Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Application
Municipal Comprehensive Plans

Pre-update review request

Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
122 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd. South • Dover, DE 19901
Phone: 302-739-3090 • Fax: 302-739-5661

Please complete this "PLUS application in its entirety. **All questions must be answered. If a question is unknown at this time or not applicable, please explain.** Unanswered questions on this form could lead to delays in scheduling your review. This form will enable the state staff to review the project before the scheduled meeting and to have beneficial information available for the applicant and/or developer at the time of review. If you need assistance or clarification, please call the State Planning Office at (302) 739-3090. Possible resources for completing the required information are as follows:

www.stateplanning.delaware.gov/
www.firstmap.delaware.gov/

www.dnrec.delaware .gov/
www.dda.delaware.gov/

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Phone: 302-739-3090 • Fax: 302-739-5661

Name of Municipality:	
Address: PO Box 196 Houston, DE 19954	**Contact Person:** Mayor Angelo Abbate
	Phone Number: (302) 422-5541
	Fax Number: (302) 422-7650
	E-mail Address: abbate.houston54@gmail.com

Plan certification date: Month, 2007

The municipality requests that the enclosed plan be reviewed to provide suggestions for revisions and improvements. The review is also to notify the municipality of any code changes since the certification of this plan that should be included in the scheduled update.

Information prepared by:	
Address: Institute for Public Administration 185 Graham Hall, Academy St. Newark, DE 19716	**Contact Person:** William DeCoursey
	Phone Number: 302-831-4925
	Fax Number: 302-831-3488
	E-mail Address: decourse@udel.edu

Maps Prepared by:	
Address: NA	**Contact Person:** NA
	Phone Number: NA
	Fax Number: NA
	E-mail Address: NA

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General Plan Approval Process

Step 1: **Draft prepared by local government.**

Step 2: **Planning Commission and/or Legislative Body approves draft plan to send to PLUS.**

Step 3: **PLUS meeting, application submitted by 1st business day of the month for that month's meeting.**

Step 4: **State comments submitted to local government within 20 business days of meeting.**

Step 5: **Local government replies to state comments in writing and submits revised plan (if necessary) to the Office of State Planning Coordination (O S P C) for review.**

Step 6: **OSPC requires 20 working days to reply to revised plan. State sends a letter accepting changes or noting discussion items or if no changes are necessary see step 7.**

Step 7: **Certification letter will be sent within 10 business days of final submission to OSPC.**

Step 8: **The local jurisdiction shall adopt the plan as final following certification. Plan is effective on the date of adoption.**

Step 9: **A copy of the final document and written notification of adoption is to be sent to OSPC.**

Comprehensive Plan / Amendment Checklist[1]

Please check yes or no as to whether the following information has or has not been included in the comprehensive plan and indicate page numbers where information may be found.

Public Participation	**Yes**	**No**	**Page # / Sections**
Public Participation Summary and Results	**X**		**12**

Population Data and Analysis	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Past Population Trends	**X**		**App A**
Population Projections	**X**		**23**
Demographics	**X**		**21**
Position on Population Growth	**X**		**23**

Housing	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Housing Stock Inventory	**X**		**22**
Housing Pipeline	**X**		**App A**
Housing Needs Analysis	**X**		**34**
Position on Housing Growth	**X**		**23**
Affordable Housing Plan	**X**		**25**

Annexation	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Analysis of Surrounding Land Uses	**X**		**18**
Annexation Plan	**X**		**47**

Redevelopment Potential	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Identification of Redevelopment Areas and Issues	**X**		**30**
Redevelopment Strategy	**X**		**31**
Community Development Strategy	**X**		**31**

[1] Please go to the following website for detailed checklist information: http://www.state.de.us/planning/services/circuit.shtml.

Community Character	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
History of the Town or City	**X**		**9**
Physical Conditions	**X**		**18**
Significant Natural Features	**X**		**25**
Community Character	**X**		**23**
Historic and Cultural Resources Plan	**X**		**46**
Community Design Plan	**X**		**23**
Environmental Protection Plan	**X**		**25**

Land Use Plan	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Existing Land Use	**X**		**18**
Land Use Plan	**X**		**46**

Critical Community Development and Infrastructure Issues	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Review of Community Conditions	**X**		**20**
Inventory of Community Infrastructure	**X**		**29**
Inventory and Analysis of Community Services	**X**		**29**
Water and Wastewater Plan		**X**	
Transportation Plan	**X**		**30**
Community Development Plan	**X**		**20**
Community Facilities Plan	**X**		**29**

Intergovernmental Coordination	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Description of Intergovernmental Relationships	**X**		**51**
Intergovernmental Coordination Strategy	**X**		**51**
Analysis and Comparison of Other Relevant Planning Documents	**X**		**8**

Economic Conditions	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Economic Base / Major Employers	**X**		**App A**
Labor Market	**X**		**App A**
Income and Poverty	**X**		**App A**
Economic Development Plan	**X**		**31**

Open Space and Recreation	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Inventory of Open Space and Recreation Facilities	**X**		**18**
Open Space and Recreation Plan	**X**		**29**

Implementation Strategies	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Evaluation of Current Codes and Ordinances	**X**		**37**
Zoning Map Revisions	**X**		**38**
Zoning and Subdivision Code Revisions	**X**		**50**
Implementation Plan	**X**		**50**
Coordination with Other Government Agencies	**X**		**51**

Other State Programs, Policies, and Issues	**Yes**	**No**	**Page #**
Total Maximum Daily Loads	**X**		**26**
Corridor Capacity Preservation Program		**X**	
Agricultural Preservation Program	**X**		**17**
Sourcewater Protection	**X**		**25**

Additional Comments:

Houston is in the process of comprehensively updating its 2007 Plan. The Town and its new consultant, IPA, are aware of the 07 agency comments. The town's ten year old policies and strategies are very likely to change. The town is very interested in comments reflecting regulatory, environmental, and procedural changes over the past ten years, as well as any updated data on roads, traffic, capital improvement projects, environmental indicators, housing, schools, and the like.

Summary: The two priorities of the 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan were: (1)to preserve and protect the character of the Town of Houston as a historic railroad-era village characterized by low-density residential neighborhoods and surrounded by a still-rural farming countryside and (2)to redevelop and revitalize blighted properties along Houston's railroad corridor. The plan recommends a new zoning and subdivision, TDR (TransferofDevelopmentRights), and Agricultural Land Preservation approach to implementing the first priority and a "MainStreet" revitalization approach to the secondpriority.

Town of the Railroad

The 2007

Town of Houston

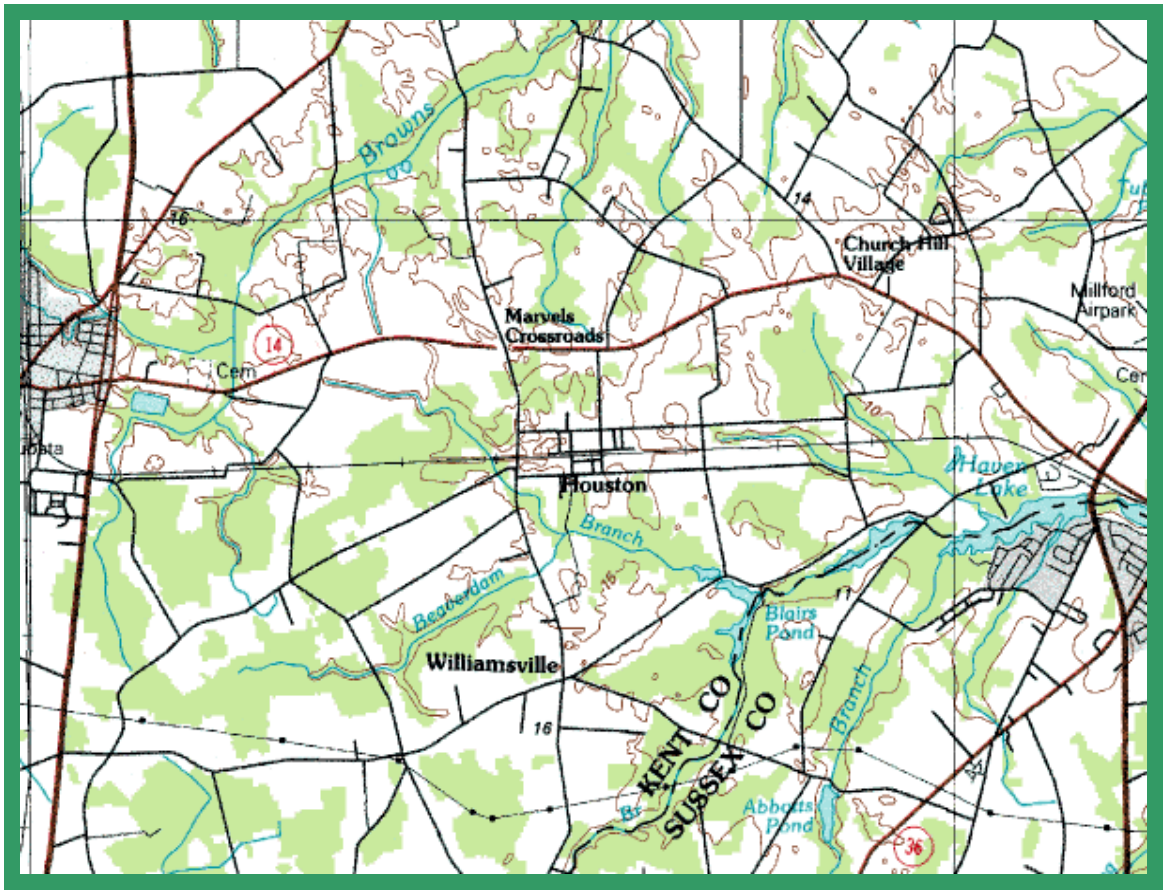
Comprehensive Plan

Town of Houston

Kent County

Delaware

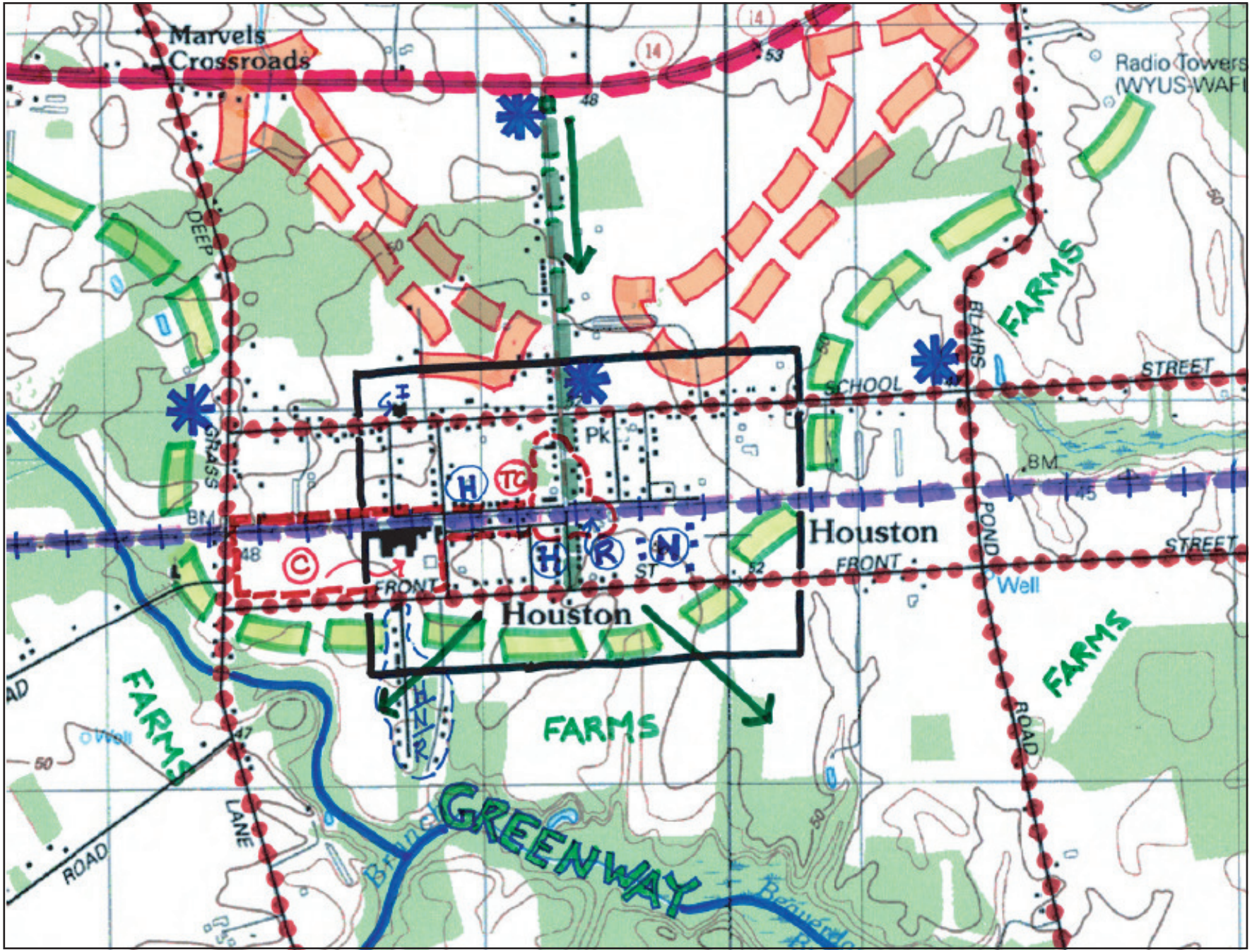
April 2007



Houston is a historic railroad-era town in a rural countryside and a community that will preserve its character and heritage while planning for a bright future.

- **Houston Community Vision**

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan



MAP B: Framework for Future Land Use

Town of Houston
Kent County, Delaware

Legend

- Town Boundary
- TC Town Center
- C Commercial Zone
- H Historic Houses
- N New Houses
- R Redevelopment Area
- Special Area
- Gateway
- Development Pressure
- Growth/ Conservation
- Mispillion River/ Beaverdam Branch Greenway
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Boulevard (Broad Street)
- Railroad
- Vista

0 1000 2000

USGS 1:12000 7.5 Minute Harrington Quadrangle, 1998

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, March 2007

THE 2007 TOWN OF HOUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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APPENDIX D - PRELIMINARY LAND USE SERVICE (PLUS) LETTER

APPENDIX E - STATE CERTIFICATION (TO BE ADDED UPON CERTIFICATION)

THE 2007 TOWN OF HOUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Houston, Kent County and State of Delaware Officials

Town of Houston

Town Council

Carroll B. Jester, President
C. Trent Crouch, Vice President
Jayme C. Arthurs, Member
Larry R. Garey, Member
John W. Johnson, Member

Connie K. Morgan, Secretary/Treasurer (Appointed)
Christine Crouch, Tax Collector (Appointed)
Mark A. McNulty, Esq., Funk & Bolton, P.A., Town Attorney

Kent County Levy Court Commissioners

Hon. P. Brooks Banta, 1st District, President
Hon. Allan F. Angel, 3rd District, Vice President
Hon. Ronald D. Smith, 2nd District
Hon. Eric L. Buckson, 4th District
Hon. Harold K. Brode, 6th District
Hon. Donald A. Blakely, 5th District
Hon. Richard E. Ennis, Sr., At-Large

County Administrator

Michael J. Petit de Mange, AICP

State of Delaware

Hon. Ruth Ann Minner, Governor
Hon. Colin R. J. Bonini, 16th District, Senate
Hon. William R. Outten, 30th District, House of Representatives
Hon. G. Wallace Caulk, 33th District, House of Representatives

Constance C. Holland, AICP, Director, Office of State Planning Coordination
David L. Edgell, AICP, Kent County Circuit Rider, Office of State Planning Coordination

THE 2007 TOWN OF HOUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Acknowledgements

David G. Nutter, AICP, and Ellen Nutter, Principals of Nutter Associates, Community Planners and Development Feasibility Consultants, of Salisbury, Maryland, have prepared the *2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan* for the Houston Town Council. The Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and the Kent County Department of Planning Services have provided guidance and assistance.

THE 2007 TOWN OF HOUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

I. VISION AND PURPOSE

A. Purpose and Authority

The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan is a new undertaking for the Town of Houston and its people. Houston has long been a special Town in Delaware and Kent County.

It was laid out as a classic railroad-era town with formal streets when the Junction and Breakwater Railroad was built through farmland in southeastern Delaware. Surrounding the Town is a still largely green and rural countryside of farms, woodlands, watercourses and small hamlets like Williamsville.

While Houston has had a zoning ordinance since 1987, it has not previously had a comprehensive plan. To the fullest extent possible, the Town wishes to devote its new Comprehensive Plan to strengthening the residential character of the Town and protecting and enhancing the unique character of its rural countryside.

The plan is based on a community vision of Houston's special character. It will provide a guide for future Town actions to protect, preserve, and appropriately allow limited, well-designed development within this precious area. The Town desires to use the Comprehensive Plan as a guideline for preparing a new land conservation and development ordinance for the Town. One anticipated result will be the creation of a new Town of Houston Planning Commission and a Board of Adjustment. The plan provides a framework for intergovernmental coordination between the Town and Kent County and between the Town and the state of Delaware. It considers a 20-year time period while being more specific about the first 18 months and first 5 years of this period. The Plan will need to be updated every five years.

> **MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** – A document prepared and adopted by a Town, coordinated with its County and reviewed and certified by the state of Delaware, according to the provisions of Title 22, Chapter 7 and Title 29, Chapter 92 of the Delaware Code. A Comprehensive Plan contains a long-term community vision, goals and objectives, policies and action projects for the physical growth, revitalization, conservation, preservation and development of the community. It respects tradition, upholds individual property rights, is general interest in nature, is based on community participation and open communication and is positive. It contains text, data analysis, maps and graphics. It defines a municipal development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population and housing growth within the municipality, existing and future land use and current and recommended zoning, community economic development, community design, expansion of its boundaries through potential annexation, development in adjacent areas, redevelopment of existing deteriorated and blighted areas, existing and enhanced community character, community facilities, public utilities, historic preservation, town center revitalization, conservation of natural resources, hydrology, open space, transportation, and critical community development and infrastructure issues.

> The comprehensive planning process must demonstrate consideration of and coordination with adjacent areas, with the county of jurisdiction and with the state of Delaware. The Plan is subject to the State review and certification process set forth in §9103 of Title 29, Delaware Code. All annexations by the municipality must be consistent with its most recently adopted and certified Comprehensive Plan meeting the requirements of Title 22, Chapter 7, Delaware Code. An area being considered for annexation must be depicted as an area for potential annexation in the adopted and certified plan. The Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed and updated every five (5) years. Comprehensive Plans are prepared and updated under the direction of the municipal Planning Commission, if there is one, adopted by Ordinance of the Town Council after public hearing and certified by the State of Delaware. The Comprehensive Plan guides the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, other codes and ordinances as applicable, annexation policy and procedure, planning and zoning review fees, development impact fees and capital improvements projects for the municipality.

Consistent with state, county and local practice in Delaware, the Study Area for the plan includes both the 256-acre area of the Town and an approximately one square mile area around it. The Study Area is bounded by Delaware Route 14 (the Harrington-Milford Highway) on the north, Blairs Pond Road on the east, the Beaver Dam Branch of the Mispillion River on the south and Deep Grass Lane on the west. The Kent County Department of Planning Services has now begun a 2007 Kent County Comprehensive Plan Update. The state of Delaware is continuing to develop its statewide Livable Delaware Program and supporting legislation. The Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan is designed to fit into these larger efforts and to express the Town's vision of its special role in the county and state.

Delaware law requires that municipalities engage in comprehensive planning activities for the purpose of encouraging "the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of the municipality and the coordination of municipal growth, development, and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and the State…" This plan was written to fulfill the requirements of a municipal development strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or fewer persons.

The municipal development strategy for a small community like Houston is to be a "development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population and housing growth within the jurisdiction, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent areas, redevelopment potential, community character, and the general uses of land within the community, and critical community development and infrastructure issues." In addition, the town's comprehensive planning process must demonstrate coordination with other municipalities, Kent County, and the state of Delaware during plan preparation. (22 Del. C. 1953, § 702; 49 Del. Laws, c. 415, § 1.)

In March 2006, the Houston Town Council received a Livable Delaware Grant from the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) to assist the Town in preparing

Houston's first Comprehensive Plan. The Town contracted with Nutter Associates, Community Planners, to work closely with the Town in preparing the Comprehensive Plan.

Coordination with Other Plans

The Comprehensive Plan effort has reviewed other applicable plans that influence the Houston Study Area.

The State of Delaware's State Strategies for Policies and Spending, prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and adopted by Executive Order 59 by Governor Minner on September 23, 2004, identifies "Level of Investment" areas that are guidelines for land use as well as state investment. Map D: State Strategies shows Level of Investment Areas within the Town and Study Area. The Town of Houston is shown as a mixture of Level of Investment Areas 2, 3 and 4 on the 2004 Strategies Map. The Greater Houston Area around the Town is shown on the Strategies Map as within Level of Investment Area 4. Within a Level of Investment Area 4, the State's goal is to preserve the area's agricultural economy and rural environment and to minimize new development. In Level of Investment Areas 2 and 3, moderate and modest levels of development are sought. The Agricultural Districting portion of the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Land Preservation Program is currently in use for a major Study Area farm located partially within the Town and partially on adjacent unincorporated land. Kent County, through its comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance has designated the unincorporated portions of the Study Area as an Agricultural Conservation zone that is outside of the county's designated "Growth Area". Both state and county designations match the desires of the Town of Houston very closely. This offers an opportunity for very successful intergovernmental cooperation.

The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Getting from Here to There: A Long Range Transportation Plan for 2030, adopted on May 4, 2005, stresses the need for a cooperative process of transportation planning with local governments. Specific transportation concerns in Houston include installing gateway signage on Route 14 at Broad Street, better management of traffic speed and safety conditions along School and Front Streets, the possible need for a new rail siding at the Libby Cannery site and policies to help mitigate the blighted conditions of properties along the Norfolk-Southern railroad corridor through the heart of Town.

The Delaware Department of Transportation's (DelDOT) Delaware Freight and Goods Movement Plan, dated June 2004, identifies goals and policies for rail freight operations in Delaware. It has a relationship with Houston's desire to work closely with Paris/Trappe Foods, DelDOT, Norfolk-Southern Railroad and the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) on the hoped-for redevelopment of the 10-acre Libby Cannery site at Mill and Pine Streets. Depending on the outcome of feasibility studies, there may be a desire by Paris/Trappe Foods to have a new railroad siding at this location. There would also be a need for controlled truck access so as to protect the

residential tranquility of the Town. The redevelopment of the Cannery property for agricultural business use is recognized as Houston's leading economic development initiative.

The January 1998 Delaware Water Study for Unserved and Underserved Communities, prepared by Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP for the Delaware Division of Public Health and its Office of Drinking Water, analyzed the need for, and cost of, a public water system for Houston. The Houston Study Area investigated included the Town, and adjacent developed neighborhoods along Broad Street, west School Street and South Minner Street. The existing water quality in 10 Houston well locations was tested, including the 70 foot deep wells at the Trappe/Paris Foods packing plant. 3 of the tested 10 wells exceeded the PMCL (Primary Maximum Contaminant Level) for nitrate, while one of the 10 exceeded it for iron, and 9 of 10 showed low pH. The Trappe/Paris Foods Packing Corporation 70' wells exceeded the standards for Nitrate and Iron and exhibited low pH. It was assumed that a deep well (300') that could draw from the more protected confined Frederica aquifer would be needed to address local nitrate problems. Water from the deep well could be mixed with water from a shallow well (100') drawing from the shallower unconfined aquifer. The study estimated capital costs for treatment facilities, a 50,000 gallon elevated storage tank and a distribution system for Houston at $1.38 million in 1997 dollars. The study also concluded that Houston was too far from Harrington and Milford to tap into their municipal water systems. The Study Area and well locations are included in the Appendix. Of the 13 communities studied, Houston and its adjacent area was ranked 4th in priority in needing a public water system.

The Kent County Department of Planning Services 2007 Kent County Comprehensive Plan update, now underway, will provide a new vision, goals and policies for land use planning in the unincorporated portions of Houston's Study Area. It will provide a basis for updating the county's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. The present county plan and zoning ordinance identifies a "Growth Area" for concentrated development within the central Dover-Harrington-Milford areas of the county. The Houston Study Area is outside the Growth Area, meaning that the County, like the State, wishes to preserve the rural character of Houston. For the purposes of the Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan it is important that Kent County has developed a "Transfer of Development Rights" program that can help preserve rural areas by transferring development rights to areas within the Growth Zone. Map A, Existing Land Use, portrays both the village character of the Town and the rural character of surrounding lands.

Other valuable plans and studies include The Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination's Equity in Agriculture: Preserving the Value of Delaware's Rural Lands study, dated September 2005, and The Conservation Fund's Kent County, Delaware – Rapid Assessment of Green Infrastructure study, dated June 2006. Both highlight the needs and means to preserve agriculture and rural character in communities like Houston.

The Delaware CEDS – A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the State of Delaware, August 2006, prepared by the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, emphasizes the need for Kent County to continue to support agricultural business and farmland preservation.

B. An Overview of Houston

As Map B: Framework for Future Land Use illustrates, Houston is a carefully designed urban town set in a pastoral landscape of farmlands, forests and waterways. It is just to the south of a rapidly developing suburban housing corridor along Delaware Route 14, and is located midway between the rapidly growing larger towns of Harrington and Milford.

A vivid portrait of Houston's heritage emerges from four histories:

THE ROOTS OF HOUSTON

"***HOUSTON*** **-** Left from Harrington on State 14 to the junction with a side road, 3.5 *m.*; R. on this road is HOUSTON, 4.2 *m.* (254 pop.), a village of broad streets on the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia branch of the Pennsylvania R.R. A large LIBBY, McNEILL & LIBBY CANNERY operates here in summer, and an antique shop is well known throughout lower Delaware. The site was the Hunting Quarter tract patented to Luke Watson in 1681. In 1854 the village was named for John B. Houston (pronounced House-ton), a landowner."

- A glimpse of Houston in 1938, from **Delaware – A Guide to the First State**, American Guide Series, The Viking Press.

"***HOUSTON***, the only village in Milford Hundred, is situated in the western part, on a tract of land warranted January 21, 1681, to Luke Watson, under the name of 'Hunting Quarter'. In 1854 the village received its name in honor of John W. Houston. A station of the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia Railroad is located here, and affords ample accommodation for travel and shipment. The village at present contains a church, a schoolhouse, two stores, a sawmill, a canning establishment and about sixty dwellings. "

- **History of Delaware 1609-1888**, by J. Thomas Scharf, A.M., LL. D.

"In 1856 a charter for the ***JUNCTION AND BREAKWATER RAILROAD*** was obtained. Construction of the Junction and Breakwater began at Clarke's Corner (thereafter Milford Junction and later Harrington) and progressed toward Milford, but was delayed at the intermediate point of ***HOUSTON***. As long as Houston was the end of the line, Milford residents complained loudly about the inconvenience of having to travel over a muddy stage road to board the train only a few miles away."

- **Rails Along the Chesapeake – A History of Railroading on the Delmarva Peninsula 1827-1978**, by John C. Hayman, 1979, Marvadel Publishers.

