

CHAPTER 2

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT



INTRODUCTION

Land suitable for industrial development is at a premium in Kenton County. Most land suitable for industry within the northern portion of the county has either been consumed, requires redevelopment and/or could entail mitigation for brownfield¹ issues, or is comprised of relatively small parcels.

Since the mid-1980's the *Area-Wide Comprehensive Plan* has identified land in the focus area (See Map 1) located south of Maher Road, east of Banklick Road, north of Walton-Nicholson Road, and adjacent to the Boone County Line for industrial land use. This is the largest portion of land currently identified for industrial land uses within the plan. The problem is that this land, containing approximately **1,500 acres**, has never been zoned for industrial land uses and remains zoned for agriculture. The *2001 Area-wide Comprehensive Plan* identified additional land, containing approximately **200 acres**, south of Walton-Nicholson Road for industrial land use.

During the past several years, land within this area has been subdivided into residential lots in compliance with the county's one-acre minimum lot size for areas zoned for agriculture. A section adjacent to this area was annexed by the City of Independence and several hundred homes have been placed on much smaller lots. The concern is that this process, which fragments the land area into smaller portions and increases the numbers of owners, will make assembly of land for industrial development more difficult. Furthermore, as the area transforms from agriculture to residential land uses, compatibility of adjoining and nearby land uses with anticipated industrial type land uses becomes an issue.

Several attempts have been undertaken since the mid-1990's to address the needs of reserving this land for industrial uses. The most recent was in March 2001 when the Kenton County Fiscal Court sponsored a public meeting to invite residents and others to express their thoughts on rezoning this area for industrial uses. The overwhelming sentiment expressed at that meeting was in opposition to the change. Opposition, in part, appeared to be based on the uncertainties of the type of industry that would be located in the area. It is probably accurate to suggest that visions of smokestacks, various types of pollution, runoff from parking lots, and traffic sparked a significant amount of the expressed concerns.

Based on recent and anticipated development activity within south Kenton County, it is evident that this region of Kenton County and adjoining areas within Boone County will continue to transform from rural to more urban uses. Growth and development within this area will impact and be impacted by land use and transportation decisions well beyond the specific boundaries of the immediate area now identified for industrial use. In order to fully evaluate development needs, including adjacent portions within Boone County, the study area (see Map 1) of this project must extend beyond the area identified for industrial land uses in the comprehensive plan (see Map 2).

It is important that a proactive approach be taken to plan for this future development. A key part of the planning process is input from the South Banklick Advisory Committee that includes area residents. The process also entails seeking significant input from area residents at public workshops. It is hoped this methodology that accommodates issues and concerns of area residents will lead to development that is beneficial for all residents of Kenton County—both existing and future.

BOUNDARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS STUDY

Two boundaries have been established to carry out the existing conditions study – the 3-mile study area and the focus area. The three-mile study area was established to understand the influence of other land uses such as commercial, community facilities such as parks and emergency services, and the need for such uses on the area; for example, to understand the influence of commercial uses in the Independence Town Center or the Nicholson area on the South Banklick area.

The focus area includes most of the properties identified in the *2001 Area-wide Comprehensive Plan* for industrial uses. This area should be used as a starting point in determining the boundaries of the study

¹ An abandoned or underutilized property that is not being redeveloped because of fears that it may be contaminated with hazardous substances

area. The focus area will eventually morph into the study area for the project based on comments received from area residents.

POPULATION ANALYSIS

The Kentucky State Data Center reports that Kenton and Boone Counties grew one percent and 18percent respectively since the 2000 Census. Assuming the same growth rate, the focus area, and the three-mile study area within Kenton County grew one percent for the five-year period between 2000 and 2005. According to the 2000 Census, there are approximately 139 persons within the focus area and 8,332 persons within the three-mile study area within Kenton County.

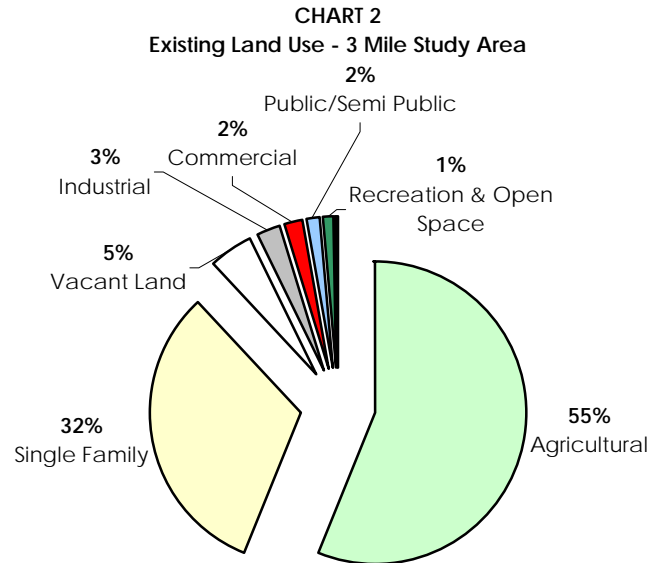


The average household size in Kenton County is 2.6 persons per household according to the 2000 Census. If the focus area develops with the current zoning (agriculture district), there is a potential for 4,685 persons to reside in the area if all the land were developed. In keeping with the growth trends towards the north of the focus area, if the area were to grow to accommodate quarter-acre lots, there could potentially be 16,398 persons within the area. As shown on Map 3, significant development activity is taking place to the north of the area and is moving south.

EXISTING LAND USE² AND ZONING

The focus area is comprised mainly of agricultural land that includes single-family homes (84%) and some single-family residential land use (14%) as shown on Map 4.

The three-mile study area is comprised mainly of agricultural land uses (55%). Single-family residential use covers 32% of the land area. Industrial land, mostly in Boone County, comprises 3% of the land area. Chart 2 shows the land use percentages within the three-mile area in Kenton County.



Existing Zoning

Land within the focus area is currently zoned for Agriculture (A-1) permitting agricultural uses and single-family residences among other uses on a minimum lot size of one acre (see Map 5). The agricultural district in the three-mile study area within Kenton County encompasses approx. 50 percent of the land.

Table 1: Acreage by zoning district in 3-mile study area

Zoning district	In Acres	Percentage of total acreage
Agriculture or single-family 1 acre lots	5669.94	50.06%
Industrial	18.15	0.16%
Neighborhood commercial/Neighborhood shopping	59.34	0.52%
1/2 acre lots - Residential	1369.62	12.09%
1/4 acre lots - Residential	2585.32	22.82%
9000 Sq. ft lots - Residential	897.69	7.93%
20,000 Sq. ft lots – Residential	74.09	0.65%
Rural Commercial	60.94	0.54%
1 acre lots - Rural Residential	592.11	5.23%

Recommended Land Use

The 2001 Kenton County Area-Wide Comprehensive Plan identifies the focus area within Kenton County for industrial uses as shown on Map 2.

The comprehensive plan recognizes that “land which can be readily used for industrial development within the Northern Kentucky area is at a premium”. Also the goal of creating industrial uses is for employment and to shorten the work trip for residents. The plan recommends that businesses and industries employing more persons per acres of operation be sought versus those types that use large amounts of land resources and employ relatively few workers. The area in Boone County adjacent to the focus area is currently identified for industrial uses and is also zoned for industrial uses.

² Land use is defined as the use of the land for uses such as single-family residential, commercial, agriculture, industrial uses and so on.

Considerations –

- Existing uses within the focus area are primarily agricultural and residential. Even within the three-mile area other uses such as retail occupy only a small percentage.
- Land within focus area as currently zoned allows for agricultural uses and single-family residential development on one-acre minimum lots.
- Land available for future industrial type development within Kenton County is scarce.
- The focus area is adjacent to land that is zoned for industrial development in Boone County.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmentally sensitive lands include floodways, areas with slopes over 20 percent (also known as physically restrictive development areas—PRDA) and riparian³ areas. Table 1 shows the percentage of sensitive land within each land use in the focus area.

Table 1: Environmentally sensitive land within focus area

Acres	% Riparian and PRDA	Floodway, PRDA, and Riparian Areas in acres
Agricultural	3%	6.94
Single Family	1%	0.39
Commercial	0%	0.00
Industrial	0%	0.00
Vacant	2%	0.49
Total Acres	6%	7.82

Source: BACE Study, December 2004

The 2001 comprehensive plan identifies physically-restrictive development areas within the focus area (see Map 6). The comprehensive plan states that these areas are not identified for the purposes of prohibiting development but rather that most of these areas should be left undeveloped.

The Banklick Creek flows along Banklick Road where most of the floodplain and riparian areas are located.

The focus area is mostly located within the Banklick Creek Watershed. The BACE⁴ project identifies critical areas for protection within the Banklick Creek Watershed as shown on Map 6 where there is an overlap of several environmentally-sensitive features such as canopy tree cover, floodplain, riparian corridor, runoff potential, and impervious surfaces.

Considerations:

- Careful planning is needed when proposing development within physically restrictive development areas.
- Preservation of riparian areas along creeks protects developed land from soil erosion and sedimentation.
- Critical areas identified for preservation should be carefully studied prior to development.

³ Riparian area – A vegetated buffer along streams and rivers that helps stabilize the soil and prevent erosion.

⁴ Banklick Watershed Council, “A case study and guide to the Banklick Creek Watershed analysis and issue characterization for education and outreach – BACE” project.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & UTILITIES

Community facilities include services such as schools, emergency services, and so on. Utilities include sewer, water, electric, and natural gas services.

Schools

The focus area is served by Kenton and White's Tower Elementary Schools, Twenhofel Middle School, and Simon Kenton High School. Vocational education is provided by the J.D. Patton Vocational School. St. Cecilia Catholic Grade School, Calvary Christian School, and the Community Christian Academy provide private educational facilities for the area. See Map 7.

The Kenton County Board of Education is currently constructing a new facility immediately adjacent to Twenhofel Middle School. Upon completion of the new structure, the old building will be razed. The resulting site is planned to be the new location of the J.D. Patton Vocational School currently located currently in Edgewood. The timing of this construction will depend upon funding from the Kentucky legislature. The Kenton County School Board has also purchased approximately 50 acres of land immediately adjacent to the Duke Energy electrical sub-station on the north side of the Walton-Nicholson Road for a future elementary school site.

The Boone County School Board provides the area adjacent to the focus area with Ockerman and New Haven Elementary Schools, Ockerman Junior High School, and Ryle High School. The southern portion of the Boone County portion of the three-mile study area lies within the City of Walton. St. Joseph Academy in Walton provides parochial grade school services.

Gateway Community and Technical College provides services from its new campus located at the I-75/Mt. Zion Road interchange, immediately to the north of the study area.

Recreation and Open Space

The Kenton County portion of the study area contains two recreational facilities: the ten-acre Depner Fishing Lake located at the intersection of Bramlage and Wilson Roads; and, the 26-acre Memorial Park located in Independence at Delaware Crossing. See Map 7. The following list identifies other Kenton County recreation areas in close proximity:

North of the focus area:

1. Banklick Woods Park, a community park of 78 acres on Independence Station Road, contains a shelter house, restrooms, grills, bleachers, ponds, disc-golf, sand volleyball and horseshoe pits.
2. Richardson Road Park, a community park of 21 acres contains a shelter house, rest rooms, bleachers, baseball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, picnic grills, a playground, and horseshoe pits.
3. Kenton County Golf Course located at 3908 Richardson Road, consists of three 18-hole golf courses.

South of the focus area:

1. Barrel Lake, a private fishing lake of 45 acres on Percival Road.

The Boone County portion of the focus area contains Lake Shore County Park and two private lakes: Chap's and Aer-O-Flo Fishing Lakes. The Boone County Comprehensive Plan calls for the creation of a community park just west of I-75 in the vicinity of the Mt. Zion Road interchange, and the creation of a large county park of at least 200 acres between I-75 and U.S. 25 north of the I-71 split.

Fire and EMS Service

The northern part of Kenton County's portion of the focus area is served by the main station of the Independence Fire Department. It operates with 16 full-time, eight part-time, and 31 volunteers who man three pumpers, and one utility truck, and provides an ISO (Insurance Services Office of Kentucky Fire Suppression Rating Schedule) rating of 4th class. The southern part is covered by the Walton Fire District with 14 full-time and three part-time professional firefighters and 14 volunteers, who man one ladder, one tanker, one heavy

rescue truck, four pumpers, three engines, one brush truck, one hazmat trailer, and three staff vehicles. The Walton District provides a 5th class ISO rating. The location of these facilities is shown on Map 7.

The Independence Fire Department has 31 emergency medical technicians who man two ambulances. The Walton Fire Department has 28 emergency medical technicians who man three ambulances and one EMS First Response Vehicle.

The Boone County portion of the study area is covered by the Walton Fire District.

Police Protection

The Kenton County portion of the study area is served by the Kenton County Police (35 officers and 20 civilians operating 40 cruisers), the Kenton County Sheriff (27 full-time and 26 part-time officers and four full-time and eight part-time civilians operating 21 cruisers), and the Independence Police Department (23 full-time and three part-time officers operating 23 cruisers). All three agencies incarcerate perpetrators in the Kenton County jail located in downtown Covington.

The Boone County portion of the study area is served by the Boone County Sheriff's Department out of a sub-station in the Walton City Hall. The Sheriff's Department has a staff of 154 law enforcement personnel.

Libraries

The Kenton County Public Library Board operates the Independence branch library on Taylor Mill Road, northeast of the focus area. This branch will soon be moved to a site adjacent to the intersection of Madison Pike and KY 16.

The Boone County portion of the study area is served by the Walton branch of the Boone County Library system. It is located in downtown Walton, immediately south of the study area.

Water

The focus area is served by the Northern Kentucky Water District. The north-east quadrant of the study area, composed of residential subdivisions, is completely served with adequate potable water for consumption and fire flow. The south-east quadrant, being mostly rural, is served by water mains located along the following roads: Wilson, Walton-Nicholson, Green, and Percival as shown on Map 8.

In Boone County the study area is served by the Boone County Water District in the north, and the Walton Water District in the south. Both areas are served with an adequate supply of potable water for consumption and fire flow.

Sanitary Sewers

The north-east sector of the focus area, containing suburban residential subdivisions, is adequately served by Sanitation District No. 1 as shown on Map 8. The remainder of the study area within Kenton County has no sanitary sewers and most rely on packaged treatment plants or septic tanks to handle their sewage.

The area immediately adjacent to the focus area within Boone County is likewise served by the Sanitation District No. 1 within the residential subdivisions lying along the eastern border of the focus area. The central part of the area is not served by sewers.

Electricity, Gas & Stormwater

Electric power distribution is broadly provided by Cinergy/Union, Light, Heat, and Power Company and the Owen County Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation. Some overlap within the residential subdivisions and commercial developments does exist. The two service areas overlap and new service is negotiated between the providers by the Kentucky Public Service Commission.