> "This is a little history about the town of Houston, as I remember it from the time I was about 8 years old which was about 1920. Do you remember when the Streets of Houston were all dirt streets? The outlying roads around town were sandy wagon tracks? Do you remember all the maple trees that lined Broad Street at one time? Do you remember what year the state laid the concrete for Broad Street? Do you remember *Henry Sapp's* Garage? Do you remember Libby McNeill and Libby's factory canning tomatoes, peas and beans? Do you remember Thistlewood's Mill around the corner for grinding grain for flour and feed etc.? A very busy place! The lumberyard used to be there. Do you remember the freight station that used to be here? Do you remember the steam locomotives that used to pull 6the trains through instead of the diesels? They had a couple of passenger cars that carried them on down the shore. They had a sidetrack here where they had carloads of cans, coal, and lumber which they unloaded here.
>
> Do you remember when Ralph Peirson had a barbershop there, between Jack Sapp's and the Railroad track? You could get a haircut for a quarter, shave .35 cents. Remember we used to have 3 stores: *Charlie Armour's*, *J.B. Counselman's*, *Johnny Wharton's*. Mr. Armour's building is still there. Counselman's is torn down, and a new post office was built there years ago. Wharton's store is gone now. It used to be where the new firehouse extension is. He had a real country store. You could buy any harness for your horses, plows, cultivators, shoes for both men and women. On one side he had a counter for men. You could buy shoes, overshoes, boots, denim pants, overalls, coveralls, denim jackets, denim shirts, maybe a few white shirts, dress shirts, some dress shoes. On the other side they had the yard goods, ladies bonnets and sewing equipment, needles, thread and so forth. Also the post office was there and Miss Clara Wharton was the postmistress. In the middle of the store, there was a counter where they had coconut bonbons, and chocolate drops and hard candy and some fruit and so forth. Down on the end of the store they had the meat grinder, big cheese wheels, big round pieces of cheese; you just cut off what you want. And they used to do the business in the barter way. People from out in the country would bring in a couple of chickens or two or three dozen eggs, maybe a basket of potatoes or a tub of lard. In the wintertime they would bring in a pan of scrapple or so, and trade that in for sugar, flour, other sundry supplies."
>
> - ***Houston, Delaware 1920*** - As Remembered by William A. Davis at 86 years of age, September, 1998

Why did Houston come to exist in the first place? Towns (or other incorporated places, like cities and villages) are settlements that grew where trade centers evolved or were created, where trade routes converged, and where, as a result, intense economic development was promoted. For Houston, this occurred where the new Junction and Breakwater rail line crossed a slight natural ridge along today's Broad Street. With its full layout of right-angled streets, and its booming rail line, Houston developed rapidly as an economic center. By the turn of the 20th century it had a major cannery, three general merchandise stores, a lumberyard and other commercial and industrial uses. Three earlier public schools were located in Houston. The Houston United Methodist Church emerged as a central religious and social center.

During the boom years before and after World War II, the Libby, McNeil and Libby Cannery employed as many as 3,000 people in three overlapping shifts. It drew seasonal workers from many places and nationalities. The present owner of the Libby, McNeil & Libby Cannery, Paris/Trappe Foods, continues to use the facility for food storage and freezing, and is working to redevelop the ten-acre complex. Obsolete buildings have been demolished and others repaired. It is understood that future use involving food storage and distribution involving both rail and truck transport is planned. The owners have expressed an interest in having a water tower.

Houston today is a vital residential Town with a growing number of newcomers. Because of its railroad origins, the Town is "tucked back" from Route 14 by one-half mile and is secluded, at least geographically, from urban pressures. This degree of geographical "sheltering" offers a major opportunity to avoid the kind of sprawl so unfortunately common in other towns.

The larger centers of Harrington, Milford and Dover surround the Study Area and provide services. It is only 10 minutes to shopping, schools and employment in Harrington and Milford and only 20 minutes to regional shopping and medical services in Dover.

In a traditional way, Houston and the entire Study Area focuses on a Town Center where the Town's stately entrance boulevard, Broad Street, crosses the railroad tracks. This was the traditional "100% corner" of Houston. The Milford-Harrington Highway (Delaware Route 14) connects the Town to the outside world, and to US Routes 113 and 13 at its east and west ends. School Street, Front Street, Deep Grass Lane and Blairs Pond Road provide major internal circulation. Within the Town lie a series of important community places, including the Town Center, with its Fire Hall and Post Office, at Broad Street and Railroad Avenue, a potential Historic District within the central and western parts of Town, varied neighborhoods, topography and soils, traffic and intersections, walking areas and potential hiking trails. These community places, or special areas, are analyzed individually in Section II.-I., Special Areas Analysis, and are shown on Map C: Special Areas.

C. Community Participation

During November and December of 2005 and January and February of 2006, a series of public meetings were held between the Town Council and Nutter Associates to familiarize the Town with the purpose and benefit of comprehensive planning and the required contents of a Delaware Comprehensive Plan. In February, the Town received a $10,000 Livable Delaware for plan preparation from the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination.

In March and April of 2006, interviews were conducted with numerous citizens, businesses, fire department officials, church members, state and county officials and members of the Town Council. A photographic and mapping reconnaissance was made

of the Study Area. The most important goals identified included preserving community character, strengthening residential neighborhoods, rectifying deteriorated property conditions along the railroad line, and balancing two topics – an appropriate approach to preservation of the historic area of the Town and an appropriate approach to limiting development on agricultural lands, whether within the Town or on surrounding lands.

The following Action Outline of Ideas was prepared and discussed with Town Council members:

- Stress Residential Quality and strong Neighborhood Design
- Create a Vision to define and enhance Houston's Historic Core at Broad Street, Mill Street and Railroad Avenue, relating it to Past, Present and Future
- Enhance the DE Route 14 and Broad Street Gateway to Houston, that connects the Town with Milford and Harrington, with signage
- Define a Greenway extension to the Mispillion Greenway in Milford that connects with Houston along the Beaver Dam Branch of the Mispillion River, and relates to other water courses, woodlands, farmlands, paths and recreational spaces, seeking opportunity for trails and chances to enjoy and appreciate nature
- Identify Economic Development Opportunity Areas based on existing and new buildings and good road and rail transportation access
- Strengthen Houston with street, streetscape and gateway improvements, including trees and landscaping, especially along Broad Street, intended to be Houston's boulevard, and the railroad line
- Conceptualize the design of mixed-use, community facility and residential infill developments for the Town's Center and adjoining parcels
- Carefully consider Growth of Population and New Development, while always preserving Houston's village size and small town quality of life
- Make architecture and design primary goals of the plan
- Market the plan as a development and conservation prospectus to attract public and private partners to help the Town
- Create a state-of-the-art Future Land Use and Transportation Plan
- View outlying community areas integrally with in lying ones
- Address housing market, tenure, socio-economic and conditions issues
- Prepare a vivid picture of Houston's place and role as a unique and well-preserved small Town in its region
- Relate the Plan to fundamental trends affecting the Region, including agricultural and natural lands, family and retirement living, affordable and workforce housing, driving patterns, income patterns and life-style preferences

- Plan for Potential Annexation where appropriate for community preservation or development, and Community Services and Facilities

On March 16, 2006 a community-wide meeting was held at the Houston Fire Hall. A flyer identifying the following discussion topics was distributed throughout the Study Area:

- Houston's History and Character – Houston's proud history needs to be remembered. We want Houston to always be Houston.
- Houston Today – The Plan will identify the unique qualities of Houston in its history and today, in terms of architecture, open spaces, land use, population and social and economic conditions.
- Town Planning & Zoning – We want to review and update Houston's Municipal Zoning Ordinance and other appropriate steps for the Town of Houston.
- Land Use – The Plan will show existing and future residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, farming and natural areas, such as the historic Town Center, farmlands and natural areas south of the Town and rapidly developing areas north of the Town.
- Transportation – The Plan will look at transportation problems and opportunities and will work with DelDOT in doing so, considering traffic on arterial routes like Route 14, adjacent country roads and Town streets. Current and future use of the Norfolk-Southern rail line will be considered.
- Business – Business, economic development and jobs are vital to Houston's welfare. Houston needs to have commercial activity and jobs in the Town, along Route 14 and in the adjacent towns of Harrington and Milford.
- Environment – The Plan will seek to preserve and protect the fine natural lands, waterways and farms adjacent to Houston. It also will seek to respect soil limitations, protect drainage channels and ensure good recharge of underlying aquifers.
- Residential Areas – The Plan will recommend steps to preserve housing and residential neighborhoods in the community. This can include steps to rehabilitate existing homes, improve neighborhood conditions, develop new single-family houses for affordable home ownership and, in areas with good services, create new or improved rental housing.
- Utilities – We need to look at water and sewer systems to think about future needs.
- Growth & Annexation – Some growth and annexation is necessary to maintain a healthy community. We will develop a Potential Growth and Annexation plan for Houston in accord with State law.
- Community Facilities – Based on community needs, directions will be identified for future improvement of community facilities through cooperation among many parties.
- Farm Land and Natural Areas – The State of Delaware and Kent County have programs for farmland preservation, land conservation and parks and recreation development. We have been thinking about a future Greenway and Greenway

Trail along the Beaver Dam Branch connecting to the Mispillion River. We want to preserve a Greenbelt of Farms, Forests, Waterways & Open Space around Houston.

- Municipal Services & Revenues – The Plan will look at municipal, county and state services, revenues and needs as they affect the future of the Town of Houston.

Approximately 50 citizens attended the meeting. David G. Nutter, AICP, of Nutter Associates, gave a slide show and presentation. A lively discussion ensued with emphasis on preserving Houston at all costs. Emphasis was given to having the Plan explore the character and form of the Town and its surroundings, and the following topics were discussed.

- Comprehensive Planning in Delaware, Kent County & Houston
- A Vision for Houston's Future
- Land Use, Transportation, Open Space, Historic Preservation, Community Services & Economic Development
- Action Projects
- Working with Kent County & the State of Delaware
- Implementation: Partnerships, Zoning & Codes, Funding

During the following discussion, participants expressed the following goals and ideas:

- "…(there have been) numerous ideas in the past . . .of things this town can do to enhance itself. Now its time to bring that plan together."
- " . . .if the town doesn't get a plan in place, development will be in place and there will be nothing we can do about it. Everyone can see how development is growing just along Route 14. Sooner or later, it'll be in town too."
- "More parks? More houses? More business?"
- " . . .an easier time in obtaining grants because we can show where we plan to use the money."
- ". . .updating the town ordinances. . ."
- ". . .looking at what other small towns have put into their plans. . ."
- "Housing, fixing deteriorating structures, traffic, zoning. . ."
- ". . .maybe add a subdivision ordinance as well. . ."
- "A comp plan is all about what the town wants to see happen in the future."
- ". . .precious farm lands that we may want to preserve. . ."
- ". . .two advantages to a town when considering annexation. First is that the land that comes in is subject to the ordinances and codes of Houston. Houston will decide how

large the lots can be developed and what is placed on those properties. The other advantage is the tax base. Instead of the State getting all of their taxes, the town gets a portion too."

- ". . .potentially be considered for Historic District and questioned how strict the guidelines would be. . .funding availability for the restoration of homes. . ."
- ". . .the town to be preserved as a small town atmosphere. . ."
- ". . .safeguards put in place in order to handle the traffic increase. . ."
- advantage is the tax base. Instead of the State getting all of their taxes, the town gets a portion too."
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- ". . .the town to be preserved as a small town atmosphere. . ."
- ". . .safeguards put in place in order to handle the traffic increase. . ."
- ". . .more police patrol for specific times. . ."
- "Development of housing is of importance . . ."
- "If development isn't controlled, it will take over and make no sense."
- ". . .logistics of a sewer system."
- "A central sewer system? Maybe."
- ". . .would like to see a subdivision code that allows for houses on a half acre lot, and not cookie cutter styles."
- "There are also small businesses sprinkled around town that are of very small impact that only add to the small town atmosphere . . .suggest we . . .provide for small impact businesses in our Comp Plan."
- ". . .wanting the town to stay small and not over developed."
- ". . .more community involvement and suggested a block party."
- "The council is looking to develop a Planning Commission . . ."

Between April and December, regular monthly meetings were held with the Town Council and interested citizens, comprising a comprehensive plan committee. Representatives of the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and the Kent County Department of Planning services attended the June meeting for a thorough and thought-provoking discussion of the potentials to coordinate with the Kent County Comprehensive Plan update project and to use the new Transfer of Development Rights program to good end.

In stages, the following topics have since been explored and developed with the Committee.

- Existing conditions, including preparation of a detailed Existing Land Use Map
- Detailed review and critique of Houston's Current Zoning Ordinance and Map
- A Framework for Future Land Use, exploring the principles, forces and factors for consideration in preparing the Future Land Use component of the Plan
- Future Land Use, in the form of land use categories and a Future Land Use Plan
- Consideration of Potential Annexation, including its use for community preservation and rural land conservation

D. Houston's Vision and Goals

> **Houston is a historic railroad-era town in a rural countryside and a community that will preserve its character and heritage while planning for a bright future.**
>
> - **Houston Community Vision**

Houston is a small central Delaware Town that is quiet and offers a fine place to live and work for families, retired persons and individuals. In form, it is a classic 19th century railroad town created by the building of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad through Delaware. It has a formal Town plan and is surrounded by verdant farmlands, watercourses and natural areas. By virtue of its one-half mile setback from Route 14, and its position within the larger "Hunting Quarter" sub-region, it has been, and can continue to be, relatively insulated from development pressures. It desires only moderate and well-designed small-scale development in the future. New landscaping and street tree planting are important to realizing the vision for Houston.

Houston wishes to preserve its countryside character through land use planning and agricultural preservation and natural resource protection, while recognizing that moderate residential development will continue, especially between the Town and Route 14. Houston desires to honor its history and character and enhance these qualities for future generations. Above all, Houston wishes to use planning and zoning to preserve its rural and open character by controlling and limiting growth and by conserving open space and farmland in and around the Town. It is the unique kind of living historical town that cannot be replicated.

Goals

- To preserve its quiet small-town quality of life, respect its architectural heritage as a 19th century railroad town, and protect and preserve the natural heritage of its agricultural and natural resource lands
- To encourage family living and small scale single-family residential development in good neighborhoods, in keeping with the life and feeling of a quiet residential town

- To encourage historic preservation within the town, and, as appropriate, within other portions of the Study Area
- To encourage and work toward the redevelopment of blighted and deteriorated properties that threaten property conditions in the Town and especially to work proactively with parties seeking to redevelop deteriorated properties along the railroad corridor
- To promote new investment in community revitalization by working cooperatively with owners and developers
- To explore new municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements, that will improve Houston
- To cooperate with county and state governments on intergovernmental efforts to benefit the goals of Houston, the state and county
- To accommodate a mix of uses within the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and the predominantly agricultural and natural character of the surrounding area. These should include agriculture, forests, waterways, greenways and trails, essential services, small-scale commercial, possibly light industrial, low- and medium-density residential, community facilities and institutional uses like churches, parks and playgrounds, and government buildings
- To develop new land use regulations, including a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance, including Environmental and Subdivision Regulations, that will protect the character and life style of the Town and encourage quality small-scale development
- To develop the capabilities and responsibilities of Town government to serve its citizens, including a greater role in planning and community development, code enforcement services by the Town and enhancements of the Town's tax base
- To recognize the potential redevelopment of the former Libby Cannery property as a state-of-the-art freezer facility as an important economic development project for the Town and County
- To work with DelDOT and other transportation agencies to improve signage, speed controls, street surfacing and traffic safety measures on arterial streets

E. Existing Land Use

Map A: Existing Land Use depicts the findings of the land use survey conducted for the Comprehensive Plan. Map A shows agricultural/natural resource/open space, commercial, industrial, residential, institutional/civic/governmental, agricultural preservation and vacant properties as the land use categories of critical importance to the Houston comprehensive plan.

Approximately 60% of the town's area is now in residential use, with the remainder a mix of agricultural and commercial/industrial uses. The predominant housing type is single-family, although there are historic townhouses on Broad Street and School Street and new apartments at the corner of Mill and Broad Streets. The largest commercial/industrial use is the Paris Foods freezer and food storage operation occupying the former Libby, McNeil & Libby Cannery complex.

Agricultural uses line the southern area of the town, and also occurs to the north. The countryside to the south is characterized by farmland devoted to soybeans, corn and some specialty crops and by woodlands and the Beaver Dam Branch of the Mispillion River. Clearly, the unincorporated area to the north of the town is rapidly infilling with single-family home development along Route 14. As noted above, the McNeil & Libby Cannery redevelopment will have a major bearing on the future of the town.

The Existing Land Use categories are defined as follows:

Agricultural/Natural Resources/Open Space uses include farms, including farmhouses and agriculturally related buildings, woodlands, forested areas, wetlands and areas reserved as natural open space.

Commercial uses include specialty and convenience retail, office and service uses.

Industrial uses include light manufacturing, storage and distribution facilities, primarily oriented to the railroad.

Residential uses include predominantly single-family homes, and also including existing townhouses and apartments.

Institutional/Civic/Governmental uses include the Houston Fire Hall, churches and post office.

Agricultural Preservation uses include the farm enrolled in the Delaware Agricultural Land Preservation Agricultural District program.

Vacant Properties include vacant buildings and lands in the railroad corridor area. These are typically not only vacant but also deteriorated and have a blighting influence on neighboring properties and on the Town as a whole. These are previously intensely developed properties where original industrial uses became obsolete.

Non-residential Uses within the town include the Houston Volunteer Fire Company in the Houston Fire Hall, the U.S. Post Office on Broad Street, the Houston United Methodist Church on Broad Street, Calloway's Auto Place on Front Street, the Community Pentecostal Church of God on School Street, Conventional Builders on School Street, Paris/Trappe Foods occupying the former Libby, McNeil & Libby Cannery complex, Abate Drafting Services and Promotional Advertising Products, Inc., as a home occupation on School Street, Mini-storage Facilities on Mill Street, the Southern Delaware Federal Postal Credit Union on Pine Street, Houston Country Gardens on Broad Street, Houston Oil Company on School Street and Scott's Auto Works on Maple Street.

Both the Town Center area and the preponderant number of commercial or industrial properties are located along the railroad tracks.

II. HOUSTON'S PLANNING AND STRATEGY

A. Town Government and Planning

First founded as a town in 1854, the year of the arrival of the railroad, the Town of Houston was reincorporated in 1976 and again in 2005 by the Delaware General Assembly, each time reestablishing and updating the Town Charter. A five-member Town Council governs the Town. Heretofore, the Town Council has served as Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment whenever these functions have been called for.

The Permits Division of the Kent County Department of Planning Services provides code enforcement services in both Houston and the surrounding area. The code services provided include zoning compliance, subdivision regulation, property maintenance, building codes and housing codes.

In the absence of a dedicated Town Hall, the Town Council meets in the Houston Fire Hall. Municipal services now provided by the Town include general administration, provision of paid secretary/treasurer and tax collector services, contractual town attorney services, annual contract support for the Houston Volunteer Fire Company, trash collection, street lighting, snow removal, local street maintenance, signs and banners, lawn mowing, participation in zoning compliance and building permit authorization in cooperation with the Kent County Department of Planning Services, police service through contracting with the Delaware State Police. The fiscal year 2006 Town Budget included $149,159 in projected revenue and $94,035 in projected expenditures. The Town has a tax base of $5,430,769 in assessed valuation.

In recent years the Town has successfully applied for and received federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to redress serious housing conditions problems. Many of these have occurred on Pine Street within the Town boundaries. The Town has also tried, without success, to organize a Clean-Up Effort in this area. There are also very serious housing conditions along South Pine Street outside the Town limits. This area has been a Traditional Black Neighborhood for many decades. Today, substantial new home construction is occurring on South Pine and Minner Streets, but there remain a significant number of dilapidated and dangerous properties. This is an area where Town-County cooperation, paired with the creative use of CDBG funds for housing rehabilitation and, in some cases, demolition, is much needed.

In the absence of a Planning Commission, the Town Council has served as the guiding agency for the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. This has been very valuable because only the Council has a complete and holistic overview over all Town affairs, including fiscal affairs. The Comprehensive Plan project has enabled the Council to work closely with the citizenry to systematically organize its feelings and aspirations regarding the future of Houston. This suggests a healthy scenario in which the Town Council becomes, and remains, highly involved in the planning for the Town in future years.

B. Demographics, Business and Growth

The Town of Houston is growing at a moderate rate. In past decades, Town population has grown or declined in response to local, regional and national economic forces.

Table 1 compares the population growth in Houston between 1990 and 2000 with population growth in Zip Code Area 19954, which includes the Town and its surroundings, Kent County, the State of Delaware, the United States and the World. Between 1990 and 2000 the Sleepy Hollow subdivision new homes on Sunset Avenue were built in Houston. The Town of Houston's average annual rate of population growth between 1990 and 2000 was therefore 3.44%, compared with only 1.95% for Zip Code Area 19954 and 1.42% for Kent County as a whole. Since 2000 there has been rapid development along Route 14 and throughout Kent County. Under normal conditions, Houston can be expected to experience continued population growth in the decades to come. The Town wishes that this be modest-to-moderate growth at a population growth rate of 1.3% or less.

Table 1
The 2007 Greater Houston Comprehensive Plan
Town of Houston Population Change, 1990-2000
By Comparison with Zip Code Area 19954, Kent County, the State of Delaware, the United States and World Population Change

	Town of Houston	Zip Code Area 19954	Kent County	State of Delaware	United States of America	World Population
1990 Pop.	320	1,341	110,993	666,157	248,709,873	5.2 billion
2000 Pop.	430	1,603	126,697	783,600	281,421,906	6 billion
10-Year Growth	110	262	15,704	117,443	32,712,033	790 million
1990-2000 Average Annual Growth	3.44 %	1.95 %	1.42 %	1.76 %	1.32 %	1.52 %

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, United Nations, Scan/US and Nutter Associates

The following description of Houston's socio-economic composition is taken from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia:

As of the census[GR2] of 2000, there were 430 people, 151 households, and 115 families residing in the town. This represents a 34.4% growth over the 320 person population of 1990. The total area of the town is 0.4 square miles or 256 acres. The Year 2000

population density was 430 persons in 256 acres or 1.7 persons per acre. In 2000, there were 166 housing units at an average density of .65 units per acre.

The racial makeup of the town was 89.30% White, 8.37% African American, 0.70% Native American, 0.47% from other races, and 1.16% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 4.65% of the population.

There were 151 households out of which 39.7% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 64.2% were married couples living together, 8.6% had a female householder with no husband present, and 23.2% were non-families. 22.5% of all households were made up of individuals and 10.6% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.85 and the average family size was 3.24.

In the town the population was spread out with 30.5% under the age of 18, 7.2% from 18 to 24, 32.6% from 25 to 44, 17.2% from 45 to 64, and 12.6% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 33 years. For every 100 females there were 103.8 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 94.2 males.

The median income for a household in the town was $39,545, and the median income for a family was $46,563. Males had a median income of $29,643 versus $20,208 for females. The per capita income for the town was $15,919. About 1.7% of families and 5.8% of the population were below the poverty line, including 4.0% of those under age 18 and 14.3% of those age 65 or over.

The following significant changes were reported by the U.S. Census Bureau between 1990 and 2000: the town's diversity index rose from 26% to 28%; median age rose from 33.71 to 36.98 years; average household size declined from 2.88 to 2.85 persons; population in the labor force rose from 148 to 180 persons; average household income rose from $36, 257 to $43,194; the number of housing units rose from 118 to 160 units, and average home value rose very slightly from $84,704 to $87,940.

Other significant changes between 1990 and 2000 include: an increase in median age from 33.71 to 36.98 years; an increase from 111 to 151 households; and only a very small 3.82 % increase in average home value over the 10-year period.

The Census Bureau estimates that the population of the town has grown from 431 to 461 persons, or 7%, between the year 2000 and 2005. Approximately 23% of the Town population is 55 years or older, illustrating the importance of retired persons in the Town.

Key Demographic Groups in the Town

There are two key demographic groups in the Town of Houston. One consists of persons above 65 years in age, a growing group now comprising over one-third of Houston's population. This group has the tendency to make consumer expenditures compatible with the types of small specialty and convenience retail uses that can fit into the traditional center of the Town of Houston. The other is young families with children.

Approximately 80% of the Town's population consists of families with children, with an average household size 0f 3.1 persons. Because Houston is a classic small town with natural open space and low density, quiet streets, limited traffic and good security, it is an excellent family environment.

Appendix A presents detailed population and business data for both the Town of Houston and Zip Code Area 19544. In 2006, there were an estimated 40 businesses with a total of 164 employees located in the zip code area focused on Houston. The population data includes projections for future years based on state, regional, and area trends. These projected increases can now be combined with and modified on the basis of planning goals.

Growth Projections

Appendix A includes population projections based on data from the United States Census Bureau. These are statistically responsible projections based on general population trends. Review of Houston's historical population growth over the past 70 years indicates an average annual rate of growth of less than 1%. By comparison, Kent County's population has grown at an average annual rate of over 4% over the past 60 years. Within the current boundaries of the Town of Houston, population growth between 1990 and the year 2000 was enumerated by the Census Bureau at an average annual rate of growth of 3.4 percent. Based on the Census Bureau's estimate of Town population of 500 persons in 2005, the 2000-2005 rate of growth was 1.6 percent per year. The projections included in Appendix A indicate a 2005-2010 growth rate of 1.8 percent.

The comparable annual growth rates for Zip Code Area 19954, which includes the Town as well as the much larger rural area to its north, east, south and west, are: (1) a 1990-2000 rate of 1.95 percent, (2) a 2000-2005 rate of 1.9 percent, and (3) a 2005-2010 rate of 1.3 percent. Population growth projections for small communities must be treated carefully because they can change drastically dependent on actual development projects. These estimates and projections are used to provide baselines for the plan.

The Plan therefore assumes an overall growth rate of 1.8 percent within the Town and 1.3 percent within the portions of the Study Area surrounding the Town. A 1.3 percent annual growth rate for the Town for the 2005-2010 period would mean a population of 535 people in 2010. Applying the same rate to the 2010-25 period would result in a Town 2025 population of 640 persons.

C. Community Character and Design

Character means the unique, best and special qualities of a person or, in this case, of a place – the Town and its enfolding countryside and natural environment. We can see that these qualities in Houston include a beautiful man-built urban town, a product of the

railroad age, pastoral fields and farms and still-natural watercourses and woodlands. The farming countryside around the town is an active and productive economic area.

Other special qualities of character include a heritage of railroad activity, farming and quiet life in and around a country town. Its history reaches back to the colonial history of the Hunting Quarter and then the coming of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad at a time of great civic ambition. It does also mean economic activity, transportation and jobs.

The visual character of Houston and its environs is a physical expression of its history and human character. One aspect of this visual character pertains to "gateways", or nodes, within the Town of Houston and the Greater Houston Area. These special places are defined by Kevin Lynch, in the classic work The Image of the City (MIT Press, 1960) as " . . . points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling. They can be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another." Gateways are major places of visual prominence and activity, where the image of Houston is formed for residents and visitors alike. Gateways are identified at the DE Route 14/Broad Street entrance to Houston, the predominant place of "arrival" and at the intersection of Broad Street and Railroad Avenue, the visual center of town. The Broad Street and Railroad Avenue gateway is the picturesque heart of the historic town. Given the presence of vacant and blighted properties at this gateway, the potential benefits of redevelopment for the entire Town are great at this location. The Route 14 gateway is the primary transportation gateway to Houston from Harrington and Milford, exposing thousands of people to the Houston community each year.

Houston's town plan is remarkably formal, with orthogonal streets, and civic buildings or open spaces at several key points in the grid. Broad Street and Railroad Avenue are the visual "Main Streets" of Houston. The railroad tracks add a very large, continuous element of open space, with long vistas, through the length of Town.

Houston's architectural styles include several mid-nineteenth century brick landmarks, notably the Houston United Methodist Church, the Broad Street townhouses and the oldest surviving school structure, now apartments, on School Street. Along the north edge of Railroad Avenue are small Victorian houses with porches. On other streets, there is a mix of early to late Victorian, "Four Square", early to mid Twentieth Century and new, single story homes. Lot sizes vary with a preponderance of 20,000 square foot lots and 20-40 foot front yard setbacks. While some streets have sidewalks, others do not, which is in character with a rural Town.

Farmhouses, many stately, occur on farmlands within the edges of Town and immediately outside its boundaries. The resultant atmosphere is one with many views of green and open fields punctuated with town streets. The mix of styles is an architectural asset to the Town.

Houston's vision and goals are the Comprehensive Plan's means of expressing this physical and community character and using these expressions to develop a vision for future years.

Higher Density Housing

Within the Town there are examples of higher density housing. These include the brick townhouses on Broad Street; the original brick schoolhouse on School Street and the former department store property at Broad and Mill Streets now converted to two apartment uses. In order to allow for a modest amount of new higher density housing in the future, it is recommended that a "scattered site" approach be used and that the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance allow "townhouses" and "apartment units" as specially permitted uses within the residential and town center zones. Higher density housing is important as a way to provide affordable housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities. It also offers a more concentrated density for the purposes of convenience and specialty retailing. Provision for accessory apartment units will be preserved in the new Land Conservation and development ordinance, which will also give encouragement to second-floor apartments above retail uses.

D. Environmental Features

Environmental Features that require protection include topography and soil quality, wetlands and good-to-excellent aquifer recharge areas.