The focus area is served by natural gas transmission lines along Maher Road, KY 17, and KY 16. Residential and commercial customers along those roads, as well as residential subdivisions that connect to those roads are served with natural gas; all others use propane gas. There are no plans to expand service into this area; but any large development creating a sufficient demand would be served. Stormwater runoff is fed through catch basins, inlets, pipes, culverts, and channels to nearby creeks and streams and ultimately into the Banklick Creek where it is carried down stream into the Licking River. The more impervious surface there is in an area, the more runoff. The federal government now requires communities to develop a storm water management program. Sanitation District Number 1 has the responsibility for this activity within the study area.

Telecommunications

The study area is served by fiber optic cables running the length of U.S. 25 and along KY 17 to Fiskburg Road. Digital subscriber line (DSL) service is sparse at present but is being added on an ongoing basis. Standard residential telephone service is available throughout the study area.

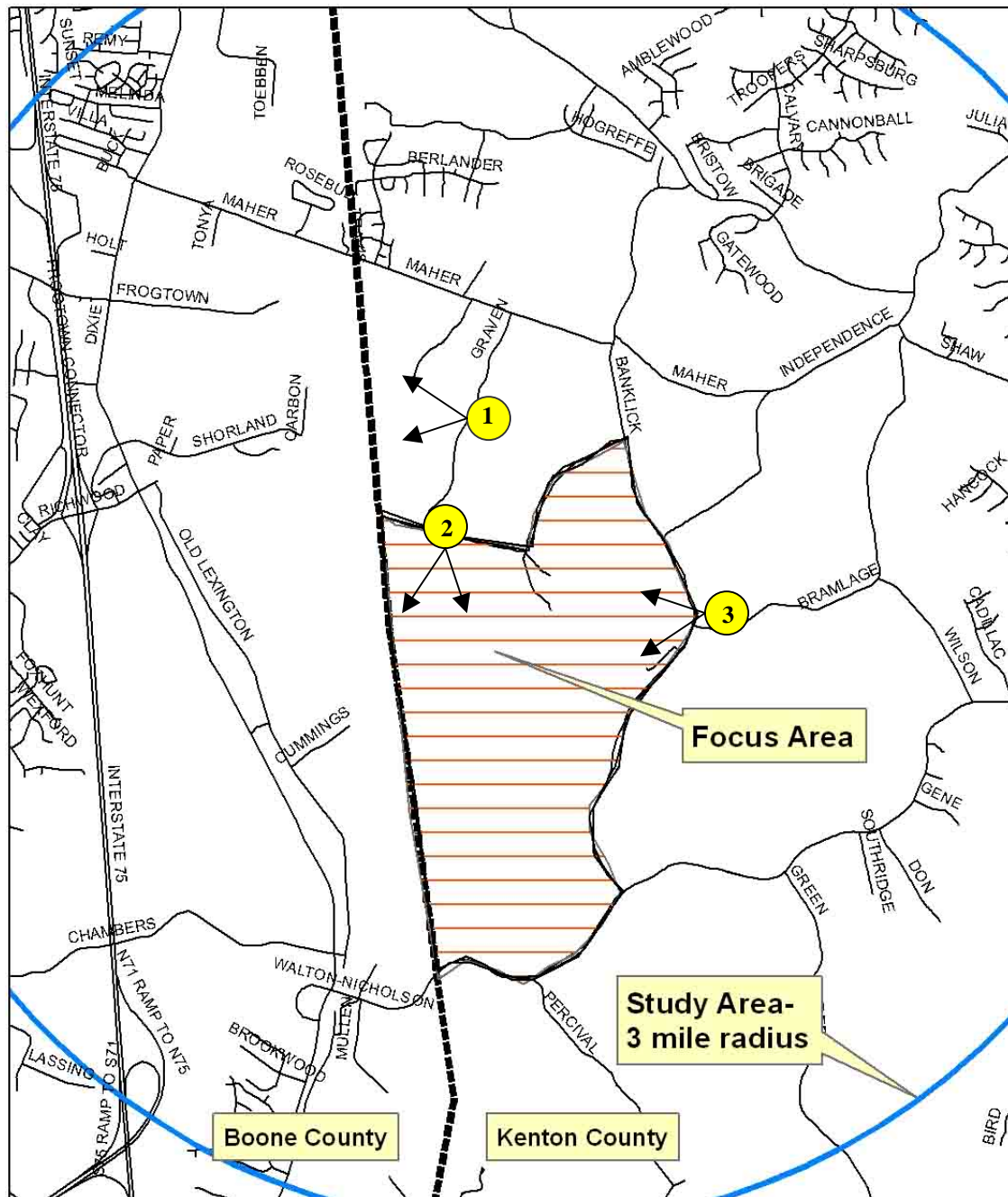
Considerations:

- The area is adequately served with the normal pattern of community facilities such as schools, libraries, recreation, police, fire protection, and telecommunications for current development.
- Electricity is available throughout the area and can be expanded to satisfy any future demand.
- Natural gas is available only along KY 16, KY 17, and Maher Road. There are no plans to expand service at this time.
- The area is only partially served with water lines capable of providing sufficient fire flow.
- Only the north-east portion of the focus area and the areas adjacent to Kenton County in the western portion of Boone County are adequately sewered.

VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

A viewshed analysis assesses the visual impacts of proposed development and proposes measures to mitigate any adverse visual impacts associated with the construction on the surrounding visual environment.

Map 9 below shows the focus area from where some sample viewshed photos were taken.



Map 9: Sample viewshed locations and direction of view



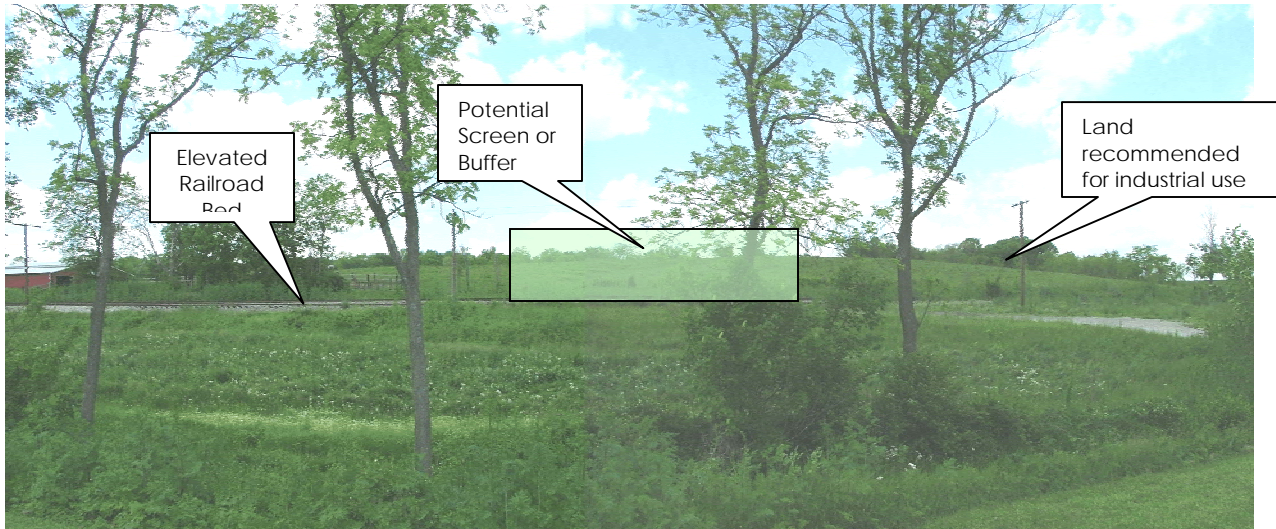
Viewshed Sample #1

Viewshed Sample # 1, taken from Graven Road, is important as it shows both the beautiful, rolling fields and woods in the distance as well as the industrial development that has moved into the viewshed of residents along Graven Road. Lighting from the industrial area may be seen by the residents of the area.