Hydrology and Topography (Map F: Hydrology and Land Use Cover) are important factors to protect the natural and built environment. The area's topography peaks at an elevation of 52 feet above sea level at the intersection of Broad Street and Railroad Avenue, along the slight Broad Street ridge line. The lower-lying Pine Street area is at Elevation 48 feet. Most of the Town is at elevation 50 feet. Houston is largely within the Mispillion River/Delaware Bay watershed. The Study Area crosses the boundaries of the Goose Pond and Marvels Crossroads Tax Ditches, which need to be improved with additional maintenance and maintenance ways. The northern part of the Town and Study Area are within the Murderkill/Delaware Bay watershed. Its Beaver Dam Branch marshes and pools are natural treasures and vital parts of the community's hydrological functioning.

Floodplains, Wetlands and Aquifer Recharge Areas are critical environmental features. The northern portions of the Study Area are part of the Murderkill Watershed, while the Town and southern portions of the Study Area drain through Beaver Dam Branch, Blairs Pond and Griffith Lake to the Mispillion River. Milford's sections of the Mispillion are now being treated as a Greenway. The conservation of farmland, and the extension of the Greenway to Beaver Dam Branch, as advocated by the Plan, will support a balanced hydrological system with good stormwater management, maximum protection of wetlands and minimum erosion. Map G: Aquifer Recharge Areas illustrates that the rural

portions of the Study Area consist of predominantly excellent aquifer recharge areas, while most of the Town (with the exception of the low-lying "sump" area on Pine Street) consists of good recharge areas. These should be protected through use of Best Management Practices to be reflected in the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance. New stormwater management practices involving vegetative filtration, riparian buffer plantings, bio-retention areas and storage in undisturbed natural areas will be considered in the new Ordinance. GIS Sources indicate that wetlands are present along Beaverdam Branch, east of Blairs Pond Road between School and Front Streets and, to a limited degree, along the Town's northern border. Consideration will be given to incorporating a 100-foot upland buffer between new developments and delineated wetlands. Every effort will be made to preserve continuous forested areas and pervious surfaces in future actions.

TMDL Control Strategies Affecting Houston - Pollution-limiting "TMDL" (Total Maximum Daily Loads of nitrogen, phosphorus or bacteria) Pollution Control Strategies have been developed by DNREC for the Murderkill (northern part of the Study Area) and Mispillion River (the Town and southern part of the Study Area) watersheds of the Delaware Bay and Estuary. Total Maximum Daily Loads are the maximum daily amounts of pollutants that a body of water can absorb without violating EPA-established water quality standards. The Mispillion TMDL directs that nitrogen and phosphorus loads in the watershed be reduced by 57 percent in the applicable portions of the watershed, and that *Enterococcus* bacteria loads be reduced by 87 percent. The Murderkill TMDL directs that nitrogen loads in that watershed be reduced by 30 percent from the 1997 baseline and that phosphorus loads be reduced by 50 percent from the same baseline. The nonpoint source bacteria load in the fresh water portion of the Murderkill River Watershed shall be reduced by 32 percent from the 1997-2005 baseline level. All point source bacteria loading in the Murderkill River Watershed shall be capped at the current, geometric mean concentration level of 35 CFU *enterococcus*/100mL. Implementation shall be achieved through the development and implementation of a Pollution Control Strategy developed by DNREC in concert with the Tributary Action Team, other stakeholders, and the public.

Soils - Map H: Study Area Soils, prepared by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, illustrates that prime agricultural soils with moderate to good drainage on gentle slopes predominate in the rural sections of the 1,653 acre Huston Study Area. The major soil classifications present in the agricultural portions of the study area include: (1) *Hambrook* sandy loam (HbA) in 24% of the area; (2) *Evesboro* sandy loam (EvB) in 13.9% of the area; (3) *Cedartown* sandy loam (CdB) in 13.0% of the area; and (4) *Rosedale* loamy sand (RoA) in 6.0% of the study area. These are well-drained soils on gentle slopes. Soils present in the Town portions of the area include (1) *Henlopen-Rosedale-Urban* land complex (HsA), comprising 9.3% of the study area, and (2) the *Klej-Galloway* complex (KgB) in 6.8% of the area. The heart of the Town, east of Maple Street, is located on HsA soil, which is somewhat excessively drained. Generally, with the exception of the somewhat poorly drained KgB soil classification, these soil types are equally good for either agricultural

crop production or urban development. Areas of hydric soils, which are very poorly drained, lie along the northern Town boundary.

LESA scoring and prime Farmlands. The Delaware Department of Agriculture uses an Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system to help decisionmakers determine the quality of land for agricultural uses and to assess sites or land areas for their agricultural economic potential. The U. S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) developed the LESA system. The LESA ratings of farmland in and around Houston are shown on Map I: LESA Scores, which illustrates that Houston's lands are considered prime agricultural lands.

E. Framework for Future Land Use

Map B: Framework for Future Land Use is a concept sketch of the Study Area that provides a framework of design principles for the development of the future Land Use Plan. It identifies major natural and built-up areas and features of the Greater Houston Study Area. It shows the Town within its municipal boundary, the traditional Town Center, historic and new residential neighborhoods, in-town commercial places, gateways, places where there is clear pressure for growth and development, the Beaver Dam Branch of the Mispillion River and Greenway, main and secondary roads, and a surrounding Study Area of unincorporated Kent County lands reaching approximately a mile in each direction. For the purpose of this framework analysis, the entire Study Area is divided into the 22 special areas shown on Map C: Special Areas. Each area is described in greater detail in Section II. -J.

Locations should be chosen for future uses that have the greatest benefit for community groups and the Town as a whole. It is noted that there is a new movement in America to accommodate a mix of uses in planned settings, with great attention to design, pedestrian circulation and community amenities.

The Livable Delaware program encourages us to think in this direction and preserve historical features, emphasize street tree planting and landscaping, lay out continuous streets, trails, pedestrian and bicycle paths, provide access to public transit and build residential neighborhoods with reasonably compact lot sizes.

In the state of Delaware's 2005 State Strategies for Policies and Spending Map and Document, which expresses the state's policies for public investment and future land use, the state is divided into "Level of Investment Areas", with Areas 1 and 2 encouraging intensive or moderate new development, while Areas 3 and 4 limit or discourage development and stress investing in conservation and preservation. The Houston Area (Map D: State Strategies) is shown as a mixture of Investment Areas 2, 3 and 4. The core of the Town is a Level 2 area, while the Town's perimeter and its southern tier of agricultural land is a Level 3 Area. The surrounding Study Area is shown as Level 4 area.

The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use element (Map N: Future Land Use) will be the guide to future development and conservation. After adoption of the plan, it will be used to create a new Town of Houston Land Conservation and Development Ordinance with related subdivision and other code provisions. The Future Land Use Plan will also be used to assist Kent County in future land use and zoning planning within the Study Area. It shall serve as a basis for establishing a Potential Growth and Annexation Area and Greenbelt in cooperation with Kent County and the state of Delaware.

In order to prepare a forward-looking Future Land Use Plan for the comprehensive plan, a Framework for Future Land Use Analysis has been used to analyze the values, forces and factors which are desired by Houston, and which are now affecting the community.

The Framework for Future Land Use analysis considers the following values, forces and factors as guidelines for deciding on Future Land Use:

Evidence of growth, development or change in given sub-areas is important. This can include expressions of interest in future development as well as social, economic or technological change. Route 14 is the most significant area of growth in the Study Area, although both the Sleepy Hollow and Sunset Drive areas have experienced growth in the form of small subdivisions.

Economic and real estate development markets and trends are important to consider. Like other historic small towns in America, Houston's growth is being influenced by the beginning of the retirement years of the Baby Boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964. Nationally, there are approximately 70 million in this demographic group. Many are beginning to show preference for exchanging urban homes in metropolitan areas for homes in quieter small towns. On the other hand, the over heated housing market of the past five years is now cooling, and housing starts and home prices are falling. Typically, commercial uses are in turn affected by residential building market cycles. There is also, out of necessity, a growing emphasis in this period on ensuring adequate public facilities on larger sites.

Above all, Houston is unique as an urban village located in the environment between Milford and Harrington, a natural region still recognizably traditional despite advancing suburban development. The USGS Base Map used with the Plan illustrates this aspect of Houston's character.

Analysis by Special Districts is important to reflect the diversity and grain of the Study Area. The analysis of 24 special areas is provided in section II.-I. below.

Historical Features that can never be replaced, including the character of the Town Center, the Town's city-like street pattern and historic buildings. The state of Delaware Historic Preservation Office has provided a mapping of Houston's buildings and properties eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. That

mapping has been used to delineate the Historic Area shown on the Future Land Use map.

Documentable evidence of strong community feelings and preferences. The record of the March community-wide meeting, quoted above, reflected strong consensus about preserving Houston basically the way it is today. Conversely, the evidence of real estate market demand along Route 14 is strongly documented by development plans and applications filed with Kent County.

Current ownership, investment and property subdivision and platting patterns, based on public records and knowledge. Houses in the Breeders Crown Farm subdivision range from 1,600 to 2,000 square feet in size and are now selling at prices ranging from $230,000 to $260,000. The 100-acre planned "Southfield", or "Olde Field", subdivision located on the south side of Route 14 approximately 1,370 feet east of Broad Street, will offer 100 house lots, at an overall density of 1 lot per acre. It will provide a 30% open space set aside. Minimum lot areas are 21,780 square feet, essentially the same as the Town zoning ordinance's current minimum lot size. A private community sewer system will be provided. The Southfield Subdivision will connect directly with the Town's public street system at School Street. As of March 2007, a new "Patrefa Point" subdivision of 83 lots on 90 acres has been proposed at the southwest corner of Broad Street and Route 14. Patrefa Point's developer, Fowler and Sons, has expressed interest in annexation. Artesian Water Co., Inc. does or will provide a public water and wastewater service for each of these three subdivisions. The Kent County zoning classification for these three areas is A-R (Agricultural Residential).

Each of these values, forces and factors has been considered in analyzing the Special Areas identified on the Framework for Future Land Use map.

F. Public Infrastructure

Streets and roads, drainage ditches, private wells and individual septic tanks comprise the man-made infrastructure of Houston. DelDOT has responsibility for the main roads, and the Town for the remaining local roads.

The Town is currently dependent on individual wells and septic tanks. Periodic interest has been expressed for a community sewer system. Houston should explore the possibility of a future public sewer system by conducting an engineering feasibility study. Possibilities include connection with Harrington's sewer treatment plant, connection to the Kent County regional wastewater treatment plant near Frederica or a separate community sewer system. As experience elsewhere indicates, if there were also to be future consideration of a public water system for Houston, it would take the form of one developed by a private water company regulated by the Delaware Public Service Commission.

G. Community Services and Facilities

The Town wishes to develop a new Town Office facility. Land has been donated to the Town east of Broad Street along the south edge of the railroad, between the abandoned Thistlewood Mill and the Sleepy Hollow subdivision. The goal is to combine a new Town Office building with a new town park, including new road access from Broad Street and/or Sleepy Hollow Drive, and a small parking area.

Vital existing community facilities include the two churches of Houston, the Houston Fire Hall and the United States Post Office. Other community facilities needed for future years may include museum, senior citizen, youth and teen, and passive or active recreation facilities.

Municipal services in Houston include general Town government responsibilities, including budgeting and tax collection, planning and zoning, grant preparation and administration, coordination with the Delaware State Police and DelDOT, supervision of trash collection and street lighting services.

Fire protection and emergency rescue services are provided by the Houston Volunteer Fire Company, a 501©(3) non-profit corporation separate from Town government.

H. Transportation

Transportation (Map E: Transportation) aspects identified include regional traffic along Route 14, arterial traffic along Broad Street, Deep Grass Lane, School Street, Front Street and Blair's Pond Road, all DelDOT managed ways. In December 2000, DelDOT released a Delaware Freight and Goods Movement Plan dated June 2004. The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted a Long-Range Transportation Plan for 2030 on May 4, 2005. While neither document specifically addresses Houston, both make clear a desire to tap the economic development potentials of the railroad and to mitigate local traffic problems affecting existing communities.

I. Redevelopment of Blighted Properties

Along the railroad line there are numerous seriously blighted and deteriorated properties that would be designated and promoted for redevelopment with new uses. "Blighted" refers to the fact that long-neglected, vacant and deteriorated properties begin to have a corrosive effect on neighboring properties, which themselves then begin to deteriorate. Redevelopment means that the properties were fully developed long ago but their original uses have long since become obsolete. They need to be revitalized with a mixture of new uses (mixed use). Mixed use would include civic, specialty retail, service, office, parking, or open space use. The Norfolk-Southern Railroad owns portions of the vacant land area adjacent to the tracks. This land presents an opportunity for the Town and

Railroad to work together on common goals. The abandoned Thistlewood Mill building is being scheduled for demolition by Kent County for public safety reasons.

One of the two principal themes of the comprehensive plan is the need to redevelop the blighted properties that exist along the railroad tracks.

The approach recommended for the redevelopment of these properties is based on the National Main Street program for revitalizing small town centers. This approach, as adapted for Houston, would have four elements:

(1) An overall long-term revitalization Plan for the area adopted by ordinance of the Town Council. In this case, the adopted plan would consist of the relevant sections of the proposed new Town of Houston Land Conservation and Development Ordinance.
(2) An organized entity with responsibility for implementing the plan for redevelopment. In the case of Houston this would be the new Town of Houston Planning Commission that is proposed for creation by the Town Council once a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance has been prepared and adopted.
(3) An organized effort to promote the best redevelopment of the blighted properties by assembling a partnership of the right agencies and investors. The formation of this partnership should begin through talks between the Town Council and the Kent County Department of Planning Services. The first order of priority should be the demolition of the abandoned and ruined Thistlewood Mill property.
(4) An "economic restructuring" effort to identify the best new uses for these properties, changing uses from railroad-era industry to new open space, civic, governmental, pedestrian trail, parking, office or convenience and/or specialty retailing uses.

One major example of redevelopment of a deteriorated railroad-era property is now underway in Houston. It is the current project to redevelop the former Libby Cannery property on Pine Street as a modern food storage, freezer and transshipment facility by its owners, Paris Foods of Trappe, Maryland. Work has been accomplished to selectively demolish the most obsolete and deteriorated portions of this building complex, and to make modest renovations to the remaining buildings. At the present time, the company is making a final assessment of construction costs to build a state-of-the-art freezer facility on the site, including a new rail siding. There is the potential for major job-creating economic development at this site, with as many as 70 jobs.

J. Special Areas

The purpose of the following Special Areas Analysis (Map C: Special Areas) is to give greater depth to the Future Land Use Plan. After reconnaissance of the Town, 22 areas were identified:

(1) The historic Town Center of Houston at Broad Street and Railroad Avenue.

The Town Center contains a mix of civic, public, governmental, residential and business uses in close proximity. It is a walkable area. Properties along the south edge of Railroad Avenue, east of Broad Street, are the most seriously blighted and need redevelopment. The one-acre tract west of the old Thistlewood Mill (see Area 9) was donated to the Town and is being considered as a site for a possible Town office and park. The successful redevelopment of the land along the south edge of the rail line could bring new life to "downtown" Houston. The Norfolk-Southern Railroad owns the open storage land at the southeast corner of the tracks and Broad Street. This is now used as for a recycling station and truck storage. There should be positive redevelopment in this area.

(2) The Mill and Pine Streets/ Railroad Avenue/West Line Line/Front Street Commercial/Industrial Area

This is the major commercial-industrial area dominated by the former Libby, McNeill & Libby Cannery at Pine and Mill Streets. The Cannery, now owned and operated as a freezer facility by Paris Foods, is being redeveloped in increments. Although feasibility is still being studied, it is believed that plans are to convert the redeveloped property to a state-of-the-art freezer, food storage and transshipment facility employing up to 70 persons. The property is connected to the Norfolk-Southern railroad line and could use rail as well as truck transportation. Plans for the large vacant tracts to the south and west of the present buildings are also unknown. It is known that the owners are very interested in a water tower. This possible redevelopment should be seen as a major and valuable economic development opportunity for the Town of Houston and Kent County.

South of the railroad line, Mill Street between Pine and Broad Streets was once a lively mix of residential and commercial uses with a close relationship to the Libby Cannery. Modern commercial mini-storage units are located along Mill Street. The historic building at the northeast corner of Pine and Mill Street was once a store close to the Cannery entrance and is now used as a residential unit. The 30,000 square foot tract at the southwest corner of Broad Street and the rail line was a general store in earlier times and is now privately owned open space. The two-storey building at the southwest corner of Broad and Mill Streets was also formerly a store and has recently been converted to two rental units. Cedar Lane Resale on Mill Street is Houston's only current retail business. It should be remembered that the Pine and Mill Street intersection, just to the south of the railroad, was once a busy commercial and mixed-use street as a result of bustling activity at the entrance to the Libby Cannery. If the Cannery is successfully redeveloped, there may again be a desire for some commercial activity at this location.

(3) Broad Street as the Entrance to Houston and the Town's Civic "Boulevard"

Broad Street at Route 14 is the "front door" of Houston. The Houston United Methodist Church sign and the DelDOT directional sign at the intersection illustrate the potential to mark this gateway to the Town in a very positive way. Broad Street between Route 14 and the Town Center is punctuated with homes and the front edges of small to medium-sized agricultural and woodlot tracts. Broad Street was clearly intended to be Houston's Boulevard, one that terminates at the founder's Houston house at the street's southern end. As residential development continues along the Route 14 corridor, there may be a need for a traffic signal at Route 14 and Broad Street. Infill residential development should be planned for north of the Town boundary, although as many of the medium-sized agricultural or woodlot parcels should be preserved in their current uses as possible.

Boulevard Landscaping for Broad Street Within the Town

Historical photographs show that there were more street trees along Broad Street in the past. It would be valuable to the Town to seek to plant street trees along all or portions of Broad Street in future years. Enhancing Broad Street's original character would have civic benefits for the entire Town and for Kent County as well. It is recommended that the Town consider additional landscaping, including the planting of new street trees, along the two blocks of Broad between School and Front Streets in future years. Ultimately, the best future treatment of Broad Street as Houston's "boulevard" would be to create a landscaped median within the 2-block area from School top Front Street. This improvement has every potential to make Houston's town center one of the most attractive small town environments in Delaware. Broad Street within the Town is an area for restoration, preservation and rehabilitation.

(4) The Broad Street/Railroad Avenue/Pine Street/Northern Town Line Neighborhood

Many of the Town's most historic homes are located in this neighborhood. There are a variety of styles, ranging from new homes on subdivided lots on Sunset Avenue, to large late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses on Broad Street, a variety of homes along School Street, and smaller homes with porches on narrower lots along Railroad Avenue. There is a home business at Pine and School Streets. The "old old brick school" on School Street is now divided into two rental units. Property conditions vary along Pine Street. There are vacant lots on Pine and School Streets and three undeveloped lots along Sunset Avenue. Lots in this area, as in the Town in general, are up to 400' deep, with widths ranging from 52 to approximately 150 feet. Only small instances of in-fill residential development are expected in this area. The stately Houston United Methodist Church adds grace to the block of Broad Street north of Railroad

Avenue. The busy Houston Fire Hall, with its large structure and busy schedule, dominates the Broad Street/Railroad Avenue intersection.

(5) The Pine Street/Railroad Avenue/Western Town Line/Northern Town Line Neighborhood

This is a mixed residential, commercial and institutional neighborhood in the northwest corner of the Town. To the west of Pine Street, the topography is lower, leading to drainage problems in times of wet weather. Steps need to be taken to correct this "sump" condition. Watkins Lane runs from School Street north to beyond the Town Line, where there are trailer and light commercial uses at the Town boundary. There was a previous request for annexation in this area, but the Town declined on the basis of concern about existing property conditions and the quality of development that might ensue. Code enforcement may be needed in this area in the future. The former Houston Elementary School (the "old school") is now an evangelical church. The former electrical substation site west of the school should be demolished and converted to a positive use. There is a substantial oil company business and a car repair business at Maple and School Street, and a Credit Union is located at Pine and Railroad Avenue. There are several large or deteriorated properties between Pine Street and the western Town line that may be redeveloped for residential use in the future. It is important to preserve residential quality and stability in this neighborhood. This is the area where the Town has obtained CDBG funds for home rehabilitation in the past. The Town has also previously made special clean-up efforts here.

(6) The Front Street/Mill Street/Pine Street/Broad Street Neighborhood

This is a transitional neighborhood between the Broad Street and Pine Street. Historic homes are located along Broad Street and Front Street, with newer homes along Richardson. A commercial plant and flower business is located between Broad Street and Richardson Street. There are several larger lots with extensive landscaping. This is a handsome residential neighborhood now and for the future. As a result of nearby Broad Street on the east, the mixed-use character of Mill Street on the north and the Cannery site on the west, there may be potential for compatible small businesses at locations on Mill Street and at the Mill and Pine Street intersection.

(7) The Minner and Pine Street Area South of Front Street and Extending South of the South Town Line

Along the unpaved portions of Pine Street south of Front Street, and the parallel, but paved, Minner Street, lies the "Wilson's Area", a historically black neighborhood partly inside and partly outside the Town boundary. This neighborhood is heavily wooded along its edges. There are some half dozen ramshackle and abandoned small houses along Pine Street in this area, with

occupied older homes to the south. Along Minner Street and portions of Pine Street, extensive new housing development is occurring. There is a need to demolish the ramshackle abandoned homes and redevelop these lots with new homes. There is also a need to use CDBG funds for home rehabilitation on Pine Street in this neighborhood. Consideration should be given to annexing this neighborhood into the Town.

(8) The Portions of the Town's Southern Agricultural Tier east of Minner Street between Front Street and the southern and eastern Town Lines

South of Front Street, the lands within the Town Boundary are in active agricultural use by several farming families. The central farm in this area is enrolled in the 10-year Agricultural Land Easement program of the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program. During the 10-year period the owner may submit discounted bids to permanently sell the development rights to the land to the Delaware Agricultural Lands Foundation.

(9) The Railroad/Eastern Town Line/Front Street/Broad Street Neighborhood, Including the Sleepy Hollow/Legend Lane Subdivision

To the east of Broad Street lies the Sleepy Hollow/Legend Lane subdivision, consisting of 17 lots of 20,000 square feet or more, all of which have been developed with homes. The 100' by 600' parcel north of the tracks is, as noted, owned by the Town, and the Town has inquired about grant funding from DNREC for the development of a public park.

(10) The Broad Street/Northern Town Line/Armour Street/Railroad Avenue Neighborhood

Between School Street and the Northern Town Line, the land is used for agriculture, a renovated farmhouse and several larger homes. South of School Street, this neighborhood includes a variety of homes on Wharton, Armour and School Streets, ranging from 6,000 to 40,000 square feet in lot size. The Wharton and Armour Street lots range from 100 to 125 feet in depth, and have frontages ranging from 55 to 200 feet in lot width. There are only 2 vacant lots in this neighborhood.

(11) The Armour Street/Northern Town Line/Eastern Town Line/Railroad Neighborhood

To the east of Armour Street, School Street and its uses take on a more rural character, with large deep lots and, in many cases, agricultural use behind the houses fronting on School Street. There are 2 large commercial uses, one north and the other south of School Street. It has been agreed that the vacant one-acre

Parcel 5 will be developed as a street connecting the Southfield Subdivision on Route 14 to the Town's street system.

(12) The Area Between the Western Town Line/the Railroad/Deep Grass Lane and North of School Street

This area is occupied by several mobile and stick-built homes with agricultural lands behind or between them. It has the look and feel of an in-Town neighborhood, including Area 13 as described below. There is a large horse farm and track south of School Street.

(13) The Area North and West of the Deep Grass Lane/Railroad Intersection

This area is intensely developed with homes fronting on School Street. A horse farm occupies the interior of this block, between School Street and the Railroad tracks. Numerous stick-built and mobile homes are located along deep Grass Lane. There are several vacant parcels both east and west of the Town Line.

(14) The Area Southwest of Marvel's Crossroads (Route 14 and Deep Grass Lane)

The area southwest of Marvel's Crossroads is now agricultural land but has recently been sold for subdivision development. The development can be expected to be similar to other single-family home subdivisions along Route 14, with an average density of approximately 1-1.5 units per acre.

(15) The Area Between DE Route 14/Broad Street/the Northern Town Line and Deep Grass Lane

There is a cluster of existing homes at the intersection of Deep Grass Lane and Route 14, with large agricultural lands between the intersection and the Town. This is clearly an area facing strong development pressure and one likely to grow toward the Town boundary.

(16) The Area North of DE Route 14 From Marvel's Crossroads East

Marvel's Crossroads has been a traditional commercial cluster on a country road. North and East of the intersection there are existing commercial uses, existing homes lining the north side of Route 14 and new subdivisions to the east. Artesian Resources and Tidewater Utilities, Inc., Delaware's two largest private water and wastewater companies, are developing community utility systems along the Route 14 corridor.

(17) The Area Between DE Route 14/Broad Street/School Street and the Northern Town Line and Broad Street

Like Area 15, Area 17 is a rapidly developing suburban area, where farmland is being converted to housing development. The Southfield Project is located here, illustrating the connection of new subdivisions outside the Town to the Town's street system.

(18) The Area Northeast of Blairs Pond Road and School Street

This area is currently in agricultural use and continued agricultural use may be possible south of the S-Curve on Blairs Pond Road.

(19) The Area East of the Town Between School Street and Front Street

The area between School and front Streets, east of Town, includes low-lying lands and wet areas draining southward to Blairs Pond, as well as actively used prime agricultural lands that should be preserved to the fullest extent possible.

(20) The Area Southeast of Blairs Pond Road and Front Street

Blairs Pond Road stretches south to major new housing developments at The Mead and along the roadway, illustrating that Blairs Pond itself has become a magnet for development. The Baltimore Air Coil development farther east, a major generator of jobs and other economic benefits, may add to this development pressure.

(21) The Area South of the Town Between Blairs Pond Road and Deep Grass Lane

Outside the Town Boundary, these actively used agricultural lands continue the in-town farming uses south of Front Street. There are three large farms in this area. The future of this land for agricultural use can be said to hang in the balance, depending on housing market conditions, owner views and development offers.

(22) The Area Southwest of Town Along Deep Grass Lane, Gun and Road Club Road and Thistlewood Road

Area 22 reaches southwest along the highly-developed Gun and Rod Club Road and Thistlewood Road all the way to the Williamsville Road. The Gun and Rod Club is an important institution on Gun and Rod Club Road. The Community Pentecostal Church of God and its rectory are located on Gun and Rod Club Road its intersection with Deep Grass Lane.

Other important places and factors in the larger Houston Area include the historic hamlet of Williamsville on the Williamsville Road, the northern and southern streams of the Beaver Dam Branch water course which flow to Blairs Pond, Griffiths Lake and the

Mispillion River and its Greenway and the growing Church Hill Village area to the northeast on Route 14.

K. Current and Future Zoning

Houston has had a variety and mixture of uses since it's founding. The four principal uses are (1) Single-family Residential, (2) Commercial, including Industrial, (3) Institutional, including churches, non-profit facilities like the Houston Fire Hall, parks (currently none) and government facilities, and (4) Agricultural and Natural Resource lands. Houston's Existing Uses are shown on the Map A: Existing Land Use. Existing Land Use is a starting point for Future Land Use. Existing Land Use, which has evolved in the history and life of the Town, is a major expression of the Town's character. We have compared the Existing Land Use Map and Existing Conditions Analysis with Current Zoning (Houston's Zoning Ordinance, taken from the original version of the Camden Zoning Ordinance, appears to have first been adopted by the Houston Town Council in about 1992 and to have been amended three times since its first adoption) to identify Zoning Use Districts and categories of permitted uses specified by the Ordinance and the experience of the Town with each provision. One goal is to identify differences, or discrepancies, between Existing Land Use and Current Zoning. Another is to better relate it to the goals for the future as expressed by the Comprehensive Plan.

The Houston Zoning Ordinance includes well-established principles of zoning. The text of the ordinance, and the "Houston Zoning District Map" (Map K: Current Town Zoning) that is an integral part of the Ordinance, establish 4 mapped zoning use districts: (1) a R-Residential District, (2) a RM-Residential Modular District, (3) a C-Commercial District and (4) an I-Industrial District.