Viewshed Sample #2 was taken from a high point on Wright Road looking south.

This area does not include residences and commands a very nice view of large, gently rolling fields and a woods in the distance. This could be a prime location for development. Plantings of landscape buffers along the road could screen unwanted views of new development from the road. Access to future development would be best achieved from the existing, larger roads already serving Boone County.



Viewshed Sample #3 taken at the intersection of Bramlage and Banklick Roads.

In sample #3, the viewing location is below the railroad and focus area. This location looks up towards an elevated railroad bed approximately 100 yards away. The focus area is located beyond the rail bed with a large hillside and tree line at the top. The hillside is currently recommended for industrial development. A green, transparent box has been added to illustrate how a screening or buffer area could shield both new development and the railroad from the roadway.

Considerations

- The area is currently rural but in transition as development pressure increases. More residential areas are being built nearby and industrial uses are developing a short distance away in Boone County.
- Every effort should be made to minimize negative effects of construction and development on surrounding residents and property owners.
- The visual effects of development should be considered as the area continues to grow.

TRANSPORTATION

Roads are the primary means for local residents and businesses to travel—both from where they live and where they want to go.

There are wider roads on the eastern side of the focus area in Boone County with Interstate 71/75 and the Dixie Highway (U.S. 25) running north and south (see Map 10). These two major transportation corridors serve existing industrial areas along U.S. 25 and Old Lexington Road. The other roads on the south, east, and north were built as rural roads and are relatively narrow, winding, and facing increased traffic as southern Boone and Kenton Counties continue to grow.

Descriptions of roads near or adjacent to the focus area

Maher Road is a narrow, local, rural road (20 feet wide; Kenton and Boone Counties). New subdivisions access this road.

Graven Road is a narrow, local, rural road (20 feet wide; Kenton County).

Wright Road is a narrow, local, rural road (20 feet wide; Kenton County).

Banklick Road/County Road 2043 is a rural, major collector (24 feet wide; Kenton County). This is a major north/south road serving eastern part of the focus area.

Walton Nicholson Road/KY 16 is a minor arterial (28 feet wide; Kenton and Boone Counties). This is the main east/west connector for southern part of the focus area.

Dixie Highway/U.S. 25 is a minor arterial in this area (varying widths from two to five lanes; Boone County).

This road is important as it is the major north/south connection to the interstate and to nearby towns.

Old Lexington Road (originally U.S. 25) is a small, remnant rural road (24 feet wide; Boone County).

Cummins Road is a local road (28 feet wide; Boone County).

Shorland Road is a local, rural road serving an industrial area (28 feet wide; Boone County).

Frogtown Road is a local, rural road large enough to carry industrial traffic (varying widths from 20 to 28 feet; Boone County).

Mt. Zion Road/Shaw Road (KY 536) is an urban, minor arterial which serves the growing residential areas in the northern portion of the study area. It provides an interchange to I-71/75 and is slated for improvements in the six-year plan.

Interstate 71/75 is the main north/south vehicular corridor. It provides three access points to the study area. At the southernmost interchange (Walton/Verona), the traffic count for 2005 is 61,400 vehicles per day. Because of the I-71/75 merge, the trip count goes up to 124,000 per day at Mt. Zion Road. The interstate is significant for both residential trips and commercial truck traffic.

Other Transportation Modes

Railroad: an active railroad runs along Banklick Road from north to south within the focus area.

Mass Transit/Bus Service: the Walton Express (22X) that runs along U.S. 25 in Boone County is the only bus route that serves the focus area, however, TANK has recently decided to discontinue it. TANK also has recently acquired land for a new park and ride lot near the I-75/Mt. Zion Road interchange. The Independence Express (30X), which serves the Independence area, is located within the three-mile study area. Two other routes serve areas just north of the study area.

Bicycle: there are currently no bicycle facilities in or near the focus area. The *Kenton County Bicycle Plan* proposes that a touring bikeway be constructed along Banklick Road to the intersection with Mt. Zion Road. The intent of the plan is to create a network of bikeways through Kenton County.

Pedestrian: no sidewalks were observed anywhere near the focus area.

Road Improvements

Major road improvements are usually pursued by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet using a combination of federal, state, and local monies through its six-year plan. Competition for road improvement projects is stiff.

Factors such as new development, increased traffic and associated delays, increase in accidents and maintenance, and infrastructure needs are used to prioritize and approve requests. The following projects are proposed within the study area and will improve road capacity to and from the interstates. They will also create favorable conditions for more development.

Kenton County

1. KY 536 (Mt. Zion Road): widening to three lanes from the Boone County Line to KY 17.
2. KY 17 (Madison Pike): widening from Independence south to KY 16.

Boone County

1. KY 536 (Mt. Zion Road): widening to three lanes from Union to the Kenton County Line.
2. U.S. 25 (Dixie Highway): widening from KY 536 south to KY 338 near the Richwood interchange.
3. Interchange Improvements: the Richwood and Mt. Zion interchanges on I-71/75 will be reconstructed.

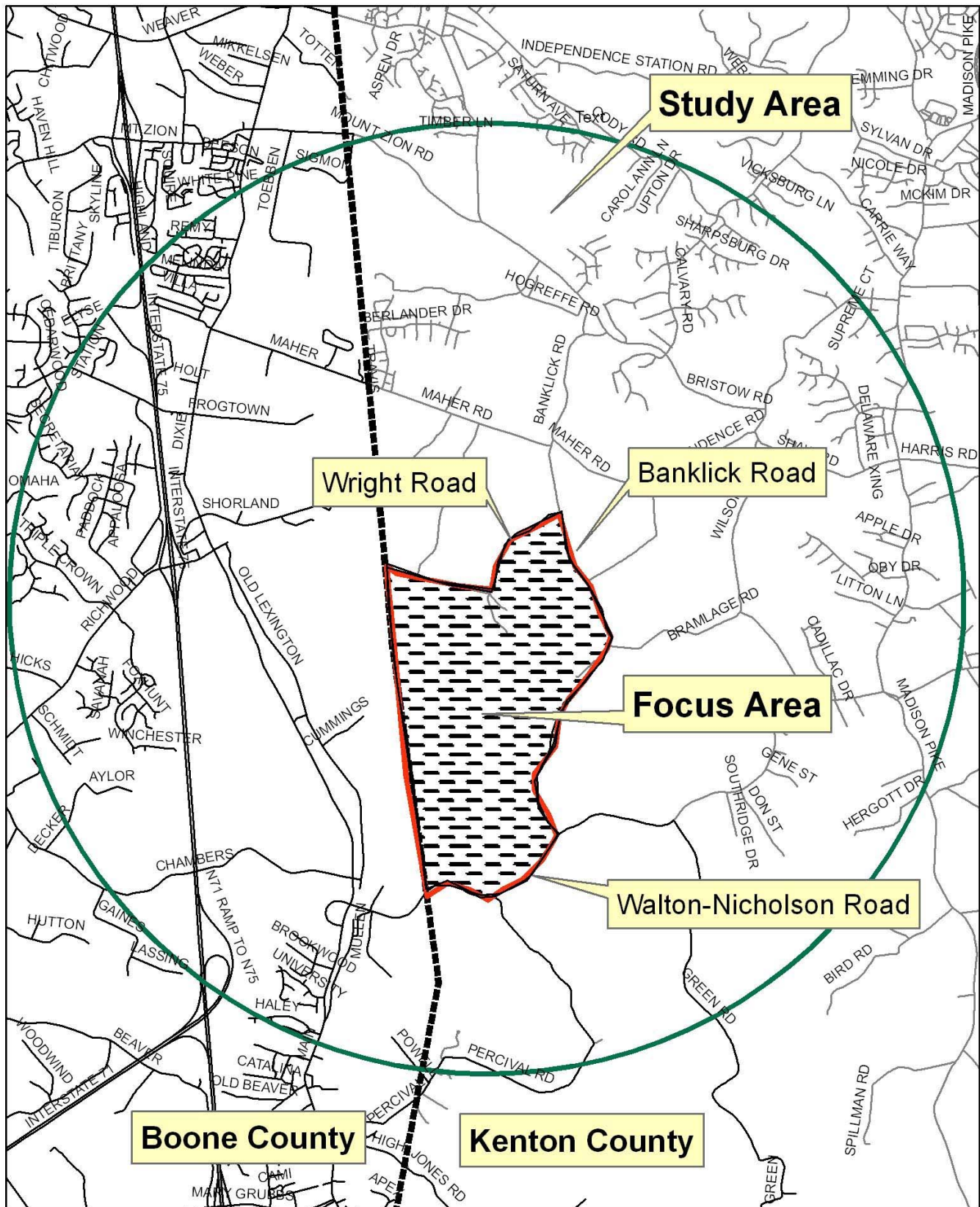
Considerations

- Kenton County roads in the focus area are primarily narrow, local, rural roads.
- New subdivisions in the northern part of the focus area are creating pressure to widen roads.
- The best roads and means of access for commercial and industrial development exist in Boone County due to the proximity of U.S. 25 and Interstate 71/75.
- Careful evaluation should be given to protecting scenic qualities of rural roads in the area.
- Feasibility of extending existing or creating new roads from Boone County into the focus area in Kenton County should be considered.
- Mass transit and multi-modal (bike and pedestrian) uses should be incorporated into the focus and study areas.
- Consideration should be given to the presence of the railroad between developable land within the focus area and Banklick Road.