<u>The Town of Houston's P-Preservation Zoning District</u>

Perhaps the most unique part of the existing Town of Houston Zoning Ordinance is the P-Preservation District. Section 6 - Preservation District (P), states that the purpose of the P-Preservation District is "to preserve undeveloped areas such as open space and agricultural lands, areas of special environmental quality, recreation potential, natural beauty or ecological importance, to enhance the quality of life in Houston, including the opportunity for privacy, natural environment and beauty, rural and low density surroundings and recreational assets".

This is a creative section of the Ordinance. Although the P-Preservation District was never mapped, and therefore has not been used, its intention is clear. It is intended to be a zoning district for lands annexed to the Town in future years. Furthermore, it expresses a vision – that annexation would be used by the Town as a vehicle for preservation, not development, and as a method of retaining the existing character of the farmlands that surround Houston. This is unique because in practice annexation is typically used to promote development, not preservation. In creating a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance for the Town of Houston, every consideration should be given to

making use of a zoning tool of this, or similar, kind, and combining it with Delaware's Agricultural Lands Preservation program and Kent County's Transfer of Development Rights program.

In the P-Preservation District, permitted principal, "as of right", uses include general farming and passive public or private recreational uses. Conditional permitted uses require specific review and approval by the Town Council and include accessory farm buildings and structures, active recreational uses and single-family farm dwellings, specifically prohibiting mobile homes.

The intention of the Ordinance is that the P-Preservation District would be applied to any and all lands that may be annexed by the town of Houston in future years.

It also defines a P-Preservation District for the purpose of historic preservation but does not show anything on the Town Zoning Map (Map K: Current Town Zoning) for this district, which to all intents and purposes means that the P-Preservation District has never been activated.

With regard to the P-Preservation District, the ordinance contains one interesting and very unusual feature, in Section 2, entitled "Unzoned Land". Article I, Section 2 says that "Any land hereafter incorporated within the Town limits of Houston, whether by annexation or otherwise, shall automatically be zoned P, Preservation, at the time such land is officially recognized as within Houston Town limits by the Town Council." It is clear that this District is intended to limit development in order to preserve the rural character of Houston and that it can be of great benefit to the Town. However, the goals and methods involved should be spelled out more clearly in the Zoning Ordinance.

Residential Zoning in Houston

The R-Residential District is a single-family residential district with the following significant features:

- It prohibits "relocatable mobile homes"
- It permits "Garden, orchard or nursery, but not commercial greenhouses" as principal, as-of-right, permitted uses.
- It prohibits "Storage of boat trailers and self-propelled camper, camp trailer(s) or boats(s)" in front yards.
- It does not permit accessory apartments, small apartments attached to a principal residence that can be beneficial for family members, the handicapped and elderly.
- It is liberal with regard to allowing non-residential uses as Conditional Uses (often called Special, or Special Exception, uses) in the R-Residential District, including child and day care centers, nursing homes, convalescent homes and rest homes, clinics, hospitals, medical office buildings, doctor's and dentist's offices, neighborhood type businesses such as convenience food markets, small retail shops, general clothing shops, banks, small restaurants and delicatessens, pet shops,

hardware and garden stores, and "any other neighborhood type business that Town Council deems appropriate", excluding adult entertainment, adult bookstores, amusement arcades and pool rooms.

Approximately 75% of the Town's land area is zoned R-Residential. The R-1 district includes extensive lands in existing agricultural use, although the ordinance does not permit agricultural use.

Given that the R-Residential District prohibits "relocatable mobile home(s)", the ordinance establishes a RM-Residential Modular Use District as a way of "establish(ing) and maintain(ing) modular residential areas". The RM District permits, by right, "new detachable single-family modular homes, but not relocatable mobile homes". Modular homes differ from manufactured or mobile homes in that modular homes are typically stick-built in "modules" or parts made within factories but assembled together on site. They are not "moveable or portable" in the way that manufactured and mobile homes are, and they do not have a "metal chassis and hitch".

Unfortunately, "modular home" is incorrectly defined in the Ordinance as a ". . .movable or portable dwelling" that is ". . . designed and constructed with a metal chassis and hitch". This is actually a definition of a manufactured home. Modular homes do not have built in chassis's or hitches. They do not have a "vehicular" character and are considered to be the equivalent of stick-built houses. The definition needs to be corrected in a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance.

Like the R District, the RM District is very permissive in allowing Conditional Uses. The RM District was created in 1994 in order to facilitate the Sleepy Hollow/Legend Lane subdivision. In addition to the Sleepy Hollow development, the RM district includes three individual parcels on Pine Street and Broad Street. The Broad Street parcel is occupied by the Brick Townhouses. The two parcels on Pine Street are occupied by manufactured homes.

Commercial Zoning in Houston

The C-Commercial District is intended by the Ordinance "to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of commercial activities generally servicing a wide area".

Within Houston's C-Commercial District:

- A single-family dwelling is permitted only "in association with a permitted office or business or commercial use in the same building or on the same premises for use by the proprietor or an employee of said business".
- Multiple-family dwellings are permitted as of right on upper floors.
- Animal hospitals are permitted as of right with "open pens at least 200 feet from a Residential District".

- Also permitted as of right are: truck, bus or motorcycle sales "provided that major repair or storage of damaged vehicles shall be inside a completely enclosed building", bottling works, cleaning works, boat, manufactured home, travel trailer and camper sales as long as "no units shall be displayed or stored in front yard(s)", drive-in and fast food restaurants, gasoline stations, hotels, motels, and motor lodges and tourist homes, and wholesale establishments of not more than 2500 square feet of accessory storage.
- Wholesale establishments with up to 15,000 square feet of gross floor area are permitted as conditional uses if approved by the Town Council.

On the Zoning Map, the C-Commercial District includes the historic Town Center area gathered around the intersection of the Railroad Line and Broad Street, including the Fire Hall and Post Office north of the tracks and reaching east and west between Pine Street and the Old Thistlewood Mill south of the tracks. Also zoned commercial on the map are: (1) the vehicle repair establishment on Front Street east of Broad, (2) the contracting establishment at the east end of School Street, (3) the Credit Union at the northwest corner of Railroad Avenue and Pine Streets and (4) the oil company on School Street west of Pine.

Industrial Zoning in Houston

The purpose stated for the Houston's current I-Industrial District is "to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for certain types of businesses and manufactured uses relatively free from offense." Interestingly, the ordinance states that the "typical development in this district would be that which is commonly known as a(n) industrial park." New residential uses are not permitted in the Industrial District, although commercial uses are permitted. Agricultural use is permitted in this district. Sections 5.3 and 5.5 apply environmental controls and limitations. The I District, unlike Houston's other zoning districts, requires (Section 5.4) Site Development Plan Approval prior to the issuance of building permits and certificates of occupancy. Section 5.7 Performance Standard Procedure requires a decision by the Planning Commission, although Houston has no Planning Commission.

Houston's Zoning Map designates the Town portion of the Libby Cannery property as an I-Industrial District. The Kent County Zoning Ordinance designates the adjacent county portion as industrial also.

Home Occupation Uses

The Ordinance permits Home Occupation Uses in all districts where residential uses are permitted (R, RM and C).

General Observations on the Ordinance

- The treatment of large parcels of one or more acres where there is more than one use on the parcel (i.e., mixed-use) deserves serious consideration – there are several where agriculture is the "second use". This needs to be thought through based on the emerging community vision for Houston.
- Similarly, the treatment of parcels which are now vacant or underutilized, in other words which have no existing use or negligible existing use, needs to be thought through as the Future Land Use Plan is prepared and thinking progresses about recommended changes in Houston's zoning for future years.
- Institutional uses typically include governmental, civic and non-profit facilities, essential service (utility facilities where applicable), public parks and playgrounds, and churches. Consideration needs to be given to having a distinct identity for Institutional kinds of uses in future land use regulation. The purpose of this is to afford them protection through good zoning.
- Regarding the relationship between the Existing Land Use Map and the Current Zoning Map, there is a significant discrepancy along the south side of Mill Street, where some of the new storage units are zoned R-Residential rather than C-Commercial.
- The Minimum Lot Requirements contained within Appendix J of the Current Zoning Ordinance need comprehensive review and revision as some of the setback dimensions may be too large for a traditional Delaware town.
- The dimensions in the Land Conservation and Development Ordinance should be based on good design guidelines for Houston. The design guidelines should reflect the historical heritage and character that existing residents feel is important and that is attracting new residents. One principle that should be included is to preserve the traditional street pattern of Houston. This means that any new streets should be continuous with existing streets, and that the right-angled street pattern should be maintained.
- The Ordinance includes diagrams illustrating several definitions; dimensional requirements and site plan features. Appendix J, revised 10/06/94, provides a table of maximum building height (35' in all zones), minimum setbacks and minimum lot width and area requirements. Minimum lot width is established at 100' in all zones, which results in making numerous existing lots on Broad Street, Pine Street and Railroad Avenue non-conforming. Front Yard setbacks are 25' in residential districts, 40' in the commercial district and 50' in the industrial district.
- Minimum Lot Area, the principal measure of density in American land use regulation and therefore very important, is established at 21,800 square feet in the R, RM and C districts, and at 43,560 square feet, or one acre, in the I district. These minimum lot sizes are consistent with DNREC requirements, based on the limitation that the Town relies on individual septic tanks and private wells.

Planning and Zoning Administration and the Issuance of Building Permits

Section 7 requires that Building Permits be approved and issued by the Houston Town Council.

The Ordinance establishes that the Town Council will serve as Houston's Board of Adjustment to hear requests for area variances or exceptions in cases of hardship or practical difficulties or appeals from the interpretations of the Zoning Ordinance. This indicates that the same public body that rules on the Zoning Ordinance hears appeals from those rulings, which is not the proper method. Section 3 states that Amendments "may be initiated by resolution (of the Town Council)", which requires correction since amendments to an ordinance can only be by ordinance. Section 3.1 stipulates that, when the Town Council decides on proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, that "consideration shall be given to the relation of the proposed change to the general purpose and intent of the ordinance and to the Comprehensive Plan. . .", whereas heretofore there has been no Comprehensive Plan.

Appendix H establishes a Fee Schedule for planning and zoning reviews. The fees, given that they were apparently established earlier than 1992, are understandably very low.

It is recommended that the Town, after preparation of a new Zoning and Land Development Ordinance, and the creation of a Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment, employ a part-time Code Enforcement Officer. The part-time code enforcement person would work cooperatively with the Kent County Department of Planning Services on code enforcement. Kent County would retain responsibility for the highly technical area of Building Code enforcement.

Relationship Between Existing Land Use and Current Zoning

The major discrepancies found between Existing Land Use and Current Zoning were:

(1) The lists of permitted principal, accessory and special, or conditional, uses, and the definitions, include obsolete and out of scale uses for a small town like Houston, and should be thoroughly revised.
(2) The Ordinance does not include provisions for site plan review, design guidelines appropriate for Houston, historic preservation, environmental conservation or the planned development of larger parcels of which Houston has several.
(3) An additional challenge is that several large areas within the Town limits are agricultural in Existing Land Use, but are zoned R-Residential which does not permit agricultural use.
(4) The Ordinance does not recognize that there is a historic Town Center in Houston, based on evolutionary heritage and mixed-use patterns.
(5) The Ordinance does not reflect the way in which zoning and building permit administration, and code enforcement, is done in Houston, which is presently through the Division of Inspection and Enforcement of the Kent County Department of Planning Services.
(6) There are important Institutional Uses, such as the Fire Hall, Houston United Methodist Church and U.S. Post Office, which need to be recognized in the Land Conservation and Development Ordinance.

(7) More effort needs to be made to make the preservation, enhancement or creation of open space a major ingredient in the Land Conservation and Development Ordinance.

(8) The Ordinance needs to reconsider what is said about the duties and interlocking responsibilities of Town Council, Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.

(9) The Town should develop Subdivision and Land Development Regulations of its own. One principle that should be incorporated is clustering. Clustering means grouping houses on those portions of a site most appropriate for buildings, and reserving the remainder of the land for open space.

(10) The Fee Schedule needs to be updated based on modern costs and needs for Town review of plans.

(11) The Town is unique and complex enough to warrant having its own appointed Planning Commission, as well as some appropriate form of part-time Code Enforcement services, at least in the area of zoning compliance.

Adequate Public Facilities and Services

The new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance should also require an "adequate public facilities and services" approach. In this approach, developers are required to demonstrate that their proposals will not overburden the municipal services and facilities that the Town is able to provide. This can be implemented by requiring developers to submit brief impact statements describing the services their proposal will require, and comparing the service requirements with existing and planned services.

Concentrated Code Enforcement for Deteriorated Properties

As an older Town, and a Town focused on an industrial railroad corridor, Houston has several areas experiencing deteriorated properties. These areas include properties along the railroad tracks and properties along Pine Street. In addition to the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance, it is recommended that the Town also adopt a Property Maintenance Code and an Existing Buildings Code. The Property Maintenance Code would require better maintenance of exterior property conditions like grass cutting and weed removal, storage within yards and paint and trim maintenance. The Existing Buildings Code would govern occupancy conditions and building code issues within existing buildings, including both residential and non-residential buildings.

A Zoning District That Emphasizes the Conservation of Open Space and Agricultural Uses

In order to implement the open space and farmland preservations goals of the plan within the Town, it is recommended that the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance include a "zone", or "use district", that emphasizes open space and farmland conservation, with limited other uses. The recently adopted *Town of Frederica Land Development Code* offers an excellent example of fashioning such an Agriculture and

Open Space zoning district. The new Frederica Ordinance also offers a good model for combining Subdivision Regulations, with design standards, with Zoning Regulations in the same document. This approach is also recommended for Houston.

Protection Against Adult-Oriented Businesses

It will be important to protect the community against the possible intrusion of adult-oriented businesses. This is an important topic for Houston because of the presence of deteriorated and blighted railroad properties. Adult-oriented businesses must be limited, however, according to constitutional guidelines. Basically, the important elements of a zoning regulation to limit them would be to limit them to the Commercial District only and to prohibit them for all locations within 1,000 feet of a church, park or place of public assembly.

Kent County Planning and Zoning Responsibilities

More than half of the Study Area is within unincorporated portions of Kent County and is regulated by the Kent County Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. Existing Land Use in these unincorporated areas is shown on the Existing Land Use Map. Kent County is now beginning an update of its Comprehensive Plan. This gives Houston an opportunity to comment on county land use planning and regulation within the unincorporated portions of the Study Area. The current Kent County Comprehensive Plan is quite weak on future land use designations, a problem the update has been designed to resolve.

In 2003, Kent County revised its Zoning Ordinance and Map to establish a Growth Zone for more intensive development, versus a non-growth area. Both the Harrington and Milford areas are within the Growth Zone, while the Houston area is outside the Growth Zone. Outside of the Growth Zone, where the Zoning is AR, a density of 1 dwelling unit per every 4 acres is permitted, assuming individual wells and septic tanks. Where a community water and wastewater system is provided, the allowable density would be 1 dwelling unit per acre. The Route 14 development projects predate the County's 2003 Zoning Ordinance changes. The unincorporated portions of the Houston Study Area are primarily zoned A-R, Agricultural Residential, in the Kent County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 205 of the county code. The portion of the Libby and McNeal Cannery west of the Town Boundary is zoned Industrial. The area northeast of the Town is zoned Multi-family Residential.

The A-R zone permits home building, as of right, on minimum 20,000 square foot lots, or at an overall density of approximately 2 homes per acre, less in cases where open space or new roads are required. Examples are the Breeders Crown Farm and Deerfield subdivisions now under active development north of Route 14. The farmland in the central south portion of the study area with portions both in and outside the Town is designated AP, for Agricultural Preservation and is enrolled in step one, 10 year Easements, of the Delaware Agricultural lands Preservation Program.

The County has also created a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. Houston is located within the tertiary TDR sending area created by this program, allowing a density of 0.5 dwelling units per acre to transfer into a more intensive TDR receiving area. The Town can participate as both a sending area (in order to preserve farmland and open space) and as a receiving area (to help redevelop blighted railroad properties) under this program. The County has developed model municipal TDR provisions to work with the County TDR program.

Williamsville – The Original Historic Hamlet

The rural hamlet of Williamsville, one mile south of Houston, was the original historic settlement within the "Hunting Quarter". When Houston was founded on the new Junction and Breakwater Railroad, many residents of Williamsville moved to the new railroad town. The Comprehensive Plan Committee has expressed a desire to help preserve the character of Williamsville. This can best be done by advocating that Kent County apply a "Rural Hamlet" or equivalent designation to Williamsville in its update of the Kent County Comprehensive Plan, and implement that designation with new zoning regulations designed to protect hamlets and crossroads like Williamsville.

Greenbelt Designation and TDR - Transfer of Development Rights

In order to implement the intent of the plan to protect farmland and open space in and around the Town, the Town should request that Kent County undertake two steps in its new county Comprehensive Plan update and the subsequent revision of its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances: (1) upgrade the TDR priority level of the farmlands around the Town from a level 3 TDR area (able to "send" development rights equivalent to .5 dwelling units per acre to "receiving" sites within the designated Kent County growth area) to level 2 (able to send 1.0 units per acre) or even level 1 (able to send 1.5 units per acre), thereby offering further incentive for the transfer of development rights. (2) Designate a "greenbelt" of farmland and open space around the Town as part of the updated Kent County Comprehensive Plan.

Within the Town, TDR would be used to help conserve existing farmland and to help make feasible the redevelopment of deteriorated properties along the railroad tracks.
The properties shown as "Properties for Redevelopment" on the Future Land Use Plan should be designated in the new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance as a "redevelopment" type mixed-use receiving zone within the Town.

L. Future Land Use

- The proposed Future Land Use Plan (Map N: Future Land Use) for the Town of Houston and the surrounding study area is based on the preceding Existing Land Use and Framework for Future Land Use analyses. The Town of Houston is seen as wishing to honor its heritage as a small town and railroad era village and enhance its

environment for living, working and recreation. Future Land Use is a cornerstone of the comprehensive plan and the basis for zoning revisions. Do the proposed future land uses fulfill the vision, principles, goals and surveys of the Comprehensive Plan, and will they help implement the plan? The surveys include Existing Land Use and Conditions, Current Zoning analysis and a Framework for Future Land Use analysis.

- Do the land use designations reflect, protect and enhance the best character of the community, preserving its unique and essential qualities? Character is defined as the essential best and most unique qualities of the community.
- Do the designations appropriately reflect the best economic trends and desired community economic development goals for the community? Emphasis is given to trends and goals that positively strengthen Houston as a place to live work and have services appropriate to its size.

Residential - Single family homes in a variety of settings, with open space in the form of parks, playgrounds and trails, is the predominant land use and continuing foundation of the character of Houston.

Town Center Area - A small, mixed-use, traditional town center, including institutional, civic, governmental, commercial, and residential uses would be designated along Broad Street, Railroad Avenue and Mill Street. Small-scale new development with amenities and streetscape treatments would be encouraged.

Historic Area - A historic area would be established for the oldest portions of Houston, from the railroad era, basically the western area from Broad Street to the western town boundary.

Commercial - Uses include convenience and specialty retail, office and service uses.

Industrial - Uses include light manufacturing, storage and distribution facilities.

Civic/Institutional/Governmental - Church, Fire Protection, a new Town office facility, and new small park and open spaces would be planned for, enhanced and developed.

M. Potential Annexation

With the housing market currently slowing but expected to rebound, there will be inevitable developer interest in developing farmlands both inside and outside the Town. This interest will apply to farmlands along the southern tier and eastern and western edges of Houston as well as to the developing area north of Town. The comprehensive plan is committed to achieving maximum conservation of these surrounding lands, especially those on the south, east and west. It is the responsibility of the plan to evaluate these possibilities objectively, in the best interest of the Town.

Map O: Potential Annexation describes the portions of the Study Area where the plan addresses possible future annexations to the Town. Delaware State Law requires that no

lands be annexed to a municipality unless the potential and appropriateness of the annexation has been found appropriate in a certified comprehensive plan. Factors considered include location relative to the best pattern for the planned growth of the municipality, existing and future land use patterns, likely development without annexation, transportation and accessibility and environmental concerns.

The idea of Potential Annexation is difficult because it does not mean that the lands identified will be annexed in the future. For one thing, annexation in Delaware is voluntary on the part of property owners. For another, no land can ever be actually annexed unless it is contiguous with the current Town boundary at the time of annexation. What the Potential Annexation map, and accompanying text, therefore mean is that properties within the Potential Annexation Area are suitable and appropriate for actual annexation should these conditions occur in the future.

The Potential Annexation Area includes all lands outside the current Town Boundary within the area bounded by Deep Grass Lane on the west, Delaware Route 14 on the north, Blairs Pond Road on the east and Beaverdam Branch on the south. Phase I Annexation, defined to mean possible annexations within the next ten years, includes all properties within this area that are north of the railroad tracks, plus the large parcel that is part of the Libby Cannery/Paris Foods property between the railroad tracks and Front Street to the west of Town. These properties are shown as Phase 1 Annexation because development pressures, coming from the north, are strongest in this area and Paris Foods is studying a possible major economic development project. All other properties in the Potential Annexation Area are shown as Phase 2 Annexation, which are likely to occur within the following ten years.

The Comprehensive Plan stresses that actual annexations may occur either for the purpose of land conservation, especially in the Phase 2 area, or for development, the more likely case in the Phase 1 area.

The purpose of the Phase 2 designation is to protect and preserve the character of the rural countryside around the Town, including farmlands, natural resource areas and low-density development areas. Conservation will also be encouraged wherever possible in the Phase 1 area.

The Potential Annexation Area would work in conjunction with the P-Preservation District that is part of Houston's current Zoning Ordinance. Section 6 - Preservation District (P), of the current Ordinance states that the purpose of the P District is "to preserve undeveloped areas such as open space and agricultural lands, areas of special environmental quality, recreation potential, natural beauty or ecological importance, to enhance the quality of life in Houston, including the opportunity for privacy, natural environment and beauty, rural and low density surroundings and recreational assets".

The P-Preservation district is a floating zone, meaning that it is mapped only when a property owner has voluntarily applied for this district and annexation has occurred.

Article I, Section 2 of the Town's current Zoning ordinance, entitled "Unzoned Land", states that "Any land hereafter incorporated within the Town limits of Houston, whether by annexation or otherwise, shall automatically be zoned P-Preservation, at the time such land is officially recognized as within Houston Town limits by the Town Council."

The P-Preservation District, in combination with the Potential Annexation Area, offers a valuable set of tools to achieve the overall goal of preserving Houston's rural countryside.

Furthermore, Kent County has now adopted a county-wide Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, and has developed guidelines for municipalities to use to make TDR a part of their Zoning Ordinances. TDR allows the development rights to a property to be transferred to another property within the framework of a comprehensive plan. In this manner, the owner of farmland bordering upon the Town could receive payment for the development rights to his property and be able to continue owning the property, and using it, as farmland.

It is proposed that the Town's P-Preservation zoning district, the Potential Annexation Area and a local/county Transfer of Development Rights program be combined for the purpose of protecting the character of Houston's surrounding countryside. It is the Town's intention to prepare a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance and to revise and update the P District regulations as part of this project.

Within the Potential Annexation Area, the Future Land Use Plan shows the properties along the east, south and west edges of the Town as Agricultural/Natural Resources. Lands between Route 14 and the northern Town boundary are shown as a mixture of Agricultural/Natural Resources and Residential, depending on location, access and property characteristics.

As part of the approach proposed for the Potential Annexation Area, eligible properties would also be identified as "Preservation" or "Sending Areas" for the purpose of the transfer of development rights. It should be emphasized that all aspects of this proposed approach are voluntary.

The use of the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program, in which farmlands are voluntarily enrolled in agricultural land preservation districts for up to ten years, and become eligible for the sale of development rights to the state, would also be encouraged in the Potential Annexation Area.

The County has recently established development impact fees for use in helping to finance public schools. The Town may also find it wise to adopt Development impact Fees in the future.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The implementation of the Plan is divided into three phases as follows:

A. Immediate and Short Term Actions (within 18 months)

- Adopt the Comprehensive Plan and request its certification by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination.

- Work cooperatively with Kent County on aspects of the new Kent County Comprehensive Plan that affect the Town of Houston and its Study Area, including the County's TDR and zoning revisions program.

- Develop a new Town of Houston Land Conservation and Development Ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and replace the town's existing Zoning Ordinance.

- Develop Design Guidelines as part of the Land Conservation and Development Ordinance that reflect Houston's unique character.

- Establish a Town of Houston Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.

- Develop the Town's capacity to administer the new land use regulations, especially in the areas of zoning and subdivision regulation compliance. It is recommended that the Town continue to rely on the Kent County Department of Planning and Permits for Building Code matters, but assume greater responsibility in the areas of Zoning, Subdivision and Property Maintenance. This can be done by hiring a part-time Town of Houston Code Enforcement Officer.

- As part of the adoption of new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance, the Town Council should adopt a set of new planning, zoning, subdivision and annexation application and review fees.

- It should also consider seeking the help of the General Assembly to amend the Town Charter (re-incorporate the Town) in order to add provision for charging development impact or annexation fees to any future developers.

- Work closely with Paris/Trappe Foods as it attempts to redevelop the Libby Cannery site as a state-of-the-art food processing and freezer facility, including possible plans to construct a new rail siding at the site.

- Work closely with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street and streetscape improvements to Houston.

- Work to develop drainage improvements for the Pine Street area, using EPA Best Management Practices.

Intermediate Term Actions (18 months to 5 years)

- Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.

- Conduct a feasibility study to assess the desirability and need for a new water and/or sewer system to serve the Town of Houston, being careful to scale the study to fit the vision of a small rural Town.

- Work with DelDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School and Front Streets, and Deep Grass Lane and Blairs Pond Road.

- Work to obtain CBDG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs.

- Work on actions to bring about the redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties.

- Undertake cooperative planning with Kent County to implement a Beaver Dam Branch extension of the Mispillion River Greenway.

Long Term Actions (More than 5 years)

- Implement the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway, working with the City of Milford and Kent County.

- Construct the new Town Office project as described above.

- Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture on programs to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands within and around the Town of Houston.

- Work with Kent County's Department of Planning services to implement a full Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program

B. Intergovernmental Coordination

The plan is an opportunity for improved cooperation with Kent County, with the state of Delaware, the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation, private foundations and the larger neighboring towns of Milford and Harrington.

C. Review of the Comprehensive Plan

The Town should review and update the Comprehensive Plan on a five-year cycle, in accordance with state law. A review schedule should be followed which accomplishes the review of the Town Comprehensive Plan just prior to the five year review of the Kent County Comprehensive Plan, so that the Town's actions and recommendations may be considered in the County Plan review.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - DEMOGRAPHIC AND BUSINESS DATA

Appendix A: Selected Census-Based Tables Comparing the Town of Houston, Kent County and the State of Delaware

Table A-1. Houston, Kent County & Delaware Historical Population Change 1940-2000

Census Year	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	60 yrs.
Delaware Population	266505	318085	446292	548104	594338	666168	783600	517095
Delaware Av. An. % Change	N/a	1.94	4.03	2.28	0.84	1.21	1.75	1.94
Kent County Population	34441	37870	65651	81892	98219	110993	126697	92,256
Kent County Av. An. % Change	N/a	1.00	7.34	2.47	1.99	1.30	1.41	4.46
Houston Population	296	332	421	317	357	320	430	176
Houston Av. An. % Change	N/a	1.22	2.68	-2.47	1.26	-1.04	3.44	0.75

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Delaware Population Consortium & Nutter Associates.

Over the 60-year period, Houston grew at the moderate-to-slow pace of 0.75% per year; Kent County grew at the rapid rate of 4.4% per year, and Delaware grew at the average annual rate of 1.94 %. The national rate during this period was approximately 1%.

Table A-2. Dwelling Units By Decade, Houston, Kent County & Delaware, 1970-2000

Area	1970	1980	1990	2000
Delaware	180233	207081	289919	343072
Kent County	25242	32737	42106	50481
Houston	120	138	189	166

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Delaware Population Consortium & Nutter Associates.

Over the 30-year period, the number of dwelling units in Delaware grew at an average annual rate of 3%; in Kent County at an average annual rate of 3.3%; and in the Town of Houston at an average annual rate of 1.28%.

Table A-3. Projected Populations and Dwelling Units, Houston & Kent County, 2000-2030

Area/Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	30
Kent County	127,134	133,558	140,036	146,690	153,292	159,785	166,366	39,232
Town of Houston	430	452	474	497	519	540	562	132
Dwelling Units	166	173	180	186	194	202	211	45

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Delaware Population Consortium & Nutter Associates.

Using a 1% average annual growth rate for Houston's population and dwelling units, and assuming an average 2.85 person household size, the Town would grow by 132 persons and 45 additional dwelling units by 2030.

Table A-4 displays the racial compositions of the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1990 and 2000.

Table A-4. Racial Composition, 1990-2000.

Race	**Delaware**		**Kent County**		**Houston**	
	1990	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**
White	80.3%	74.6%	78.7%	73.5%	83.3%	89.3%
Black	16.9%	19.2%	18.6%	20.7%	12.8%	8.4%
Other	2.8%	6.1%	2.8%	5.8%	3.90%	2.3%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000, Summary File 1 and Nutter Associates

During this decade, while the percentages of persons of Hispanic origin grew by more than 100% in both the county and the state, it decreased from 3.9% to2.3% in Houston.

Table A-4 displays the age compositions of the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Year 2000 Census.

Table A-4. Age Composition.

Age	State of Delaware		Kent County		Town of Houston	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<5	51,531	6.6	9,138	7.2	27	6.3
5-9	55,813	7.1	9,703	7.7	36	8.4
10-14	55,274	7.1	10,063	7.9	34	7.9
15-19	55,632	7.1	9,843	7.8	28	6.5
20-24	51,665	6.6	8,610	6.8	15	3.5
25-34	108,840	13.9	17,160	13.5	61	14.2
35-44	127,601	16.3	20,560	16.2	73	17.0
45-54	103,999	13.3	15,805	12.5	68	15.8
55-64	71,519	9.1	11,014	8.7	39	9.1
65-74	56,415	7.2	8,420	6.6	28	6.5
75-84	34,762	4.4	4,844	3.8	17	4.0
85+	10,549	1.3	1,537	1.2	4	0.9

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 1.

The striking difference between the Town of Houston, on the one hand, and Kent County and the State of Delaware on the other, is the smaller percentage of persons aged 20-24 and the larger percentage of persons aged 25-54 in the Town population.

Table A-5 displays the levels of educational attainment of the Year 2000 populations of the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston.

Table A-5. Educational Attainment of population over the age of 25.

Jurisdiction	High School diploma or higher	Bachelor's degree or higher
State of Delaware	82.6%	25.0%
Kent County	79.4%	18.6%
Town of Houston	74.2%	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Although the Town's percentage of high school graduates is roughly equal with that of Kent County, it is significantly lower that the state or national (80.4%) percentages. Houston's percentage of persons who hold bachelor's degrees is greatly lower that the comparable County, State or National (24.4%) percentages.

Table A-6 displays the housing stock composition of the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston as reported in the Year 2000 Census.

Table A-6. Housing Stock Composition.

Housing Type	Houston	Kent County	State of Delaware
Single - family, detached	86.4%	58.4%	55.9%
Single-family, attached	1.0%	8.4%	14.1%
Multi-family	1.0%	14.5%	18.7%
Mobile home or other	13.6%	18.7%	11.3%

Houston's percentage of single-family, detached homes is remarkably higher that comparable County or State percentages. 31.8% of the Town's housing stock was built in the 1980-89 decade, 13.6% was built in the 1960-69 decade and 54.6% was built prior to 1949.

Table A-7 displays income data for the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston as reported in the Year 2000 Census.

Table A-7. Household Income & Poverty Level Data.

	Town of Houston	Kent County	State of Delaware
Median Household Income	$46,196	$40,950	$47,381
% Of individuals below poverty level	5.8	10.7	9.2
% Of seniors below poverty level	14.3	8.8	7.9

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Median Household Income in the Town is very close to the statewide figure, and higher than the Kent County figure. The % of individuals below poverty level is smaller in the Town than in the County or State but the % of seniors below the poverty level is greater.

Table A-8 displays labor force data for the State of Delaware, Kent County, and the Town of Houston as reported in the Year 2000 Census.

Table A-8 Labor Force Characteristics of Population 16 years or over.

	Town of Houston		Kent County		State of Delaware	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 Years and Over	312	100.0	95,895	100.0	610,289	100.0
In Labor Force	193	61.9	64,387	67.1	401,152	65.7
Not in Labor Force	119	38.1	31,508	32.9	209,137	34.3
In Armed Forces	4	1.3	3,079	3.2	3,792	0.6
Unemployed	7	2.2	3,413	3.6	20,549	3.4

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 3.

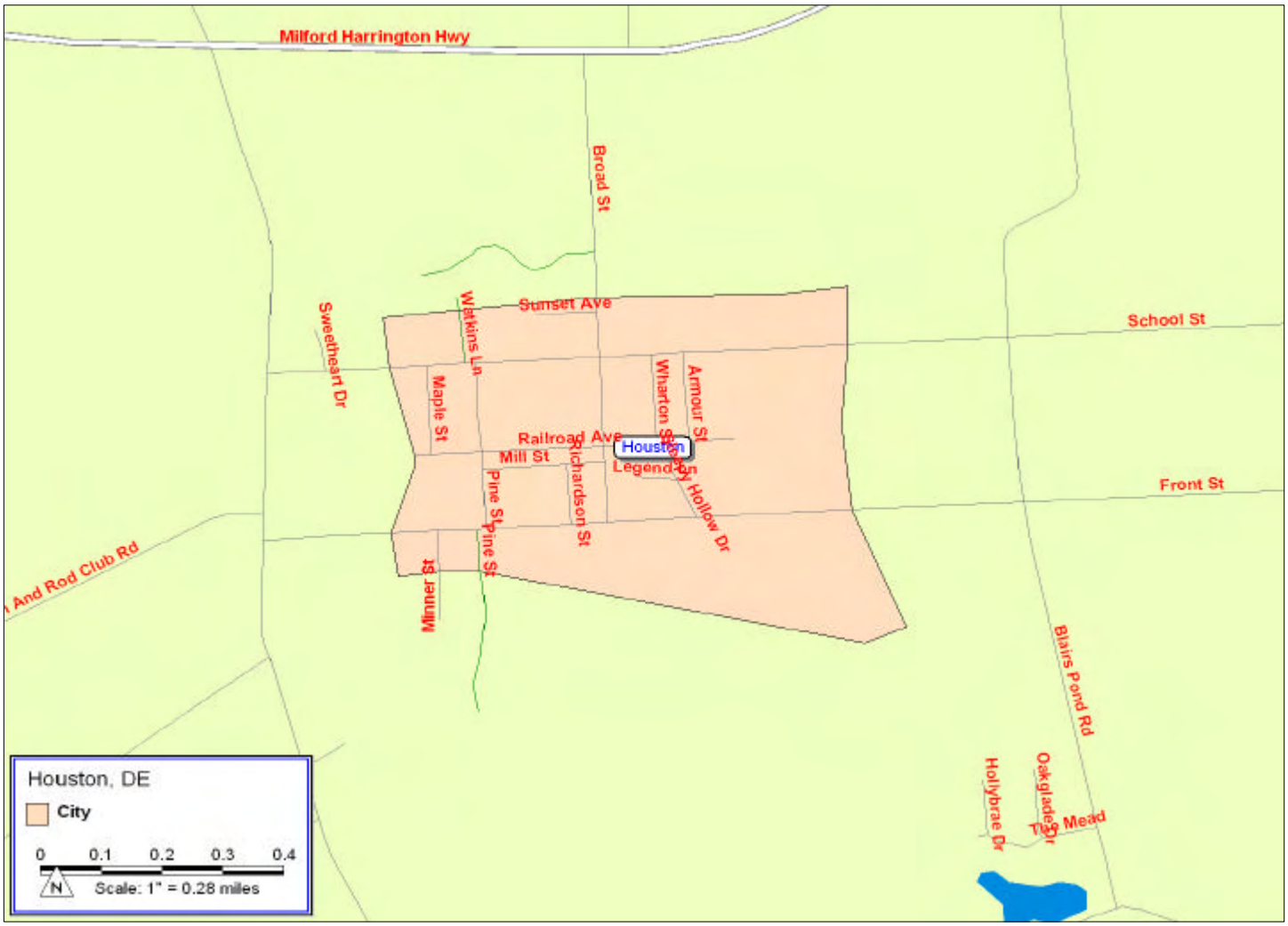
The labor force figures for Town, County and State are generally comparable, although the percent reported as not being in the labor force is higher.

MapFacts Key Demographic Profile: 2000

Scan/US, Inc.

Houston, DE

Place 10-36760 Houston



Total Population	430		**Households**	151	
White	357	83.0%	Families	120	79.5%
Black	62	14.4%	With Kids	62	41.1%
American Indian/Alaskan	1	0.2%	Non-family	31	20.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.2%			
Other Race	3	0.7%	**Average Household Size**	2.8	
Hispanic Origin	9	2.1%	Average Family Size	3.1	
			Average Non-family Size	2.1	
Population By Age					
< 18 Years	115	26.7%	**Average Household Income**	$49,306	
18 - 64 Years	266	61.9%	**Median Household Income**	$46,196	
65+ Years	48	11.2%			
Median Age	37.0		**Total Housing Units**	160	
			Occupied	151	94.4%
Population In Households	430		Owner-Occupied	131	86.8%
In Families	366	85.1%	Renter-Occupied	20	13.2%
In Non-families	64	14.9%			
			Average Home Value	$116,141	
Population, 16+ In Labor Force	206		**Median Home Value**	$106,932	
Employed	203	98.5%			
White Collar	104	51.2%	**Average Contract Rent**	$414	
Blue Collar	99	48.8%	**Median Contract Rent**	$461	
Group Quarters	0	0.0%	**Diversity Index**	29	

Key Demographic Profile: 1990/2000

Scan/US, Inc.

Houston, DE

Place 10-36760 Houston

	1990 Census		2000 Census		1990 - 2000 Change	
Population	320		430		110	34.4%
Group Quarters	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	#DIV/0!
Population By Race						
White	274	85.6%	357	83.0%	83	30.3%
Black	41	12.8%	62	14.4%	21	51.2%
American Indian/Alaskan	1	0.3%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.3%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Other Race	2	0.6%	3	0.7%	1	50.0%
Hispanic Origin	6	1.9%	9	2.1%	3	50.0%
Diversity Index	26		29		3	11.5%
Population By Age						
< 18 Years	84	26.3%	115	26.7%	31	36.9%
18 - 64 Years	199	62.2%	266	61.9%	67	33.7%
65+ Years	36	11.3%	48	11.2%	12	33.3%
Median Age	33.7		37.0		3.3	9.7%
Population In Households	320		430		110	34.4%
In Families	282	88.1%	366	85.1%	84	29.8%
In Non-families	38	11.9%	64	14.9%	26	68.4%
Households	111		151		40	36.0%
Families	88	79.3%	120	79.5%	32	36.4%
With Kids	44	50.0%	62	51.7%	18	40.9%
Non-family	23	20.7%	31	20.5%	8	34.8%
Average Household Size	2.9		2.8		0.0	-1.2%
Average Family Size	3.2		3.1		-0.2	-4.8%
Average Non-family Size	1.7		2.1		0.4	25.0%
Population, 16+ In Labor Force	161		206		45	28.0%
Employed	149	92.5%	203	98.5%	54	36.2%
White Collar	78	52.3%	104	51.2%	26	33.3%
Blue Collar	71	47.7%	99	48.8%	28	39.4%
Average Household Income	$36,260		$49,306		$13,046	36.0%
Median Household Income	$30,650		$46,196		$15,546	50.7%
Total Housing Units	118		160		42	35.6%
Occupied	111	94.1%	151	94.4%	40	36.0%
Owner-Occupied	94	84.7%	131	86.8%	37	39.4%
Renter-Occupied	17	15.3%	20	13.2%	3	17.6%
Average Home Value	$84,738		$116,141		$31,403	37.1%
Median Home Value	$73,488		$106,932		$33,444	45.5%
Average Contract Rent	$308		$414		$106	34.4%
Median Contract Rent	$298		$461		$163	54.7%

Source: 1990, 2000 Census

Detailed Demographic Trends: 2000/2006/2011

Houston, DE

Place 10-36760 Houston

	2000 Census		2006 Estimates		2011 Projections	
Population	430		520		594	
In Households	430	100.0%	520	100.0%	594	100.0%
In Families	366	85.1%	447	86.0%	514	86.5%
In Non-families	64	14.9%	73	14.0%	80	13.5%
Population By Race						
White	357	83.0%	430	82.7%	490	82.5%
Black	63	14.7%	80	15.4%	96	16.2%
American Indian	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Asian	1	0.2%	3	0.6%	4	0.7%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other/Multi-Racial	8	1.9%	6	1.2%	4	0.7%
Hispanic Population	9	2.1%	14	2.7%	17	2.9%
Households	151		170		185	
Average HH Size	2.8		3.1		3.2	
Family Households	120	79.5%	132	77.6%	140	75.7%
With Children	62	41.1%	69	40.6%	73	39.5%
Average Family Size	3.1		3.4		3.7	
Non-Family Households	31	20.5%	38	22.4%	45	24.3%
With Children	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Average Non-family Size	2.1		1.9		1.8	
Households By Count Of Persons						
1	25	16.6%	26	15.3%	28	15.1%
2	56	37.1%	54	31.8%	57	30.8%
3 - 4	53	35.1%	67	39.4%	74	40.0%
5+	17	11.3%	23	13.5%	26	14.1%
Households By Count Of Vehicles						
0	2	1.3%	2	1.2%	2	1.1%
1	36	23.8%	40	23.5%	43	23.2%
2	75	49.7%	81	47.6%	87	47.0%
3+	38	25.2%	47	27.6%	53	28.6%
Total Vehicles Available	311		365		406	
Average Vehicles/Household	2.1		2.1		2.2	
Total Housing Units	160		196		226	
Vacant	9	5.6%	26	13.3%	41	18.1%
Owned	131	81.9%	148	75.5%	162	71.7%
Rented	20	12.5%	22	11.2%	23	10.2%

Municipal Development Strategy Checklist

Towns & Cities with a population of less than 2000 persons
Town / City:
Plan Dated:
Reviewed by:

= State Requirement under Title 22, Section 702 Del C.
☯ = Strongly Suggested
★ = Encouraged but Optional

Public Participation

Summary: All plans should have some provision for input by the public. Public input is most useful early in the planning process, and should help form the plan's goals and recommendations. The development of a community vision for the future is a useful exercise.

❑ **Public Participation Summary and Results.** The plan should include a section which describes the public participation process and summarizes the results. If developed, the vision statement could be contained in this section. ☯

Population Data and Analysis

Summary: The following population data is important to characterize the residents of the town or city, and will inform land development plan recommendations, especially in regards to housing and social services.

❑ **Past Population Trends.** Historic population data from past Census reports should be reported, and trends analyzed. It should be sufficient to go back 30 or 40 years (in 10 year increments), although older data may be informative in certain cases. ☯

❑ **Demographics.** Demographic information about the population should be reported and analyzed. In the larger cities the Delaware Population Consortium can be a good resource. For smaller towns, the most recent Census summary files can be used. ☯

❑ **Position on Population Growth.** The Municipal Development Strategy must contain *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* detailing the jurisdictions position on population growth. If possible, some type of population projection should be used. Also, it may be beneficial to complete a build-out scenario, particularly for jurisdictions with significant amounts of vacant land within the current boundaries.

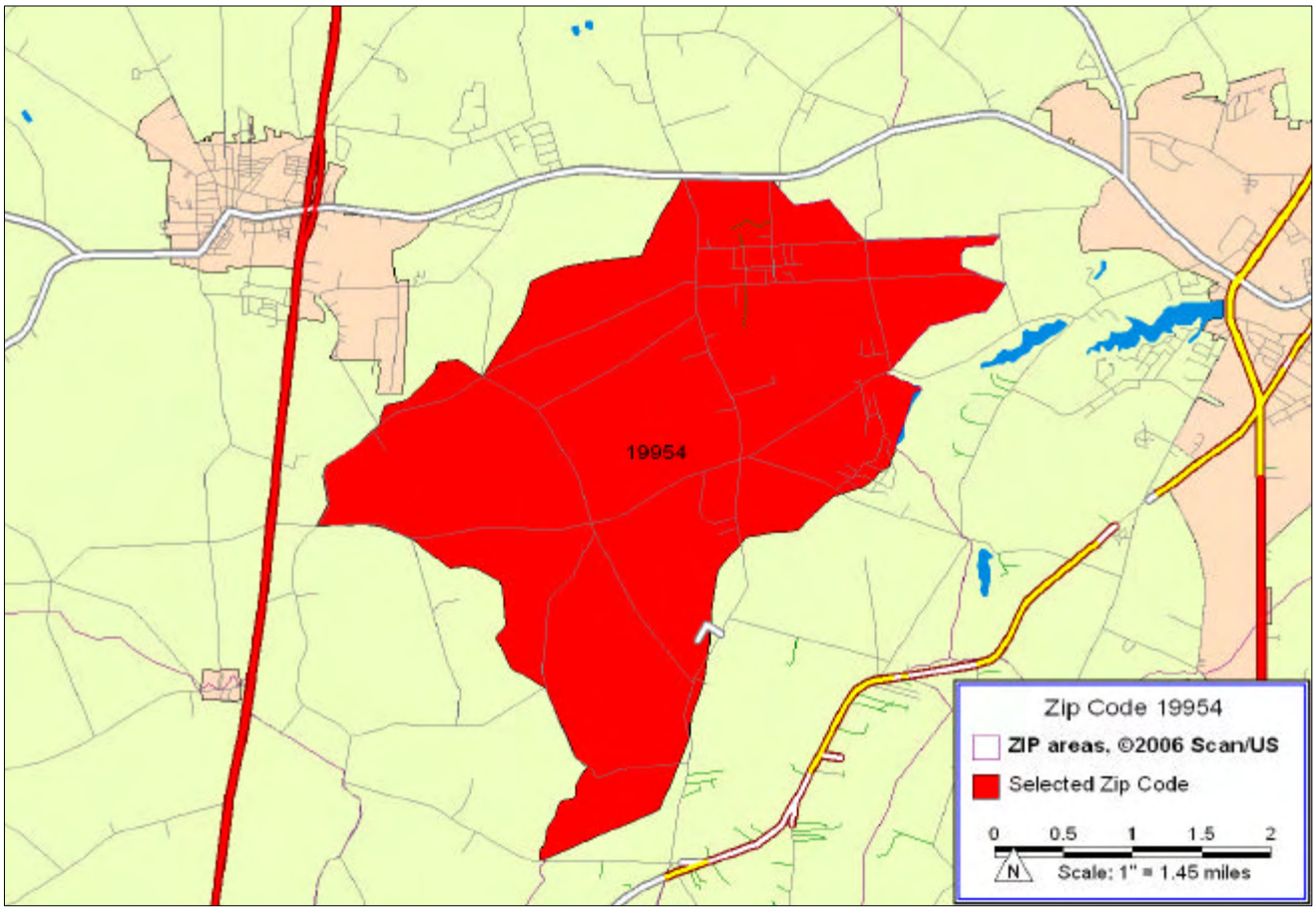
Housing

Summary: A description of the housing styles, housing stock, and conditions should serve as a starting point for evaluating the residential uses in the town. This information, in concert with the population and employment projections, will provide the basis for land use plan recommendations. Information about low to moderate income housing needs will allow for the provision of affordable housing.

❑ **Housing Stock Inventory.** An inventory of the housing stock in the community, including the number and type of dwelling units. An inventory of the affordable housing resources should also be included. ☯

❑ **Housing Pipeline.** How many housing units are approved and pending construction. ☯

MapFacts© Demographic Summary: 2006 **Scan/US, Inc.**
ZIP 19954 **09/25/2006**
ZIP 19954- Houston



Population		**1,906**	
	In Group Quarters	0	0.0%
Race:	White	1,552	81.4%
	Black	311	16.3%
	American Indian	3	0.2%
	Asian	17	0.9%
	Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
	Other/Multi-Racial	23	1.2%
Hispanic Origin		48	2.5%
Sex:	Male	935	49.1%
	Female	971	50.9%
Age:	< 10 Years	262	13.7%
	10 - 14 Years	124	6.5%
	15 - 19 Years	125	6.6%
	20 - 24 Years	90	4.7%
	25 - 34 Years	269	14.1%
	35 - 44 Years	285	15.0%
	45 - 54 Years	310	16.3%
	55 - 64 Years	211	11.1%
	65 - 74 Years	132	6.9%
	75 - 84 Years	78	4.1%
	85+ Years	20	1.0%
Median Age		37.9	

Households	**651**	
Average Household Size	2.9	
Family Households	496	76.2%
Average Family Size	3.4	
Non-Family Households	155	23.8%
Average Non-Fam HH Size	1.4	
Households by Income		
$0 - $24,999	138	21.2%
$25,000 - $49,999	195	30.0%
$50,000 - $74,999	172	26.4%
$75,000 - $99,999	77	11.8%
$100,000 +	69	10.6%
Average HH Income	$51,854	
Median HH Income	$48,936	
Per Capita Income	$17,711	
Vehicles Available	1,344	
Average Vehicles/HH	2.1	
Total Housing Units	747	
Owner Occupied	565	75.6%
Renter Occupied	86	11.5%
Vacant	96	12.9%

Source: 2006 Scan/US Estimates **09/25/2006**

Key Demographic Profile: 1990/2000

Scan/US, Inc.

ZIP 19954

ZIP 19954- Houston

	1990 Census		2000 Census		1990 - 2000 Change	
Population	1,341		1,603		262	19.5%
Group Quarters	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	#DIV/0!
Population By Race						
White	1,111	82.8%	1,310	81.7%	199	17.9%
Black	213	15.9%	247	15.4%	34	16.0%
American Indian/Alaskan	4	0.3%	5	0.3%	1	25.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	0.4%	10	0.6%	4	66.7%
Other Race	7	0.5%	7	0.4%	0	0.0%
Hispanic Origin	16	1.2%	33	2.1%	17	106.3%
Diversity Index	29		30		1	3.4%
Population By Age						
< 18 Years	372	27.7%	435	27.1%	63	16.9%
18 - 64 Years	833	62.1%	987	61.6%	154	18.5%
65+ Years	136	10.1%	182	11.4%	46	33.8%
Median Age	33.5		36.4		2.9	8.6%
Population In Households	1,341		1,603		262	19.5%
In Families	1,237	92.2%	1,410	88.0%	173	14.0%
In Non-families	104	7.8%	193	12.0%	89	85.6%
Households	475		587		112	23.6%
Families	380	80.0%	460	78.4%	80	21.1%
With Kids	206	54.2%	240	52.2%	34	16.5%
Non-family	95	20.0%	127	21.6%	32	33.7%
Average Household Size	2.8		2.7		-0.1	-3.3%
Average Family Size	3.3		3.1		-0.2	-5.8%
Average Non-family Size	1.1		1.5		0.4	38.8%
Population, 16+ In Labor Force	678		792		114	16.8%
Employed	635	93.7%	777	98.1%	142	22.4%
White Collar	287	45.2%	376	48.4%	89	31.0%
Blue Collar	347	54.6%	401	51.6%	54	15.6%
Average Household Income	$33,602		$47,538		$13,936	41.5%
Median Household Income	$28,195		$43,783		$15,588	55.3%
Total Housing Units	505		618		113	22.4%
Occupied	475	94.1%	587	95.0%	112	23.6%
Owner-Occupied	406	85.5%	508	86.5%	102	25.1%
Renter-Occupied	69	14.5%	79	13.5%	10	14.5%
Average Home Value	$80,138		$116,955		$36,817	45.9%
Median Home Value	$71,462		$100,803		$29,341	41.1%
Average Contract Rent	$292		$400		$108	37.0%
Median Contract Rent	$288		$428		$140	48.6%

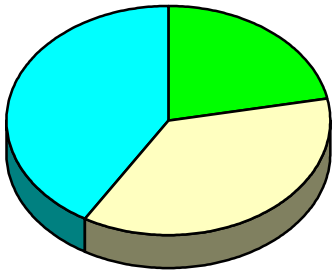
Source: 1990, 2000 Census

Employment By Occupation: 2006
ZIP 19954
ZIP 19954- Houston

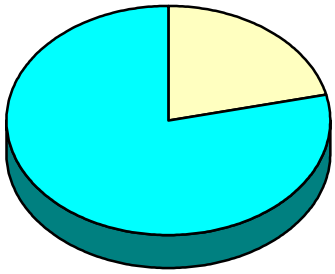
Scan/US, Inc.
09/25/2006

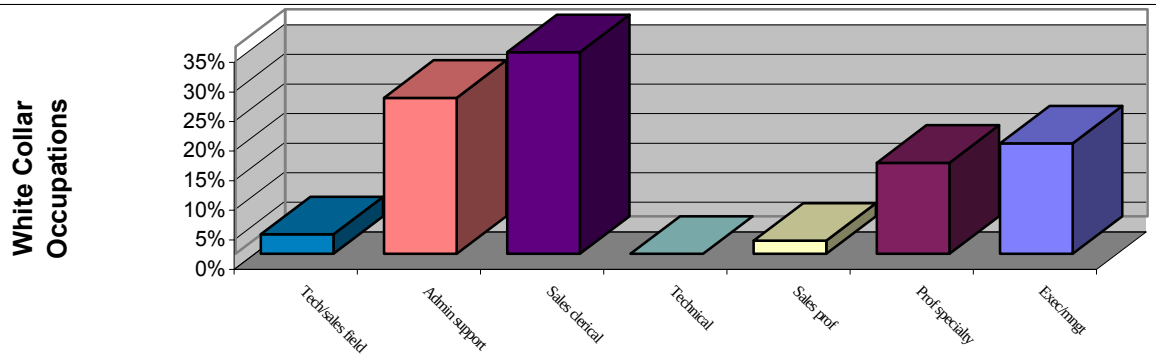
Total Businesses	**40**	
Total Employees	**164**	
Average Employees Per Firm	**4.1**	
White Collar Occupations	**91**	**55.5%**
Executive/Management	17	18.7%
Professional Specialty	14	15.4%
Technical	2	2.2%
Sales Professional	0	0.0%
Sales Clerical	31	34.1%
Administrative Support	24	26.4%
Technical/Sales Field	3	3.3%
Blue Collar Occupations	**73**	**44.5%**
Private Household Workers	0	0.0%
Protective Services	2	2.7%
Service, Other Site	18	24.7%
Service, Other Field	0	0.0%
Agriculture	6	8.2%
Crafts/Repair: Site	21	28.8%
Construc/Repair/Mining: Field	11	15.1%
Machine Operators	1	1.4%
Transportation	9	12.3%
Laborers	5	6.8%

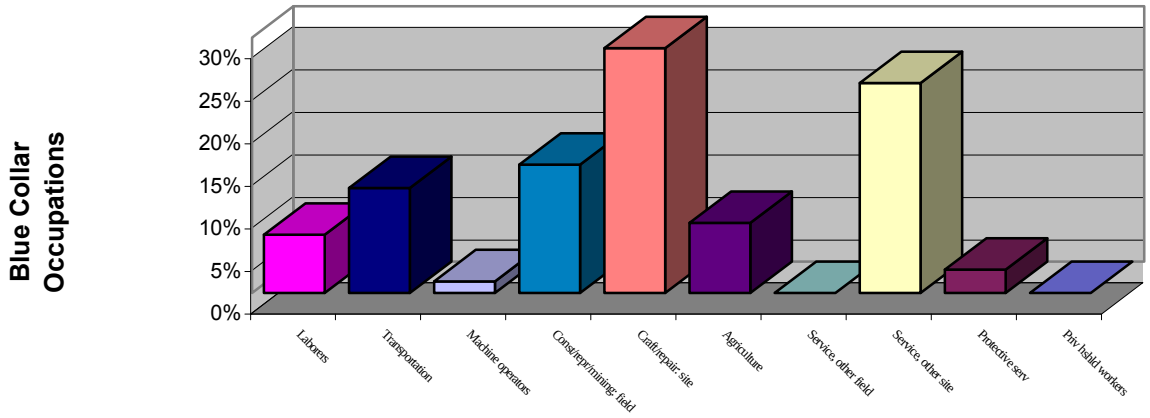
Site-Based Employment	**150**	
Exec/Mngt/Prof	33	22.0%
Tech/Sales/Admin	55	36.7%
Blue Collar	62	41.3%



Field-Based Employment	**14**	
Tech/Sales/Admin	3	21.4%
Blue Collar	11	78.6%







ZIP 19954- Houston

	2000 Census		2006 Estimates		2011 Projections	
Population	1,603		1,906		2,153	
In Households	1,603	100.0%	1,906	100.0%	2,153	100.0%
In Families	1,410	88.0%	1,691	88.7%	1,925	89.4%
In Non-families	193	12.0%	215	11.3%	228	10.6%
Population By Race						
White	1,310	81.7%	1,552	81.4%	1,748	81.2%
Black	247	15.4%	311	16.3%	366	17.0%
American Indian	5	0.3%	3	0.2%	2	0.1%
Asian	10	0.6%	17	0.9%	25	1.2%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other/Multi-Racial	31	1.9%	23	1.2%	12	0.6%
Hispanic Population	33	2.1%	48	2.5%	60	2.8%
Households	587		651		699	
Average HH Size	2.7		2.9		3.1	
Family Households	460	78.4%	496	76.2%	521	74.5%
With Children	237	40.4%	259	39.8%	274	39.2%
Average Family Size	3.1		3.4		3.7	
Non-Family Households	127	21.6%	155	23.8%	178	25.5%
With Children	3	0.5%	3	0.5%	4	0.6%
Average Non-family Size	1.5		1.4		1.3	
Households By Count Of Persons						
1	100	17.0%	101	15.5%	107	15.3%
2	212	36.1%	204	31.3%	209	29.9%
3 - 4	209	35.6%	260	39.9%	286	40.9%
5+	66	11.2%	86	13.2%	97	13.9%
Households By Count Of Vehicles						
0	25	4.3%	25	3.8%	27	3.9%
1	154	26.2%	170	26.1%	180	25.8%
2	270	46.0%	291	44.7%	309	44.2%
3+	138	23.5%	165	25.3%	183	26.2%
Total Vehicles Available	1,168		1,344		1,480	
Average Vehicles/Household	2.0		2.1		2.1	
Total Housing Units	618		747		850	
Vacant	31	5.0%	96	12.9%	151	17.8%
Owned	508	82.2%	565	75.6%	608	71.5%
Rented	79	12.8%	86	11.5%	91	10.7%

APPENDIX B - MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CHECKLIST

❑ **Housing Needs Analysis.** How many housing units, of which type, will be required to accommodate the existing and future population? Be sure to include affordable housing needs in the analysis. ★

❑ **Position on Housing Growth.** The Municipal Development Strategy must contain *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which relate the jurisdictions position on housing growth. These elements should be developed in concert with the population analysis, and if possible with any build-out scenario that is discussed.