MAPS

FOCUS AND STUDY AREA

MAP 1

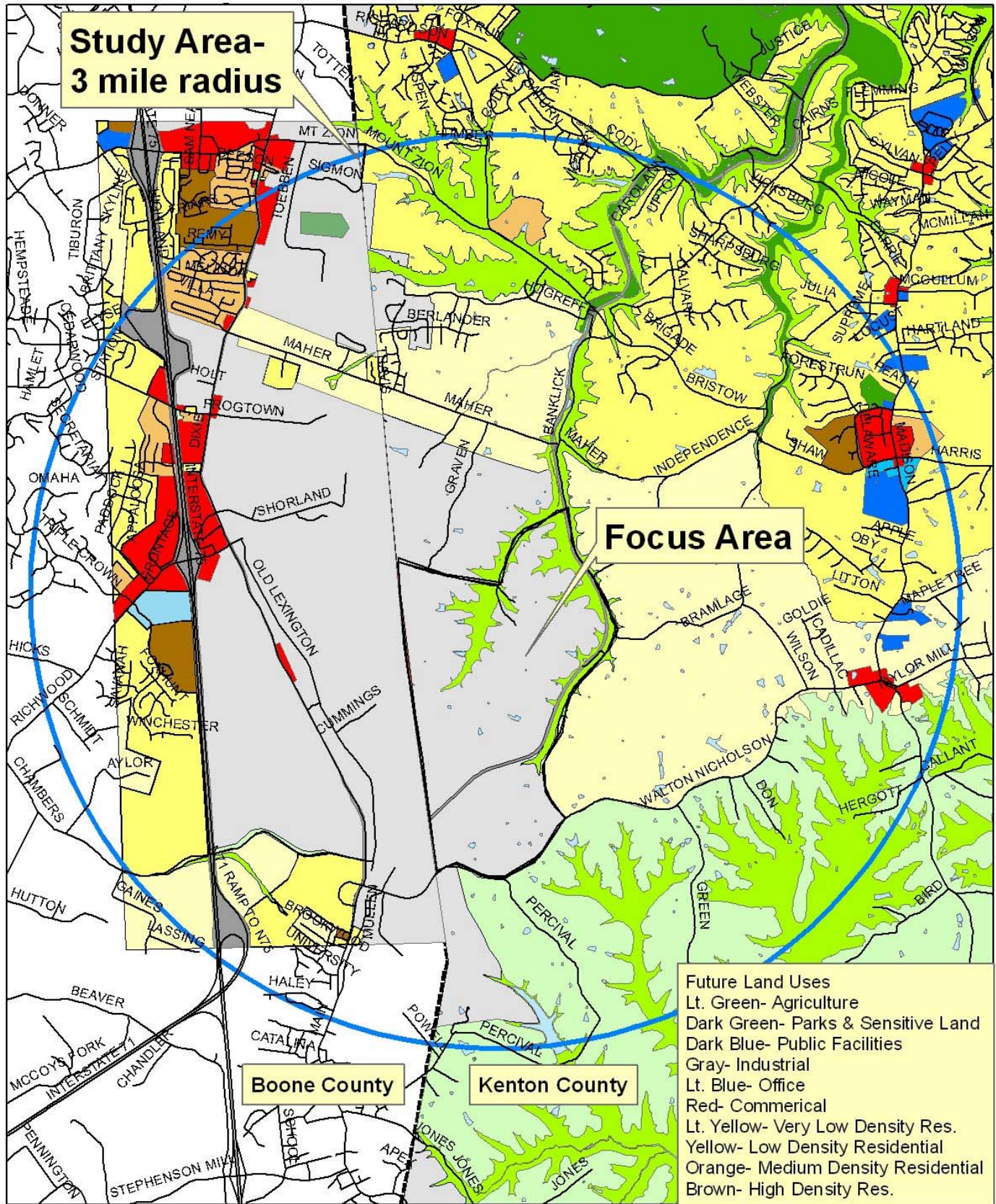


South Banklick Small Area Study



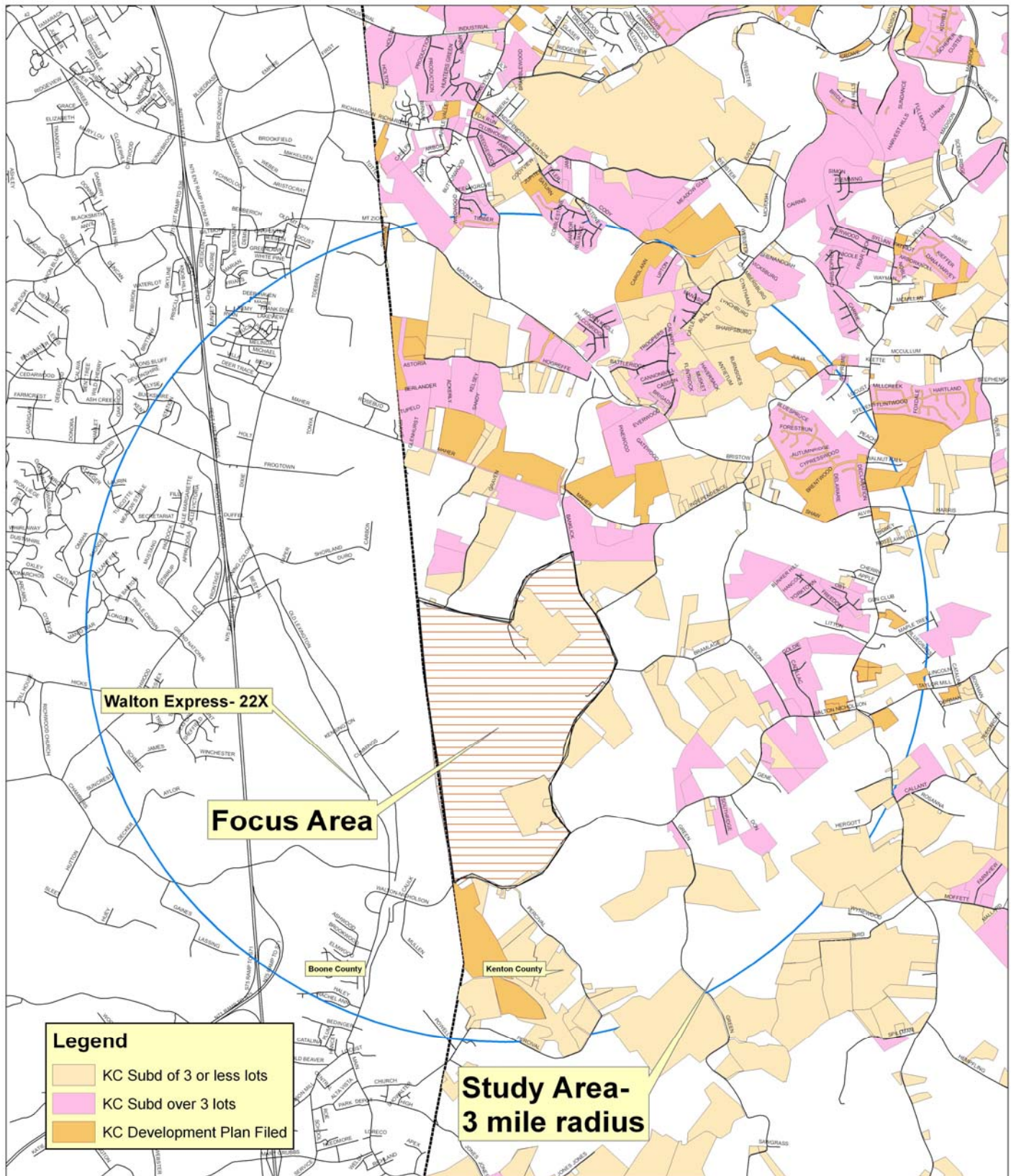
October 4, 2005

COMP PLAN FUTURE LAND USE MAP 2



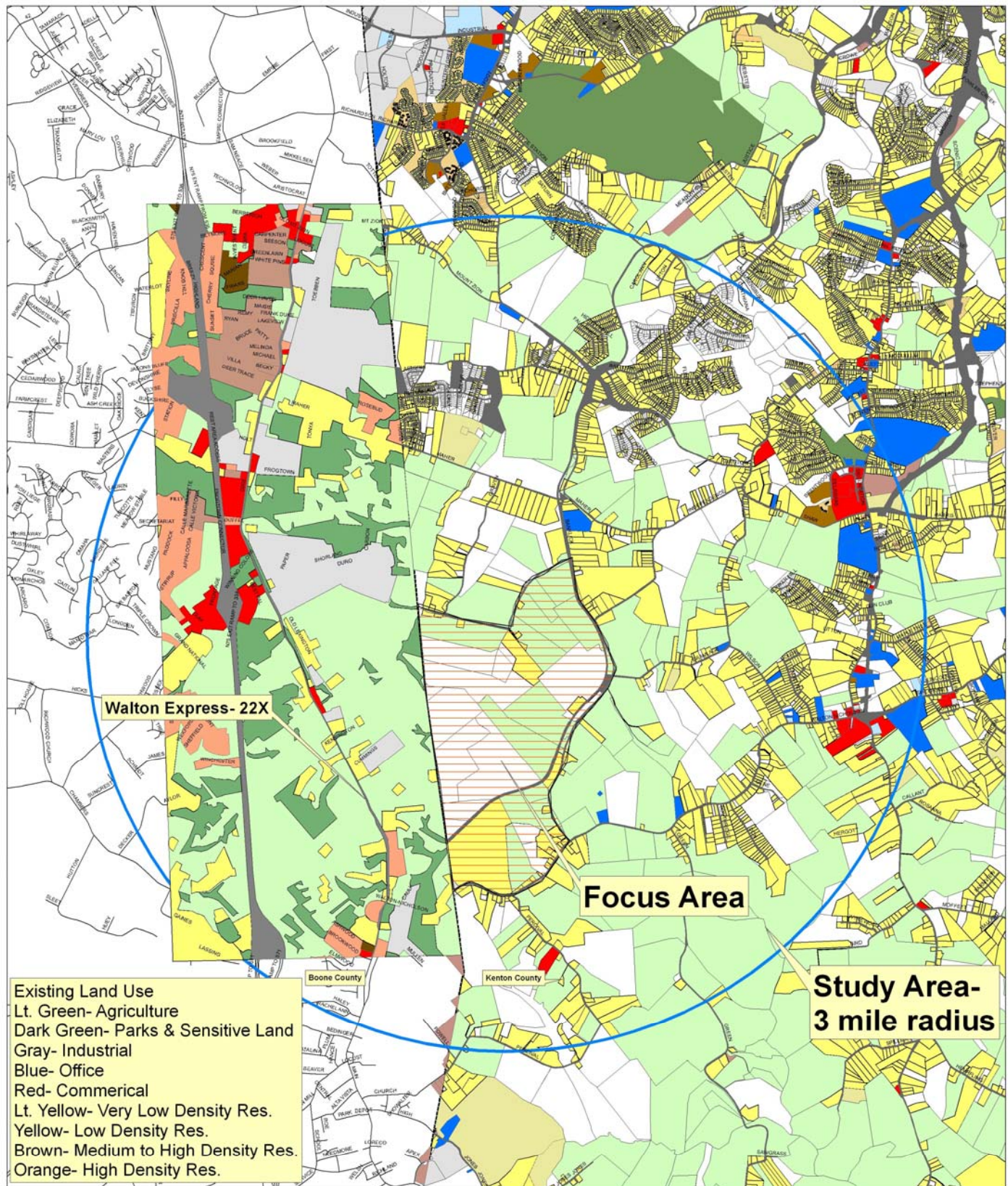
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MAP 3