Expansion of Boundaries and Development of Adjacent Areas

Summary: The section on potential expansion of the town's boundaries should discuss the desired uses for the lands immediately surrounding the town or city, and designate lands which are desirable for annexation by the town. Expansion plans should be coordinated with adequate public facilities for the new area.

❑ **Annexation Plan.** The Annexation Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy and desires for expansion through annexation. Capacity of public facilities and services should be analyzed as a part of this plan. The plan must designate future land uses for all proposed parcels and areas that are designated for annexation by the municipality. This element is required in order to comply with the provisions of H.B. 255.

❑ **Development of Adjacent Areas.** The Municipal Development Strategy must consider the potential land uses, current zoning and development potential of adjacent areas within the county and / or in near-by municipalities, and how the development of these areas may impact the community in the future. While the town may not seek to annex these properties, the plan may contain some policies or guidelines for interacting and coordinating with the relevant county and / or municipal government as these lands develop.

Redevelopment Potential

Summary: An analysis of areas in the municipality that need revitalization and redevelopment, and a strategy to accomplish those goals.

❑ **Identification of Redevelopment Areas and Issues.** An inventory of areas within the community in need of revitalization or redevelopment, and a discussion of the issues which have led to their decline. ☯

❑ **Redevelopment Strategy.** A set of *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* to encourage and enable the redevelopment and revitalization of the areas described above.

Community Character

Summary: A community's character is defined by its history, urban form, natural environment, and other features that make the community unique. Plans should identify these elements, and include strategies to preserve or enhance them.

❑ **History of the Town or City.** It is important to note when the community was established and what the historical factors in its growth and development were. Also, what features from the early period of growth are still existing and valued by the community? ☯

❑ **Physical Conditions.** A description of the general layout of the town and the physical condition of major elements in the built environment. ☯

❑ **Significant Natural Features.** Describe the overall topography and geology of the town. Also, note significant natural features present in the jurisdiction. Significant features refer to elements of the natural environment which provide important wildlife habitat, ecological functions, aesthetic or recreational values to the community. Examples of significant natural features include woodlands, wetlands, streams, lakes, rivers, prime agricultural soils, aquifer recharge areas, floodplains or other notable natural features. ☯

❑ **Community Character.** Drawing from the above data and analysis, the Municipal Development Strategy must include relevant *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* to describe what is unique about the community and how the town proposes to preserve and enhance its character, if desired. Historic preservation, the protection of the natural environment, and the enhancement of cultural institutions are some examples of how this might be achieved.

❑ **Environmental Protection Plan.** The Environmental Protection Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy to preserve important natural resources, and prevent development activities which are detrimental to the natural environment. While this is not a required element, it is highly recommended for towns that are located on or near significant environmental features. ☯

Land Use Plan

Summary: The land use plan evaluates existing land use within a municipality, then recommends proposed land use categories for all parcels in the community. The land use plan should be expressed as both text and a map or map series. The Land Use Plan represents a composite of recommendations for the community, and should be derived after an analysis of all relevant data found elsewhere in the plan.

❑ **Existing Land Use.** A survey of the existing land uses in the town or city. Land which is currently vacant and developable should be identified. This element should be expressed as a map, although some text may be included. The existing land use element should provide existing land use information for each parcel as a result of a recent windshield survey or reliable parcel based building information. ☯

❑ **Land Use Plan.** The Land Use Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define the proposed land uses for all areas within the municipality's jurisdiction. Particular attention should be given to the recommended land uses for lands which are vacant and likely to be developed. The Land Use Plan must show the desired future land uses for each parcel in the municipality. This data will form the basis for the required update of the zoning ordinance within 18 months of plan adoption.

Critical Community Development and Infrastructure Issues

Summary: This section involves an evaluation of the community facilities and major infrastructure of a town, primarily its water and wastewater system. Transportation infrastructure should also be considered. The systems should be evaluated for their adequacy and capacity to serve current and future growth. In addition, the municipality should review items and facilities which will improve the community as a whole. These programs may include such things as housing assistance or rehabilitation, replacement of infrastructure, or economic development activities intended to provide enhanced job opportunities. Few small municipalities will be able to accomplish these activities alone, so intergovernmental coordination will be important.

❑ **Review of Community Conditions.** The Municipal Development Strategy should identify any critical community development issues that are present in the town. ☯

❑ **Inventory of Community Infrastructure.** An inventory of the community's water, wastewater, transportation, open spaces, recreational facilities, schools, public buildings and other community infrastructure. For water and sewer systems, treatment methods, capacities, and allocations should be considered. ☯

❑ **Inventory and Analysis of Community Services.** An inventory of the services offered by the municipality, including any services (such as snow removal or trash pick – up) that have land use implications. ☯

❑ **Water and Wastewater Plan.** The Land Use Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define and critical infrastructure issues and describe the future enhancements and expansion of these systems to serve current and future growth areas. The ability of these systems to serve undeveloped areas in the town and any land desirable for annexation should be considered.

❑ **Transportation Plan.** The Transportation Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define any critical transportation issues and strategies and actions to improve the transportation system which serves the town. This plan should be written in close coordination with DelDOT, and include descriptions of applicable programs such as Corridor Preservation.

❑ **Community Development Plan.** The Municipal Development Strategy should include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* detailing a strategy for addressing any critical community development concerns. Coordination with other government and non-profit agencies may be necessary to develop an effective strategy, especially in a small town with limited resources.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Summary: The plan should describe the municipality's relationship with other government jurisdictions and state agencies, and specify strategies for improving those relationships.

❑ **Description of Intergovernmental Relationships.** A description of the municipality's relationships with various other levels of government, such as counties, nearby towns, and the state. Also, it will be desirable to detail the relationships with important state agencies, such as DelDOT and DNREC.

❑ **Intergovernmental Coordination Strategy.** A strategy for coordinating planning actions with other government jurisdictions and agencies, as defined above.

❑ **Analysis and Comparison of Other Relevant Planning Documents.** The municipal development strategy must include an analysis and comparison of the proposed land use and annexation plan with other relevant planning documents. These documents may include but are not limited to the State Strategies for Policies and Spending, the most up to date County (and/or municipal) plans, State Transportation Plans, etc. The analysis must demonstrate that the proposed municipal development strategy is compatible with the other relevant plans, or provide a compelling case for the proposed deviation.

Implementation Strategies

Summary: Plans should be systematically implemented through a series of policies and regulations. The plan should identify how existing regulations support the plan, and suggest new policies and regulations as needed to implement the plan. In some cases, where more research or study is required, additional plans or plan elements may be recommended for completion after plan adoption.

❑ **Evaluation of Current Codes and Ordinances.** Evaluate the municipality's current codes and ordinances to determine whether or not they support the intent and goals of the plan. A listing should be made of codes and ordinances that do not, and these should be scheduled for revisions. ☯

❑ **Zoning Map Revisions.** The zoning map is a key implementation tool which should be consistent with the Land Use Plan. Zoning maps should be revised as needed concurrently or shortly after plan adoption. The zoning map must be revised to comply with the land use plan within 18 months of plan adoption.

❑ **Zoning and Subdivision Code Revisions.** These codes are also critical implementation tools, and should be revised as needed. In some cases, the recommendations of the Land Use Plan will require the addition of new regulations in these codes. ☯

❑ **Implementation Plan.** It may be very helpful to develop an implementation work plan which lists actions and policies that the municipality can take to systematically implement the plan. ☯

❑ **Coordination with Other Government Agencies.** Interactions with other government agencies, such as the county and the state, are often necessary to help municipalities achieve their goals. This section should list the types of coordination foreseen. ☯

❑ **Other State Programs, Policies, and Issues.** The Municipal Development Strategy should take address or otherwise consider relevant state programs, policies and issues that are relevant to the individual municipality based on geographic location, public service arrangements, or other factors. These items may be explored through the intergovernmental coordination process, as well as through direct interaction with the Office of State Planning Coordination and / or the individual State agencies. In some cases it will be necessary to address these items as conditions for certification. These programs, policies, and issues include <u>but are not limited to</u> the following:

❑ The **Total Maximum Daily Loads** program through the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. This program will be relevant to municipalities adjacent to significant watercourses or located in "impaired" watersheds.

❑ The **Corridor Capacity Preservation Program** through the Department of Transportation. This program will be relevant to municipalities near Routes 1, 13, and 113 in Kent and Sussex Counties and Route 52 in New Castle County.

❑ The **Agricultural Preservation** program through the Department of Agriculture. This program will be relevant to municipalities with agricultural preservation areas adjacent to their boundaries, or within their proposed annexation areas. It will also be relevant to municipalities in rural areas where farming is still an active land use near or within their jurisdiction. ☯

❑ The **Wellhead Protection** program through the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. This program is relevant to municipalities with public water systems. Although the regulations will not be enforced until 2007, it is desirable to identify appropriate land uses for wellhead areas as soon as is practical. ☯

Other Comments:

Summary:

APPENDIX C - MAPS

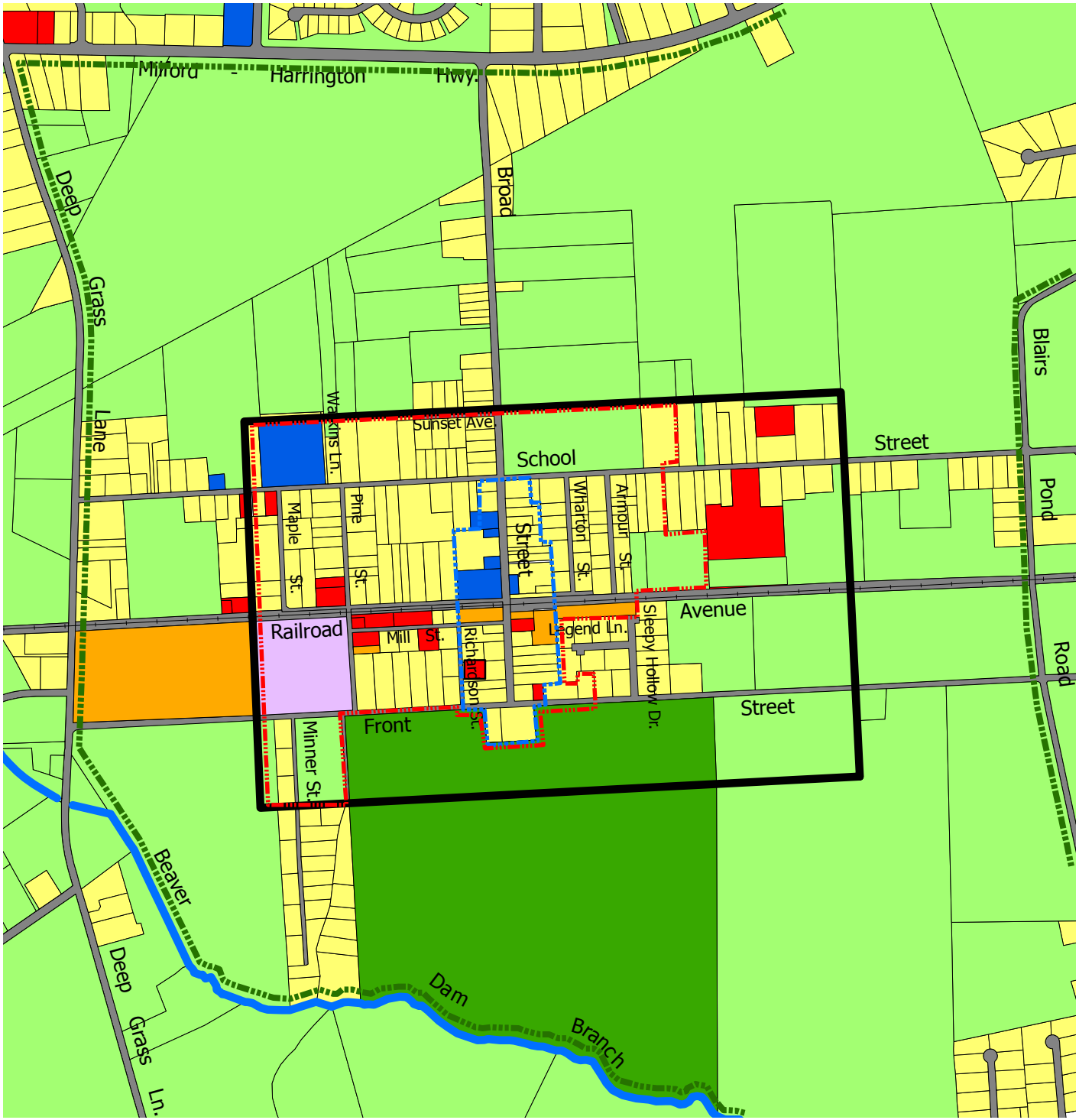
Comprehensive Plan Maps

Map A: Existing Land Use
Map B: Framework for Future Land Use
Map C: Special Areas
Map D: State Strategies
Map E: Transportation
Map F: Hydrology and Land Use Cover
Map G: Aquifer Recharge Areas
Map H: Study Area Soils
Map I: LESA Scores
Map J: Delaware Water Study – Houston Study Area
Map K: Current Town Zoning
Map L: Kent County TDR Transfer Values
Map M: Kent County TDR Receiving Areas
Map N: Future Land Use
Map O: Potential Annexation Area

Town of the Railroad: 2007 Greater Houston Comprehensive Plan

MAP A: Existing Land Use

Town of Houston, Kent County, Delaware



Agricultural / Natural Resources/ Open Space

Commercial

Vacant

Residential

Institutional/Civic/ Governmental

Agricultural Preservation

Industrial

Transporation

Municipal Boundary

Town Center

Historic Area

Potential Annexation

Scale 1:12000

0 500 1,000 2,000

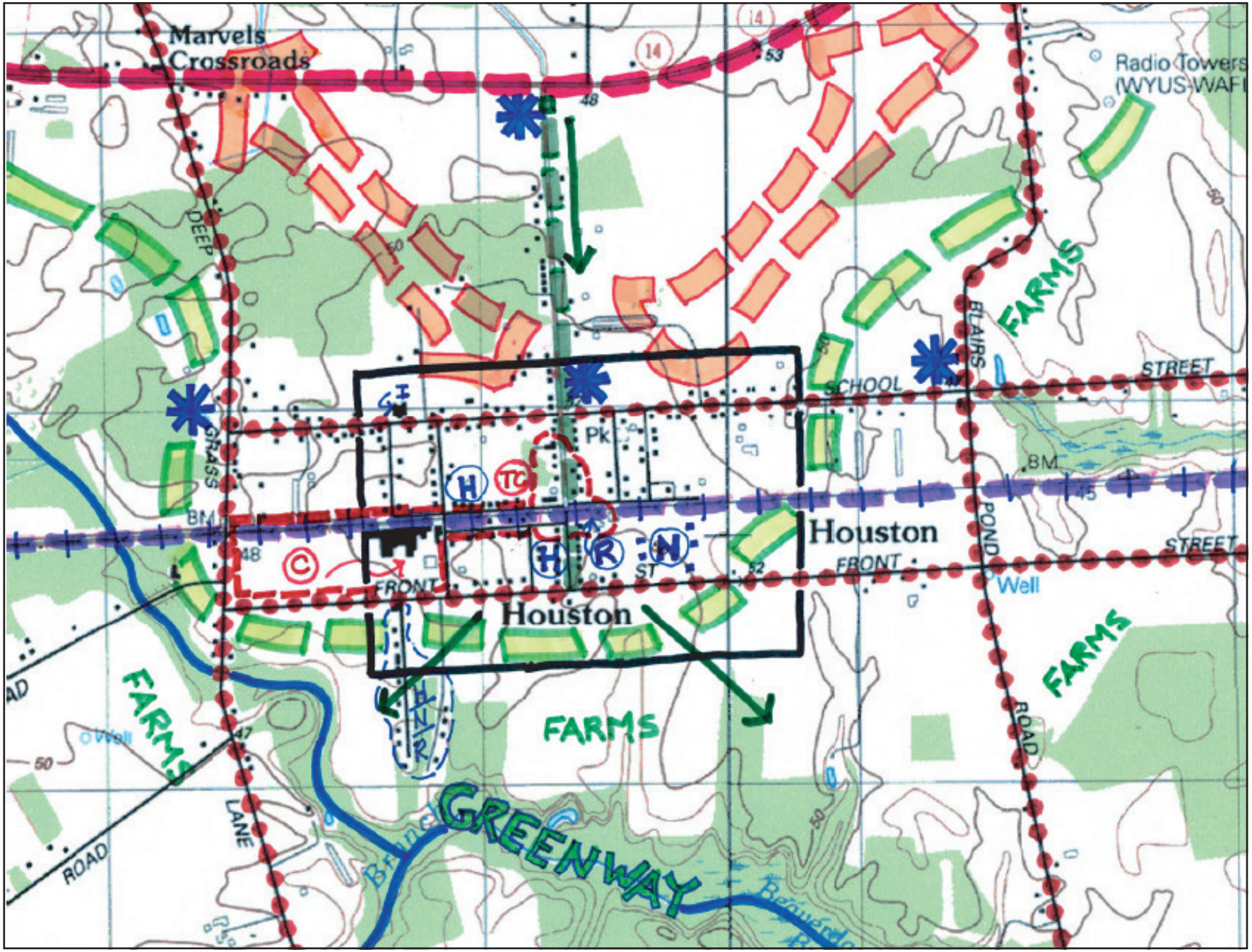
Feet

N

Sources:
USGS 1:24000 Digital Line Graphs, 1998
Kent County Department of Planning Services

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, March 2007

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan



MAP B: Framework for Future Land Use

Town of Houston
Kent County, Delaware

Legend

- Town Boundary
- TC Town Center
- C Commercial Zone
- H Historic Houses
- N New Houses
- R Redevelopment Area
- Special Area
- Gateway
- Development Pressure
- Growth/ Conservation
- Mispillion River/ Beaverdam Branch Greenway
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Boulevard (Broad Street)
- Railroad
- Vista

0 1000 2000

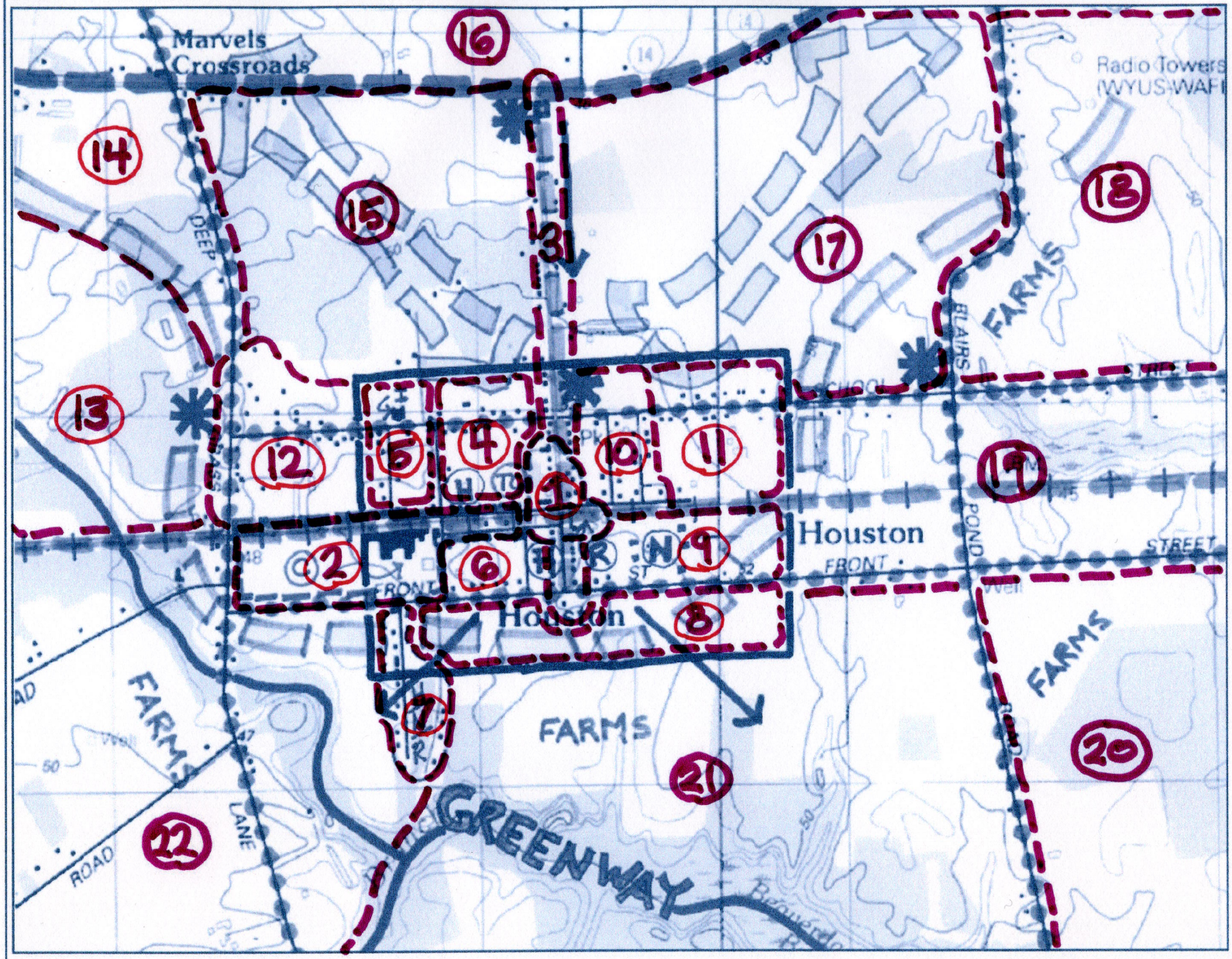
USGS 1:12000 7.5 Minute Harrington Quadrangle, 1998

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, March 2007

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan

MAP C: SPECIAL AREAS

Framework for Future Land Use
Town of Houston
Sussex County, Delaware



Legend

- Town Boundary
- TC Town Center
- C Commercial Zone
- H Historic Houses
- N New Houses
- R Redevelopment Area
- Special Area
- Gateway
- Development Pressure
- Growth/ Conservation
- Mispillion River/ Beaverdam Branch Greenway
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Boulevard (Broad Street)
- Railroad
- Vista

0 1000 2000

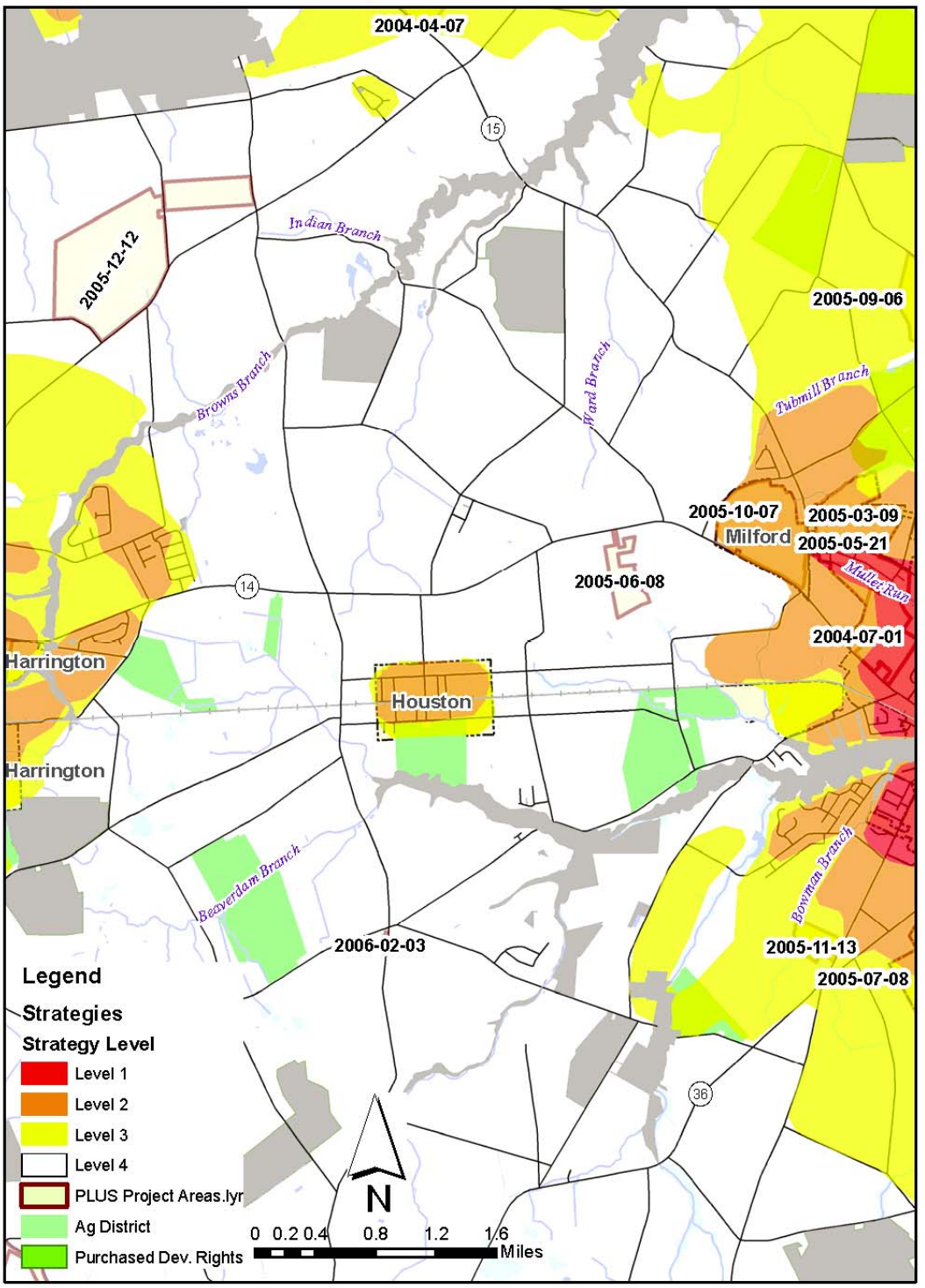
USGS 1:12000 7.5 Minute Harrington Quadrangle, 1998

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, July 2006

DGN: 8/1/06

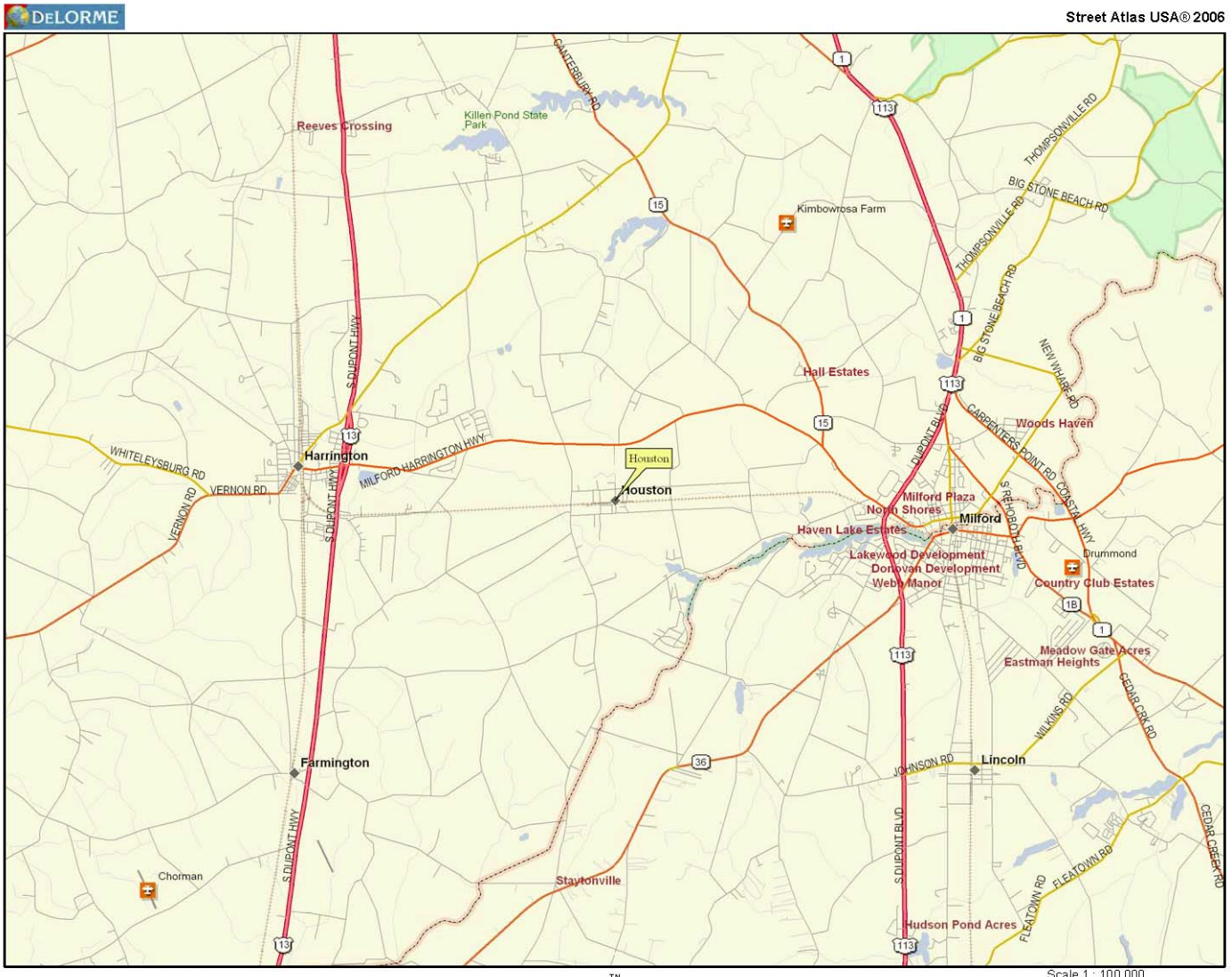
MAP C: Special Areas

Houston, Delaware Area



MAP D: State Strategies

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map D: State Strategies



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www.delorme.com

TN
MN (11.7°W)

MAP E: Transportation

Scale 1 : 100,000
1" = 1.58 mi
Data Zoom 11-0

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map E: Transportation

State of Delaware

Data on map are based on Delaware framework data layers. The Delaware DataMIL is jointly operated by the Delaware Geological Survey (DGS) and Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI)

For metadata information, visit http://www.nsdi.udel.edu

Scale 1:24,000

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Kilometers

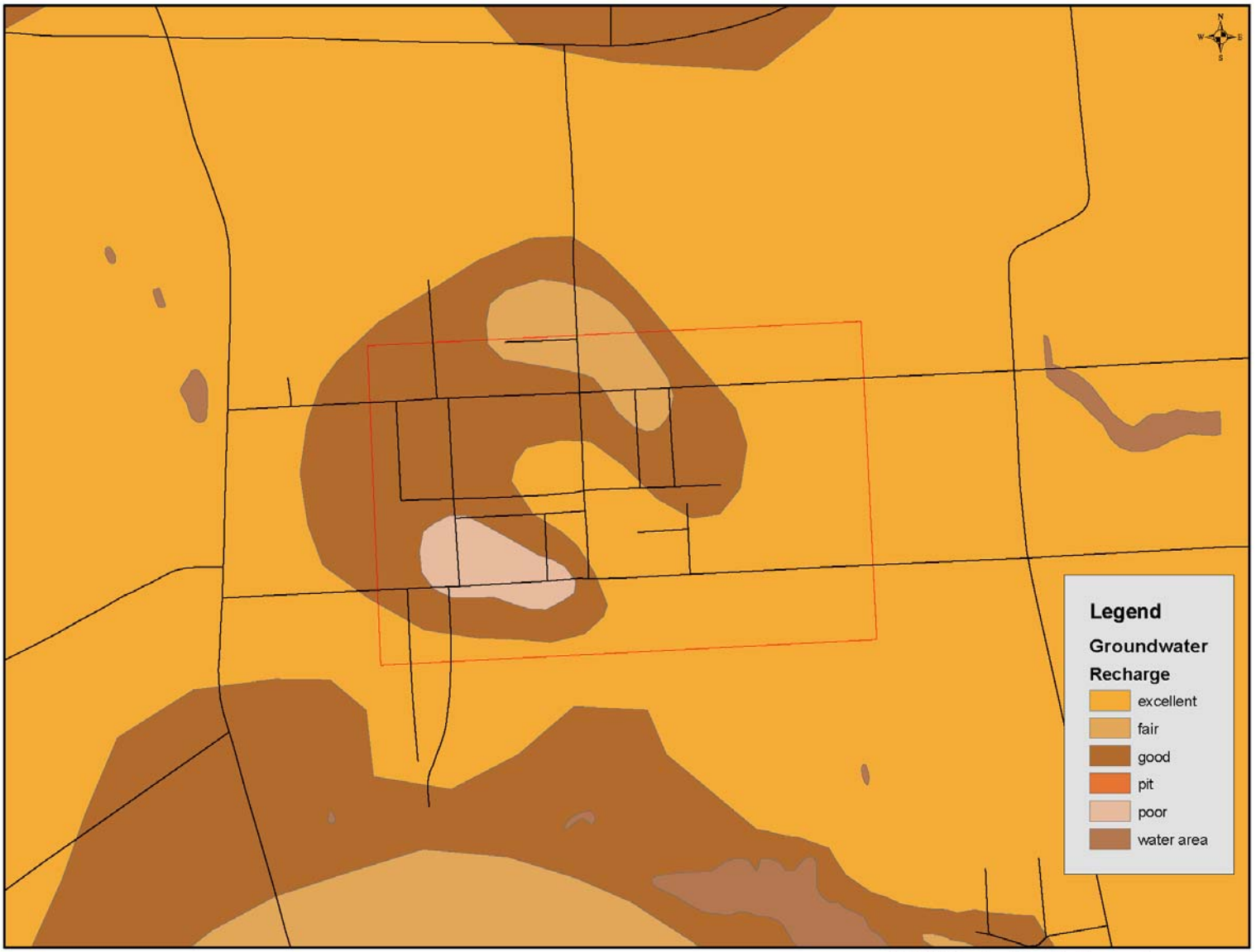
0 800 1600 3200 Feet

Magnetic Declination Approx. 11 mils

DataMIL Mini Map

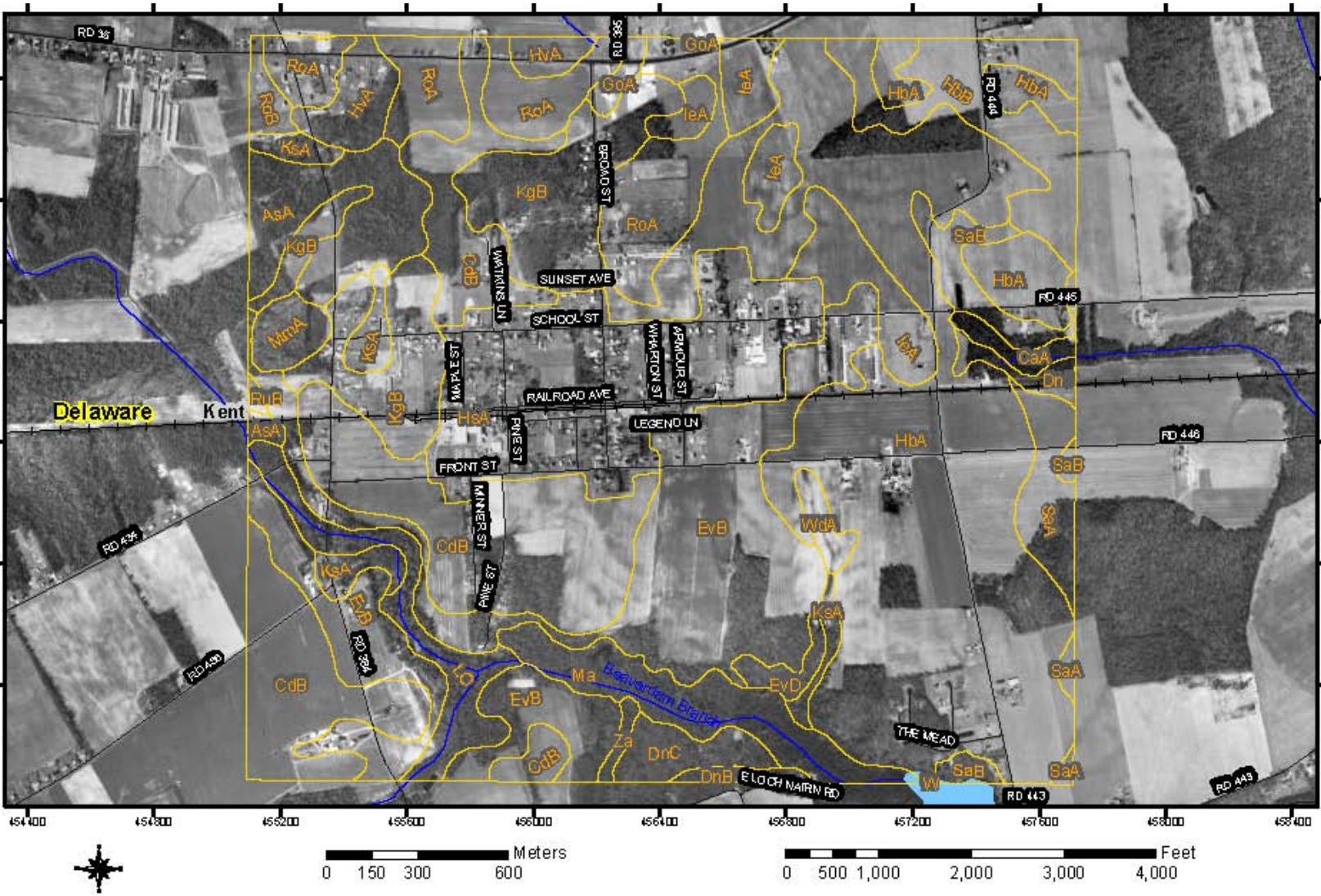
MAP F: Hydrology and Land Use Cover

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map F: Hydrology & Land Use Cover



MAP G: Aquifer Recharge Areas

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map G: Aquifer Recharge Areas



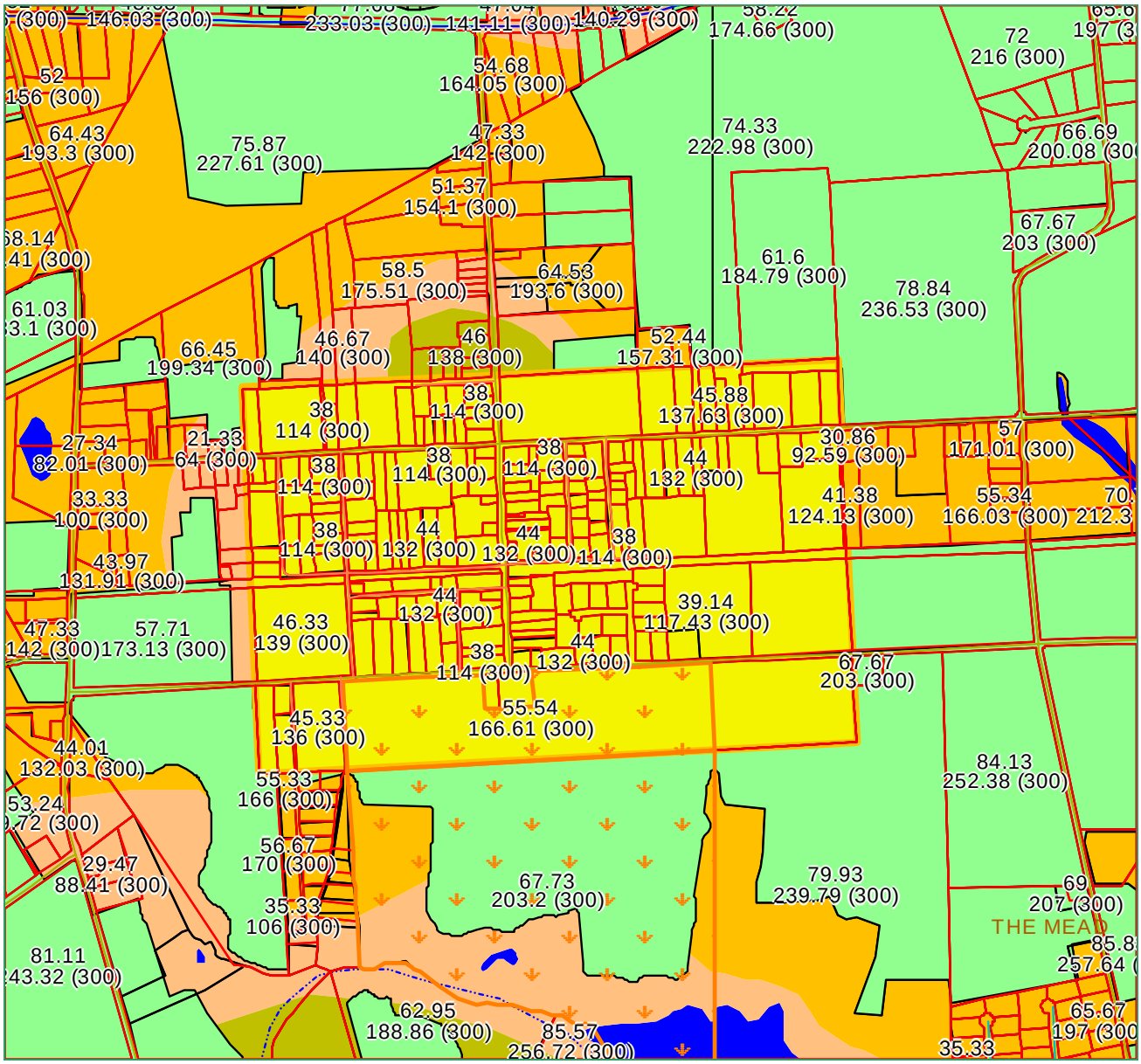
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Web Soil Survey 1.1
National Cooperative Soil Survey

MAP H: Study Area Soils

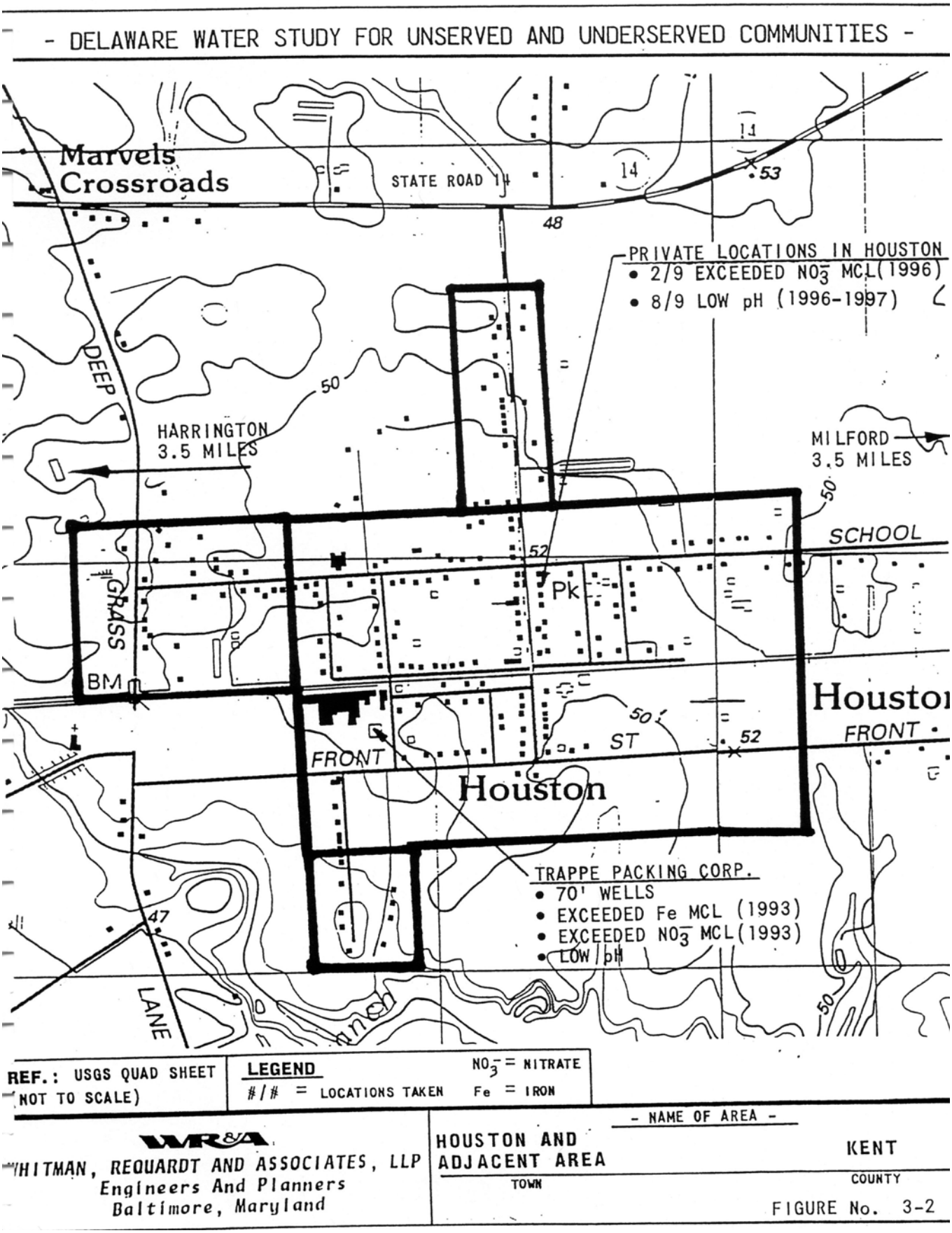
11/27/2006
Page 1 of 4

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map H: Study Area Soils



TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map I: LESA Scores

Source: Delaware Department of Agriculture
LESA Scores are given to the left of the (300) entries for each parcel.



TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map J: Delaware Water Study – Houston Study Area

THE TOWN OF HOUSTON DELAWARE

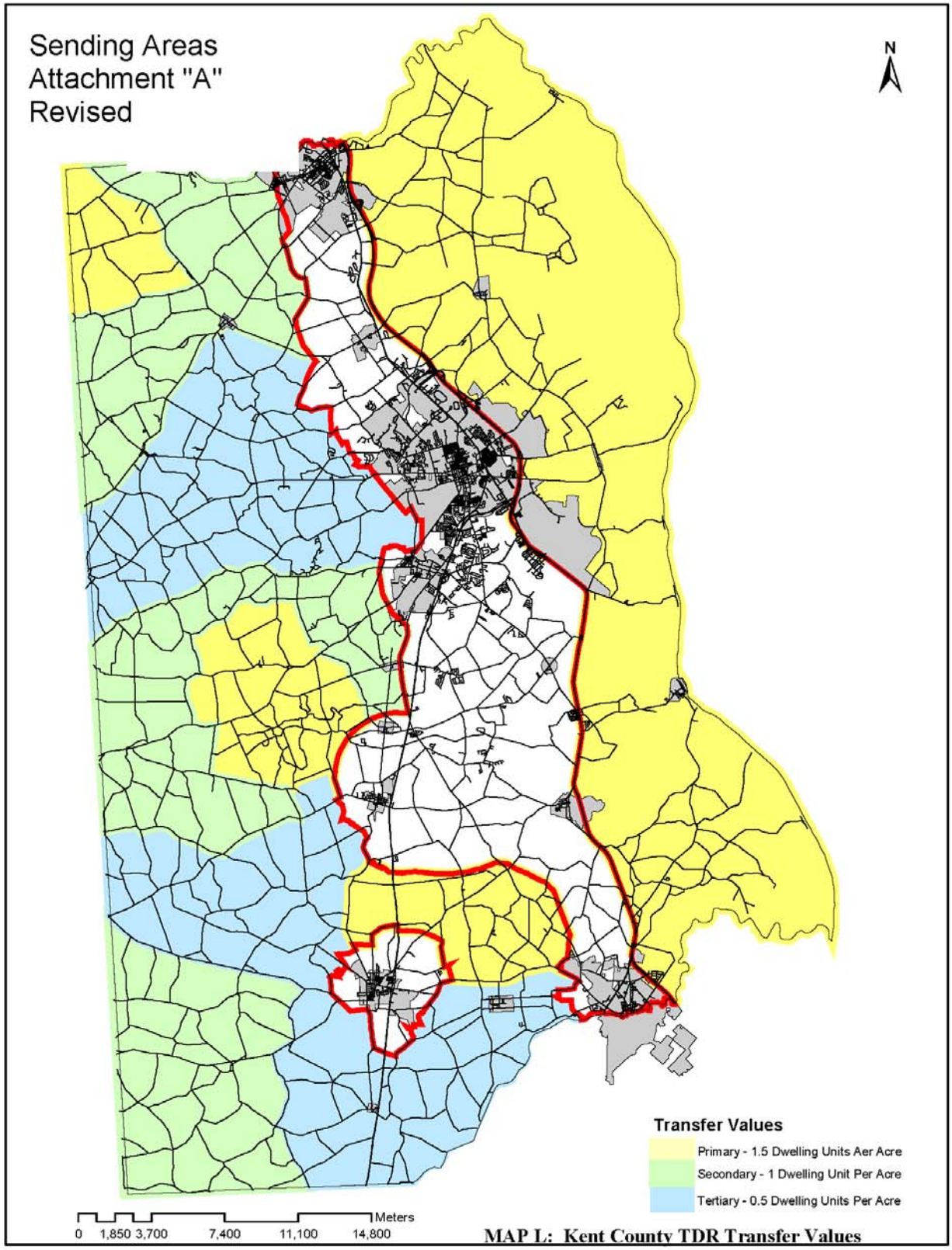
ZONING DISTRICT MAP

SCALE 1" - 600'

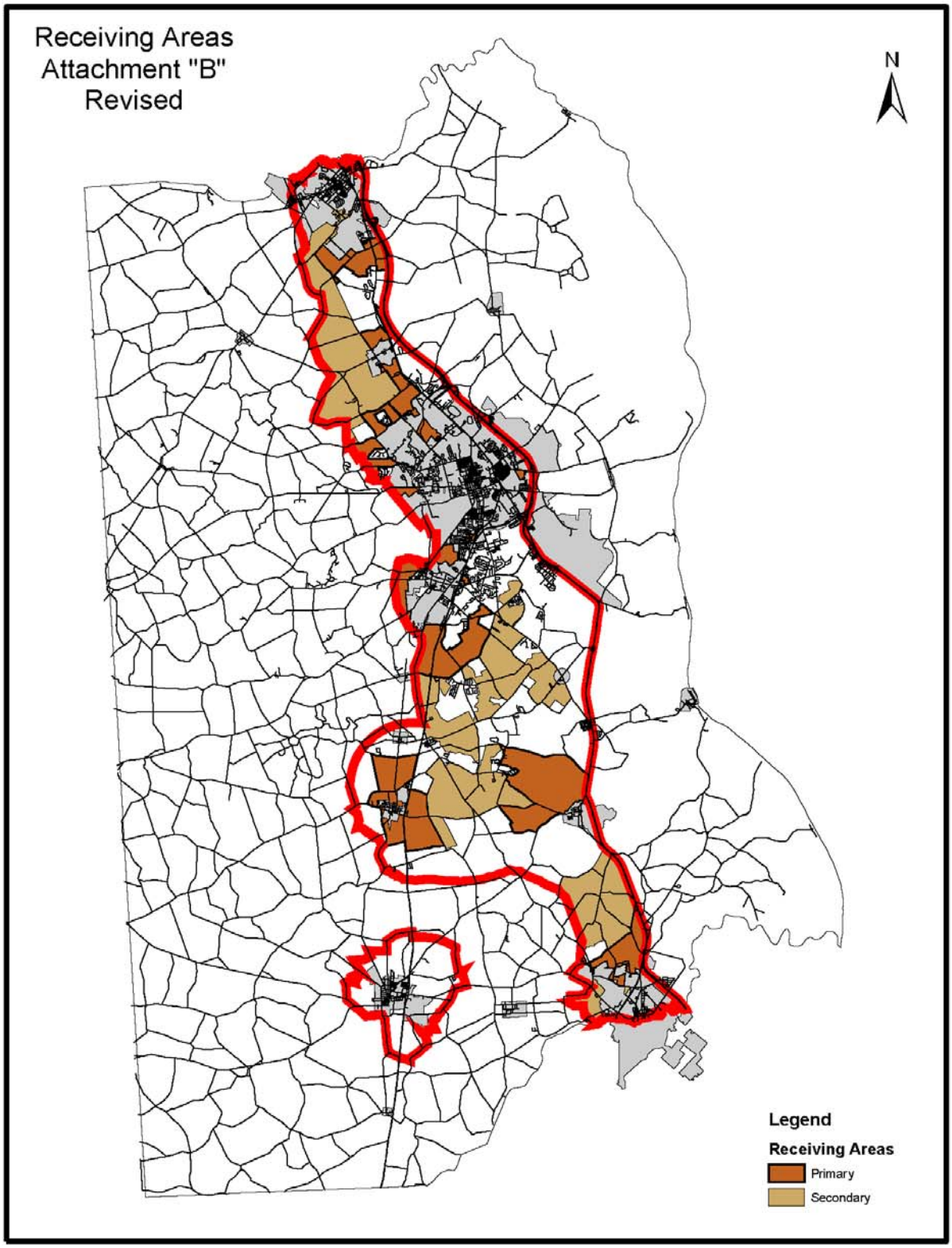
MAP LEGEND

- RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL MODULAR
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map K: Current Town Zoning



TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map L: Kent County TDR Transfer Values