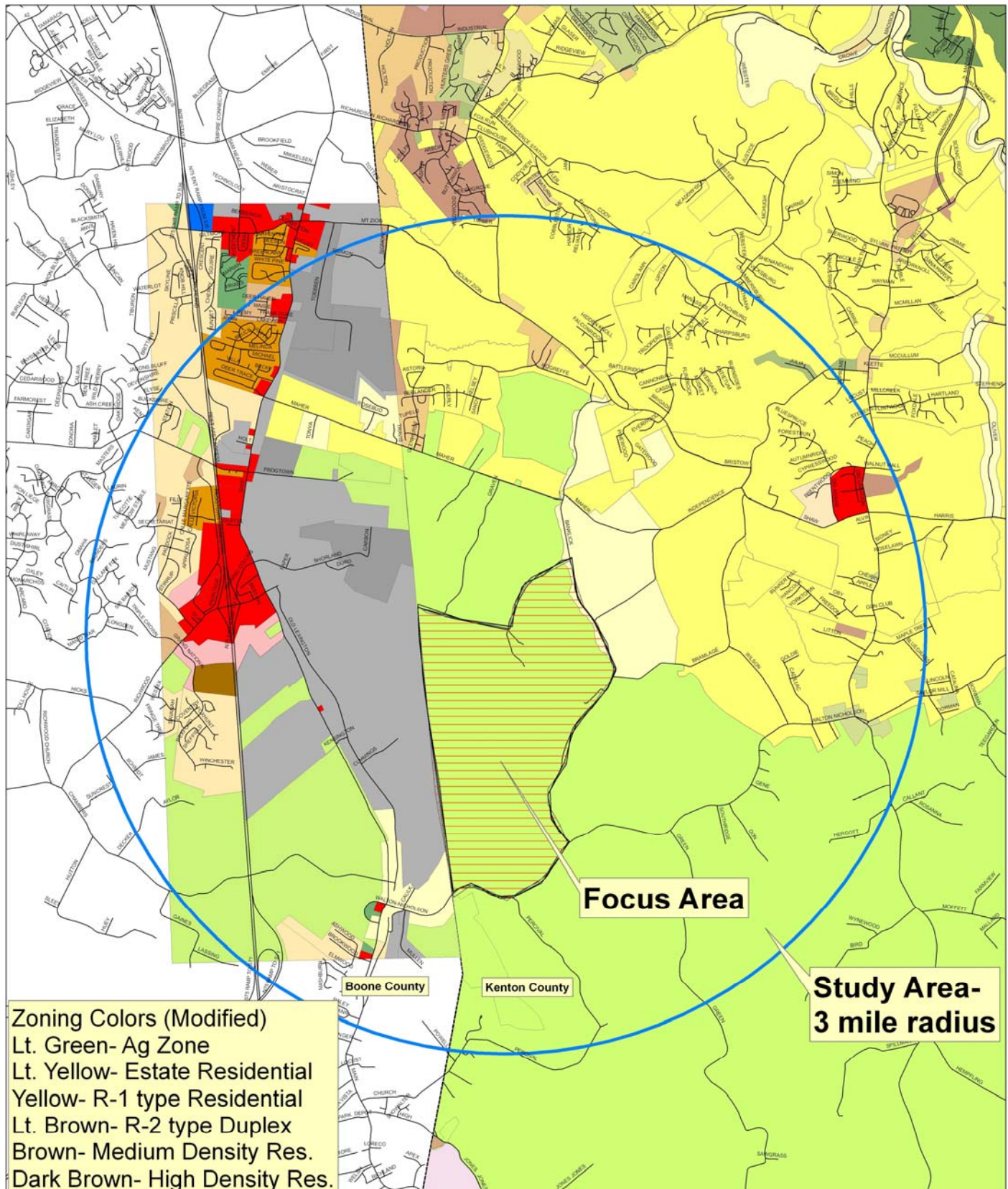
EXISTING LAND USE

MAP 4

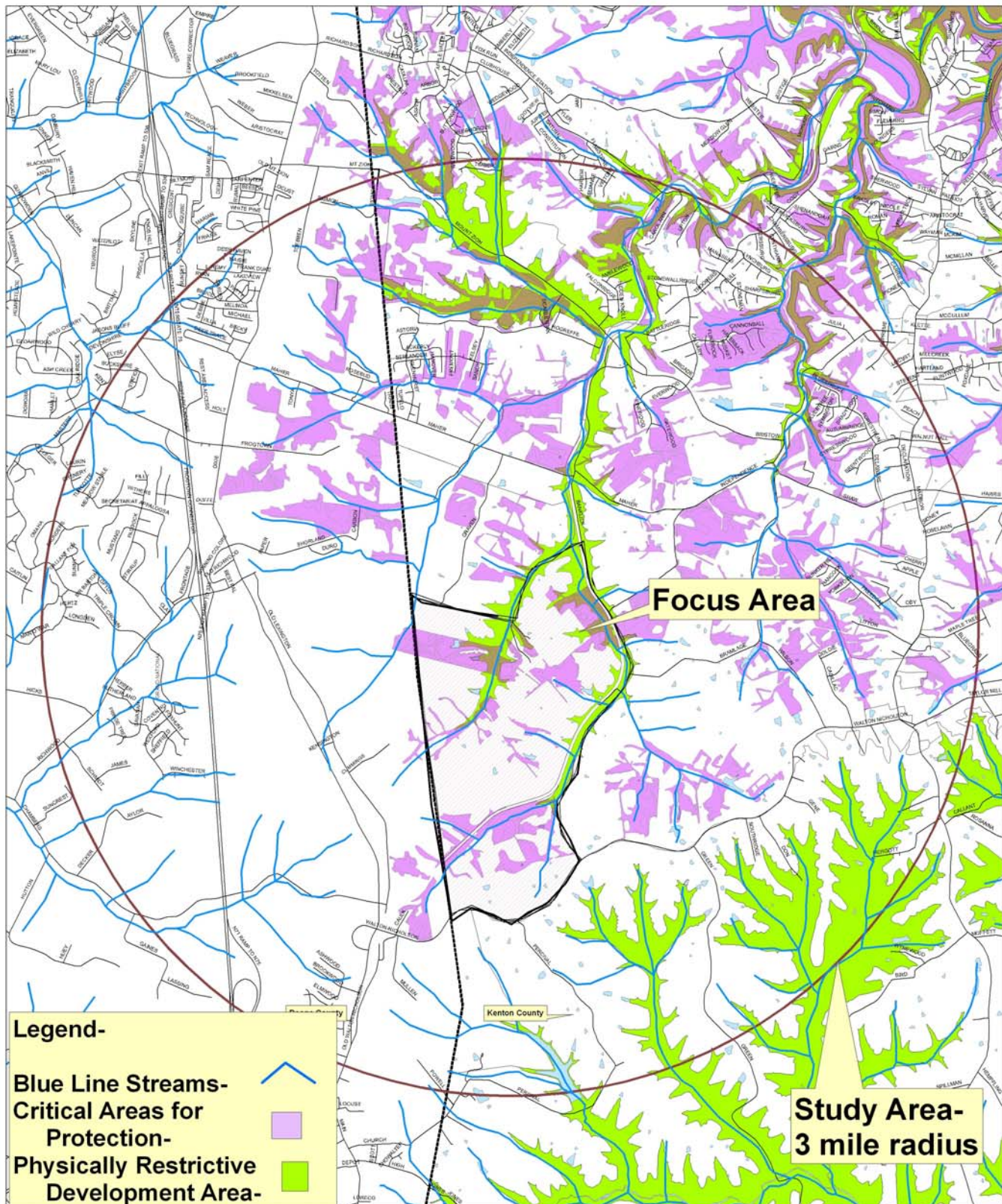


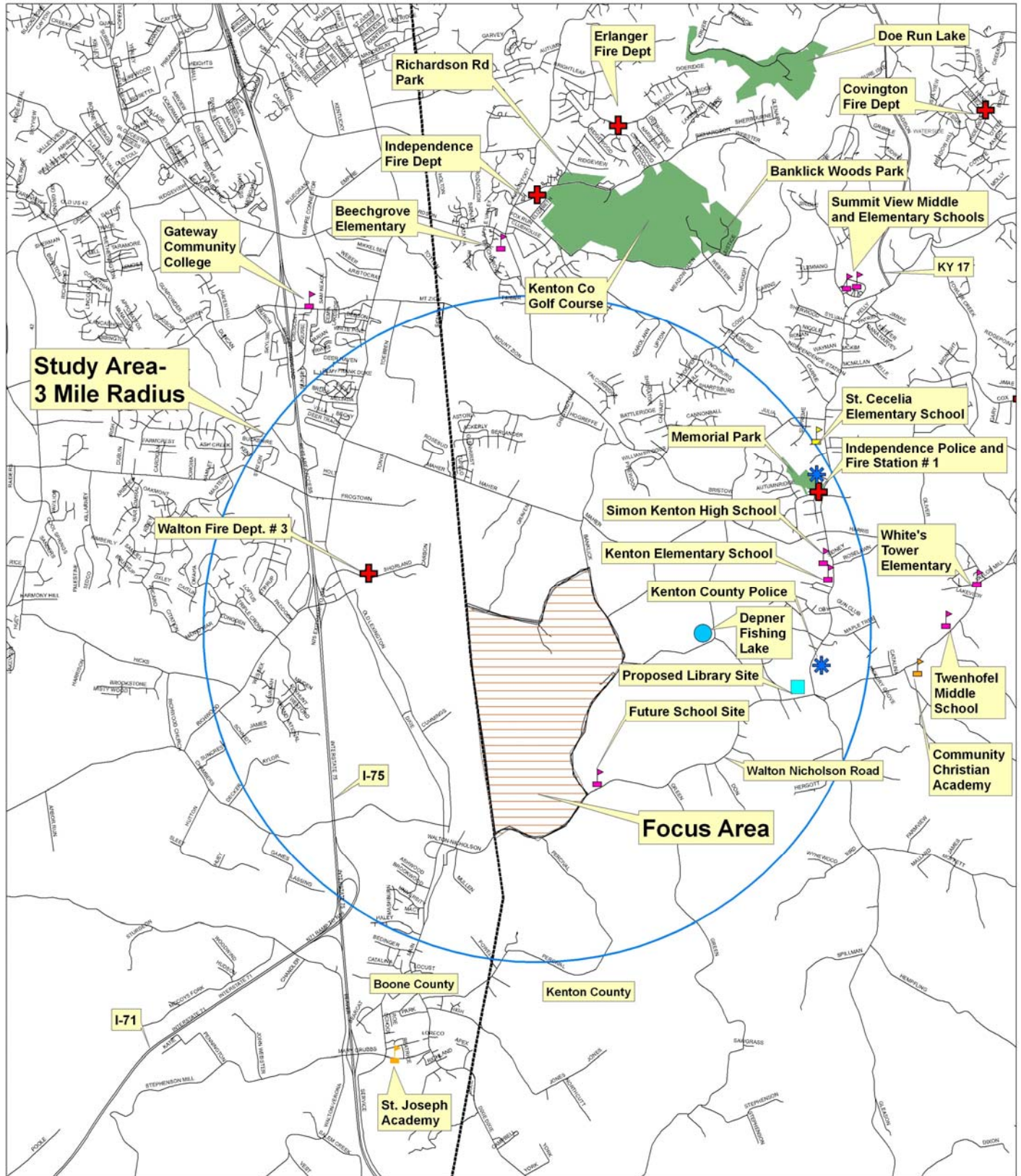
EXISTING ZONING

MAP 5



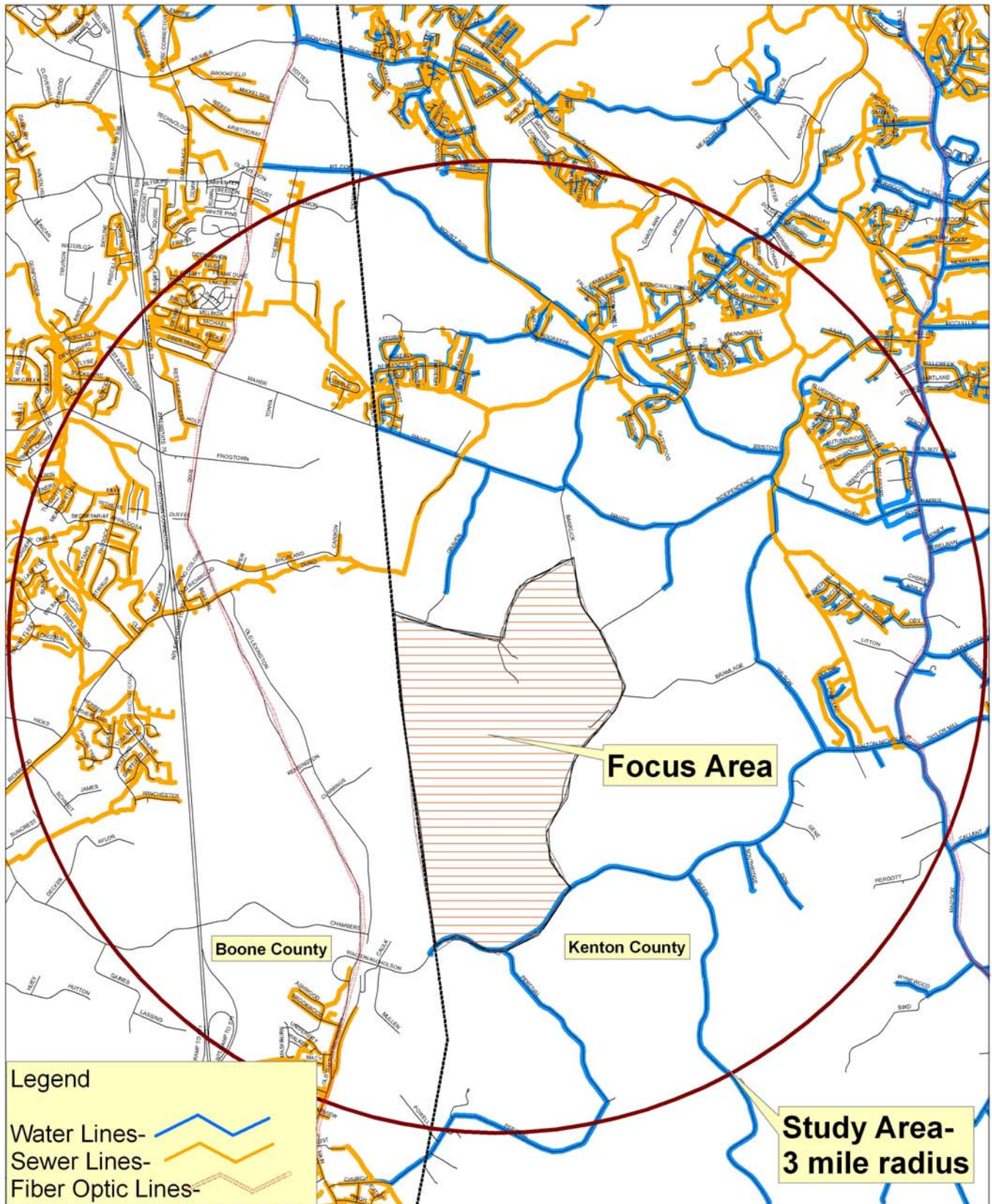
ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS MAP 6





UTILITIES

MAP 8



MAP 9 ON PAGE 2-9

TRAFFIC COUNT AND BUS SERVICE MAP 10