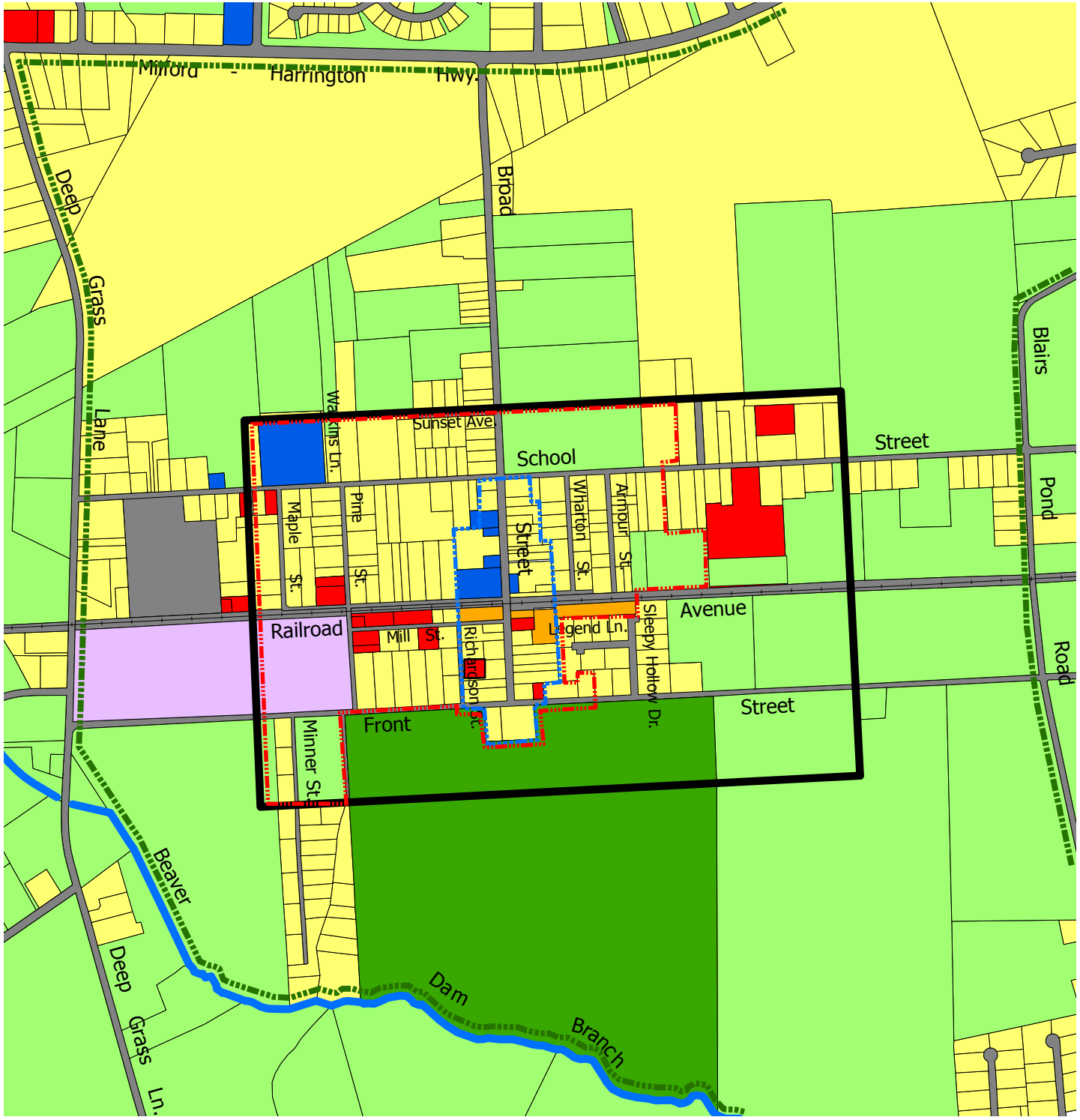
MAP M: Kent County TDR Receiving Areas

TOWN OF THE RAILROAD:
The 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan
Map M: Kent County TDR Receiving Areas

Town of the Railroad: 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan

MAP N: Future Land Use

Town of Houston, Kent County, Delaware



Agricultural / Natural Resources/ Open Space

Commercial

Mixed Use

Residential

Institutional/Civic/ Governmental

Agricultural Preservation

Industrial

Transporation

Municipal Boundary

Town Center

Historic Area

Potential Annexation

Scale 1:12000

0 500 1,000 2,000

Feet

N

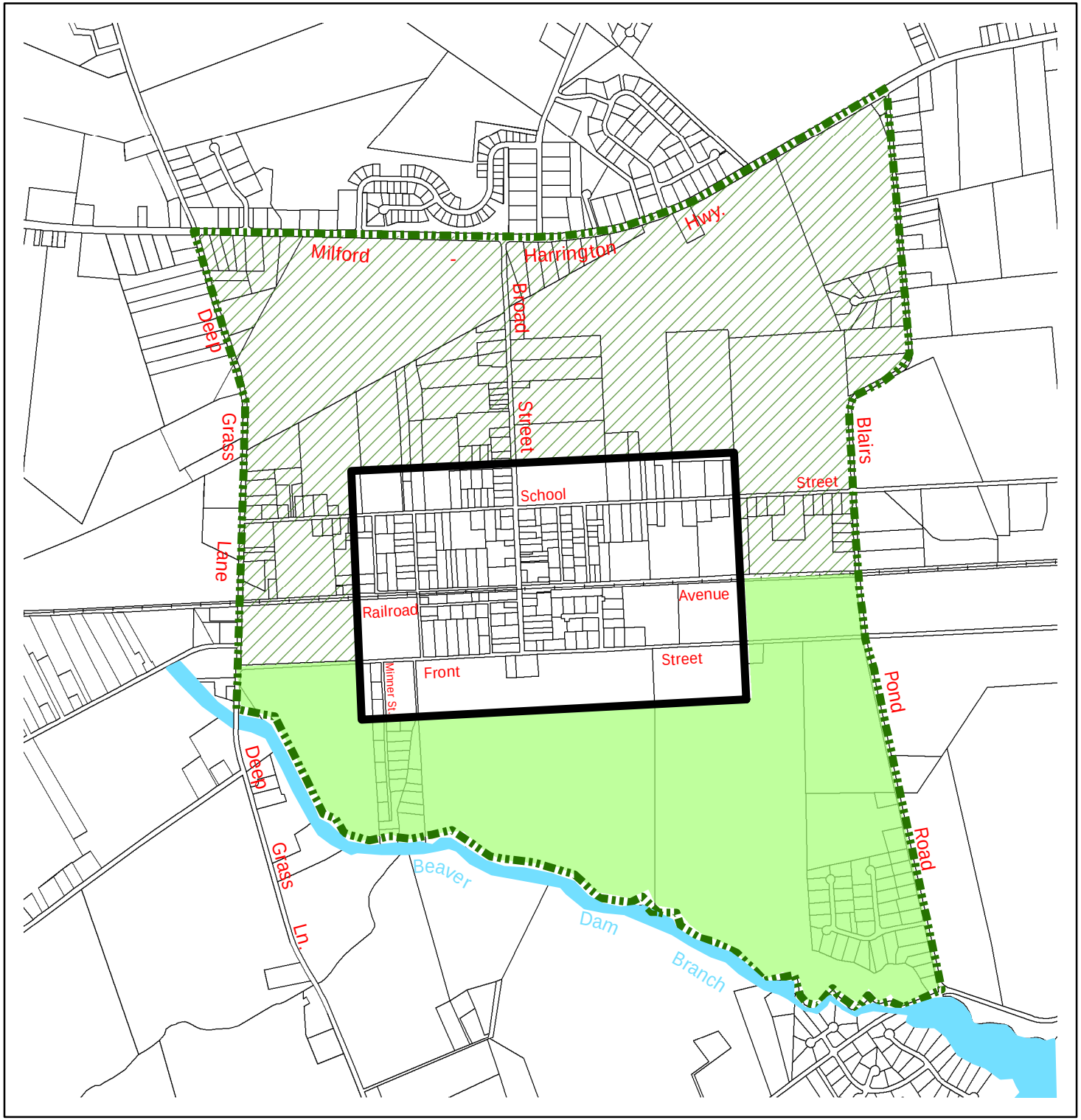
Sources:
USGS 1:24000 Digital Line Graphs, 1998
Kent County Department of Planning Services

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, March 2007

Town of the Railroad: 2007 **Town of** Houston Comprehensive Plan

Town of Houston,
Kent County, Delaware

MAP O: Potential Annexation



Phase 1

Phase 2

Municipal Boundary

Potential Annexation

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 Feet

Scale 1:18000

Sources:
USGS 1:24000 Digital Line Graphs, 1998
Kent County Department of Planning Services

Prepared for the Town of Houston, Delaware by
Nutter Associates and Charles Adler, III, March 2007

APPENDIX D - PRELIMINARY LAND USE SERVICE (PLUS) LETTER

STATE OF DELAWARE
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
STATE PLANNING COORDINATION

February 21, 2007

Mr. David Nutter
Nutter & Associates
507 C. South Boulevard
Salisbury, MD 21801-5753

RE: PLUS review – PLUS 2007-01-10; Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mr. Nutter:

Thank you for meeting with State agency planners on January 24, 2007 to discuss the proposed Town of Houston Comprehensive plan.

Please note that changes to the plan, other than those suggested in this letter, could result in additional comments from the State. Additionally, these comments reflect only issues that are the responsibility of the agencies represented at the meeting.

Below is a list of comments received from State agencies:

Office of State Planning Coordination – Contact: David Edgell 739-3090

The Office of State Planning Coordination commends the Town of Houston for preparing a well crafted comprehensive plan that defines a clear vision for the Town's future. It is obvious that Houston values its small town heritage and rural setting. Our office supports the dual goals of preserving agricultural lands as a "greenbelt" around the town and encouraging redevelopment and economic development in the town center.

It will be important for the town to partner with Kent County and the Delaware Department of Agriculture to achieve the plan's laudable land preservation objectives. There are certainly many opportunities to utilize Kent County's Transfer of Development

Rights ordinance and the State Agricultural Preservation Program to reach these objectives. Our office stands ready to work with the Town and these agencies to facilitate the implementation of the plan.

The Town's desire to revitalize the underutilized properties in the town center and its support of the ongoing efforts to redevelop the vacant cannery operation are evidence that Houston sees itself as a complete community. Drawing from the Town's heritage as a center of residence and commerce centered along the railway, the draft plan envisions a future where it is possible that economic growth and activity can coexist in a small town situated in a rural setting. This goal will be a challenge to achieve, so careful implementation of the plan will be critical. Working with the Delaware Economic Development Office there may be some opportunities to encourage or enable the economic development objectives. However, the Town must take care that the infrastructure improvements needed to support economic growth are compatible with the overriding objective of maintaining the small town character and rural setting that define Houston.

Our office is available as a resource to assist the Town through the plan certification as well as through the implementation phase. Please do not hesitate to contact David Edgell, the Circuit Rider Planner for Kent County for information and assistance. We look forward to working with you.

Certification Comments: These comments must be addressed in order for our office to consider the plan amendment consistent with the terms of your certification and the requirements of Title 22, § 702 of the Del. Code.

1. Future Land Use Map – Where is the parcel the town is considering for a new park and town hall? What is the future land use? The future land use map should designate this land in a future land use category that is consistent with the intended use. (I assume it is the mixed use parcel W of Broad Street. If so, this is probably appropriate).

2. The maps must have proper titles and reference letters (i.e. Map A, B etc) that match the references in the text and the map appendix table of contents. The maps in the electronic file were not properly labeled and presented out of order, which did cause some confusion with the reviewers.

3. The plan references "Map K" as the Potential Annexation Area map starting on page 47. The map appendix notes that Map K is Current Town Zoning. Please clarify.

4. The map appendix identified "Map L" as "Future Land Use and Potential Annexation". It is difficult to determine exactly which map is Map L because there are no letters on these maps. However, it is assumed that that this refers to the map labeled "Future Land Use," which does include an overlay for Potential Annexation as a dashed, green line. The following comments refer to this map:

    a. The title should be changed to "Future Land Use and Potential Annexation".
    b. The dashed green line that is intended to indicate areas for potential annexation runs off of the page in the northeast and southeast corners. The map area must be expanded to show all lands intended for annexation. This may necessitate a separate map.
    c. This map will govern future land use in any annexation areas. The future land use category "Agriculture / Natural Resource / Open Space" may be problematic. It appears that the town has an unused zoning district (P-Preservation) that can be used for this purpose. It is understood that the town desires a greenbelt and land preservation. The policies of the Kent County Comprehensive Plan and any future County ordinances will be critical to making this portion of the Town's plan a reality.

5. The Transportation Plan section on p. 30 and Map E. focus on regional transportation. Are there any local transportation issues that should be considered? Local street improvements, sidewalks, and intersection enhancements are all things that could be addressed in the transportation plan. If there are no such issues, please state this in the plan. Please see the DelDOT comments below for more detail, and some suggestions. We consider DelDOT comments 2 and 3 in this letter to be certification issues. The other DelDOT comments are recommendations.

6. The implementation plan should have some mention of the requirement to do a comprehensive rezoning within 18 months of plan adoption. It appears that at a minimum there will be some changes needed to ensure that the zoning map and the future land use map match. It is possible that this could be accomplished using the existing ordinance. It is recommended that this be completed concurrently with plan adoption or very soon thereafter, if possible.

7. Page 46, Future Land Use refers to "Map K" when the appendix labels the Future Land Use Map as "Map L". Please clarify.

8. Page 47, Potential Annexation. Refers to Map K, when the appendix labels the Future Land Use Map as "Map L". Please clarify.

Recommendations: Our office strongly recommends that the Town consider these recommendations as you revise your plan. These recommendations are intended to enhance or improve the plan, and assist in plan implementation.

1. The groundwater recharge map is difficult to read. We recommend a different color ramp, perhaps using same color scheme used by DNREC.

2. In the discussion of State Strategies on page 27 it may be worthwhile to note that the Strategies anticipates investing in conservation and preservation in Level 4.

3. The "Redevelopment of Blighted Properties" section on p. 30 underscores the fact that there may be very viable economic development potential in Houston. The challenge will be to ensure that this is accomplished in a way that is consistent with the character of the town. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that has been recently published by the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) is a program that should be of some assistance in this effort. At this time it is unclear how the program will be administered. Please contact the Jeff Stone with the Delaware Economic Development Office at (302) 739-4271 for more information regarding this process.

4. The concept of a TDR sending area greenbelt around the town will require coordination with Kent County through the upcoming Kent County Comprehensive Plan Update. It is recommended that representatives of the town work directly with Kent County Department of Planning Services and also participate in issue forums, public workshops and public hearings to pursue this joint planning strategy.

5. Page 47, Future Land Use. The discussion of "Commercial" land use does not mention the possibility of second floor residential uses. The previous chapter indicates that this is a permitted use according to the existing zoning ordinance. Please consider second floor apartments as a possible land use in commercial and town center areas.

6. The Water and Wastewater Plan does not have the detail that it should. The impression is that the town does not wish to consider public water or wastewater service at this time. A feasibility study at a future time is suggested on Page 29, but not referenced in the implementation chapter which starts on page 50. The provision of public water and/or sewer services in the town could have both positive and negative ramifications. This is complicated by the fact that the town seems to want to intensify some land uses (the town center, industrial uses, redevelopment areas) while encouraging preservation of agricultural uses and a

greenbelt. The plan should evaluate these options and give some clear policy guidance to help shape the future feasibility study. If not, the study is likely to focus only on the engineering aspects (how can it be done and at what monetary cost) and not consider the potential positive and negative impacts on the town or the implementation of town goals.

7. Delaware Code requires that all lands annexed into the town be placed in a zoning category consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. The language in the town's zoning ordinance requiring that all lands be zoned "P" upon annexation will be problematic, and should be changed. Specifically, lands annexed containing existing subdivisions or single family homes should be given an appropriate residential zone. According to the Future Land Use Map there are some of these properties in the annexation area. Although Delaware Code provides 18 months for the Town to make these changes, it is recommended that this be revised concurrently or very soon after certification.

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs – Contact: Alice Guerrant 739-5685

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs applauds Houston's town officials and consultant for the detailed town history and the attention paid to preserving the historic fabric and viewshed of the town. Historic preservation is a major part of the vision for the town's future, and is intertwined throughout this document. The approach to preservation of the farming area around the town will assist in the preservation of historic farm complexes and archaeological sites that are probably found in this area.

The DHCA will be happy to continue working with Houston and to provide technical assistance for any preservation issues or questions that come up in the future, particularly on ways to rehabilitate buildings in their historic zone.

Department of Transportation – Contact: Bill Brockenbrough 760-2109

1) The Plan's treatment of transportation issues occurs in several places in the plan and the Transportation section on page 30 in Part II (Planning and Strategy) is short and relatively uninformative. Because transportation does not appear to be a major concern for the Town, this approach may be acceptable, but it does little to address opportunities that might exist for coordination and actions involving DelDOT. DelDOT recommends that the Transportation Section in Part II be expanded and strengthened. Specific transportation items that should be added to the Transportation Section are identified below.

2) On page 8 (and again on page 30), the Plan cites the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025, adopted on July 5, 2001 as stressing "the need for a cooperative process of transportation planning with local governments." The Plan then mentions three specific concerns in Houston that relate to transportation. They have three comments about this paragraph:

   a) DelDOT recommends citation of the MPO's current Plan, which is for 2030 and was adopted on May 4, 2005.

   b) In their experience, the cooperative process to which the MPO's Plan refers is primarily a matter of matching changes in land use, which is to say growth and development, with the transportation facilities needed to serve it. This process may not be a major factor in the Town's planning as they appear to be focused on maintaining and improving the small town environment that they have, but it could be confusing to place the concerns cited in the same paragraph as the MPO's Long Range Plan.

   c) The two concerns just mentioned should be included in the Transportation section in Part II and addressed through recommended actions in Section III.A.

3) Also on page 8 (and again on page 30), the Plan cites the Delaware Freight Rail Plan, dated December 2000, and mentions "Houston's desire to be more involved in working with DelDOT and Norfolk Southern on railroad issues affecting the Town." A more current document would be the Delaware Freight and Goods Movement Plan, dated June 2004. As to the "railroad issues," they should be specified in the Transportation section and addressed through recommended actions in Section III.A.

4) The list of goals on pages 16 through 18 has only one transportation-related goal. That is acceptable, but the goal as written does not mention the "railroad issues" identified on page 8, it is not really developed in the Transportation section, and it is not fully addressed by the actions recommended in Section IIIA. Further, to have a goal of working with DelDOT, without an indication of how the Town intends to do that, is of little value.

5) On page 24, it is mentioned that "While some streets have sidewalks, others do not." Is that a concern for the Town? If so, the Plan should address it.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control – Contact: Kevin Coyle 739-9071

- Houston has highlighted several areas in the comprehensive plan that have historical drainage problems, in addition the town has expressed the desire to redevelop blighted properties and wish to protect and enhance existing natural areas. The Drainage and Stormwater Program strongly recommends and encourages the Town of Houston to consider adding drainage and stormwater infrastructure and management options to Section F: Public Infrastructure. Municipalities need to emphasize drainage as a necessary infrastructure element in areas targeted for growth and development, and in areas of redevelopment. State stormwater regulations do not provide specific guidance for development in areas of poor drainage or historic flooding problems except for requiring a downstream study. Site-specific engineering solutions often end at the property line of the parcel being developed. A more comprehensive approach to providing solutions for drainage issues in areas designated for growth will require coordination between the town, DNREC, and DelDOT.

  Houston has designated areas of concern in their comprehensive plan that fall within the boundaries of two tax ditch systems – the Goose Pond Tax Ditch, and Marvels Crossroads Tax Ditch.

  As identified in the draft plan, Houston also falls in the Murderkill and Mispillion watersheds, both of which are impaired for nutrients and bacteria in surface waters. Houston can do its part to help improve water quality by encouraging the implementation of best management practices for surface water quality and drainage. Generally, the preferred option for surface water quality protection for stormwater treatment, as stated in the Delaware Sediment and Stormwater Regulations, are those practices collectively known as Green Technology best management practices which achieve stormwater management objectives through filtration, infiltration, and storage. These practices are typically associated with natural vegetation and undisturbed soils while minimizing reliance on structural components (such as wet ponds) and promoting the natural hydrologic process. Examples include, but are not limited to low impact development and conservation design practices, vegetative filtration, riparian buffer plantings, bio-retention areas, vegetative flow conveyance, as well as recharge and surface storage in undisturbed natural areas. Requiring maintenance access ways along drainage ditches helps to provide a buffer along ditches and waterways that act as a conveyance for pollutants while providing unencumbered access to remove blockages.

The town plans to develop a new Town of Houston Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to reflect the recommendations of the comprehensive plan, regulate permitted uses and densities, etc. The Drainage and Stormwater Section encourages the town to model their ordinance after Kent County's subdivision ordinance and requests that you consider stormwater management as a component of your ordinances and codes. It is also strongly recommended that you consider developing your own drainage code as well to address private drainage issues as land develops. Representatives from the Division of Soil and Water Conservation's Drainage and Stormwater Section will be happy to meet with the Town to provide assistance and/or draft language for consideration as you develop any ordinances. Please contact Jennifer Campagnini at 302.739.9921 or at Jennifer.campagnini@state.de.us to set up a meeting or to provide additional assistance.

The current Sediment and Stormwater Law and Regulations are available online at http://www.dnrec.state.de.us/DNREC2000/Divisions/Soil/Stormwater/StormWater.htm. The regulations are due to be revised in the coming year.

- The following are the Watershed Assessment Section's suggestions/comments on the Town of Houston's Comp Plan Update, and pertain mainly to the Environmental Features Section (pages 25-26).

Recommendation #1

Studies have consistently shown that a 100-foot upland buffer between wetlands/waterbodies and residential/commercial development is, in most cases, the minimum buffer width necessary to maintain water and habitat quality. We strongly encourage the Town to adopt said buffer width as a recommendation for future ordinance in their Comp Plan.

Recommendation #2

Since the creation of impervious cover through development is well-known environmental problem in all watersheds under intense development pressures – including the Mispillion and Murderkill watersheds of which this town is part – inclusion of proactive BMP strategies to mitigate its impacts should be included in the Comp Plan and considered for ordinance. Suggested BMP strategies the Town could adopt include the following: reducing the amount of allowable forest

cover removal; requiring the use of alternative paving surfaces (especially in commercial developments) where practicable; allowing only green stormwater technologies; and, as mentioned previously, adopting a minimum buffering requirement from all wetlands and streams.

State Fire Marshal's Office – Contact: R. T. Leicht 739-4394

These comments are intended for informational use only and do not constitute any type of approval from the Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office.

The Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office has the responsibility to review all commercial and residential subdivisions for compliance with the Delaware State Fire Prevention Regulations. This Agency asks that a MOU be established between the Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office and the Town of Houston. The State Fire Marshal's Office would be issuing approvals much like DelDOT, Kent Conservation, and DNREC. This Agency's approvals are based on the Delaware State Fire Prevention Regulations only.

The Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office has no objection to the annexation growth and boundaries.

As a suggestion you may want to look at a section about public water. Specifically the infrastructure as it may become necessary, by building and/or fire code, for the re-development of in Town areas into residential apartment housing units. You may also want to look at the public water infrastructures that will abut the Town limits.

Department of Agriculture - Contact: Scott Blaier 698-4500

The Delaware Department of Agriculture would like to commend the Town of Houston on a well written and ambitious Comprehensive Plan. The Department especially supports the Town's commitment to retain the rural agricultural land use that surrounds the town, and its goal to permanently preserve those lands through Kent County's transfer of development rights (TDRs) ordinance. The DDA also appreciates the discussion on page 26 using the Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) system to demonstrate the lands surrounding Houston are considered prime agricultural lands.

The Department supports the Town's goal to preserve the agricultural areas surrounding the town (specifically the "Greenbelt" concept mentioned on page 14). The Department is also encouraged by the Town's view of annexation as a "vehicle for preservation not development to retain the existing character of farmlands that surround Houston" (page 38).

However, despite the Town's stated intention of annexing agricultural land with the intent to preserve it, the Department is generally not in favor of properties enrolled in the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation program being annexed into cities or towns. The primary reason for this preference stems from the potential for condemnation by a town or city once annexed, in order to use the property for other than agricultural purposes.

The Department also supports the County's TDR ordinance, and more specifically, the Town's aspirations to work with the County create a "Greenbelt" around the Town through the program. The Department would be glad to assist the Town in its efforts to preserve additional agricultural land. Please feel free to contact the Planning and Land Preservation Section toll free (within Delaware) at 1-800-282-8685.

The Department is encouraged by the proposed expansion of the Paris Foods facility. Agribusiness and industries that support agriculture are critical to making agriculture a viable and competitive industry within the State. The Department of Agriculture has a fully staffed marketing section that would be glad to assist the Town in further exploring and developing it economic potential with regard to agriculture. Please contact the Marketing Section toll free (within Delaware) at 1-800-282-8685 to learn more about how they may be able to help the Town.

Page 32 of the plan suggests planting new street trees along Broad Street. The Department's Forest Service has Urban Foresters on staff to help communities with such projects, and may even be able to help defray the Town's costs through grants. Please contact the Forest Service toll free (within Delaware) at 1-800-282-8685 to learn more about how they may be able to help the Town accomplish this goal.

Public Service Commission - Contact: Andrea Maucher 739-4247

Any expansion of natural gas or installation of a closed propane system must fall within Pipeline Safety guidelines. Contact: Malak Michael at (302) 739-4247.

Delaware State Housing Authority – Contact Vicki Walsh 739-4263

The Delaware State Housing Authority has reviewed the 2007 Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan to determine how the State's goals, policies, and strategies, as they relate to affordable housing, have been incorporated. Since Houston's population is less than 2,000, the Comprehensive Plan is required to include goals and recommendations for providing sound and affordable housing for its residents, which the Plan states.

Specifically, The DSHA supports the Plan's goals for providing sound affordable housing by permitting a new Zoning Ordinance that allows "townhouses" and "apartment units" as specially permitted uses within the residential and Town center zones. . We encourage the Town to continue exploring zoning techniques to provide additional affordable housing opportunities. An example would be to permit accessory dwelling units in residential areas as a matter of right, to encourage social- and economic-integration, and life-cycle housing. Overall, this is a well thought out plan that addresses housing issues pertinent to the Town of Houston.

Department of Education – Contact: John Marinucci 739-4658

The DOE supports the State Strategies for Policies and Spending, to the extent possible and practicable within the limits of the Federal and State mandates under which the Department operates.

1. In its review of Comprehensive Plans and Comprehensive Plan Amendments, the DOE considers:
   - Adequate civil infrastructure availability within the region to accommodate current and future educational facilities.
   - Transportation system connections and availability to support multimodal access within the community, to include but not limited to walk paths, bike paths, and safe pedestrian grade crossings.
   - Transportation road system adequacy to accommodate bus and delivery vehicle traffic to current, planned or potential educational facilities.
   - Recreation facilities and opportunities within the community and their respective proximity to current and planned or potential education facilities. The DOE also recognizes the potential that the educational facilities are to be considered recreational facilities by and within the community.

2. The DOE *typically* considers industrial/commercial development incompatible with educational facilities, however, residential development and educational facilities *are typically* considered to be compatible. As a result, the DOE is interested in the proximity of current and planned or potential education facilities to commercial/industrial development zones.

3. The DOE recognizes the integral role of educational facilities within communities. As such, the DOE seeks to assure that residential growth, that generates additional demand on educational facilities, is managed with adequate educational infrastructure being made a part of sub-division plans as appropriate.

4. The DOE offers its support to assist the town and participate in coordination between the town, the Milford School District, Kent County, the Office of State Planning Coordination as well as other school districts and stakeholders as future developments and annexations may be considered.

5. Facility and enrollment information can be found at: http://facilitynet.doe.k12.de.us/portal/index.html

6. The DOE has no further comments or objections to the proposed plan.

Approval Procedures:

1. Once all edits, changes and corrections have been made to the plan please submit the completed document (text and maps) to our office for review. **Your PLUS response letter should accompany this submission.** Also include documentation about the public review process. In addition, please include documentation that the plan has been sent to other jurisdictions for review and comment, and include any comments received and your response to them.

2. Our office will require a maximum of 20 working days to complete this review.

3. We will provide the Town of Houston with written verification that our office has accepted the plan and all changes for adoption and certification.

4. The plan may then be formally adopted by your Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council.

5. Send our office documentation that the plan has been formally adopted by your Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council. We will also require two (2) bound paper copies of the plan and map series and one (1) electronic copy for our records. A certification letter will be sent once these materials have been received. The plan will be certified effective on the date of adoption.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. Again, we commend the Town on a well crafted plan which clearly articulates an achievable vision for Houston's future. If you have any questions, please contact me at 302-739-3090.

Sincerely,

Constance C. Holland, AICP
Director

CC: Town of Houston