

MEMORANDUM

To: Town Council

From: Community Development Committee (CDC)
Councilor Rodden, Chair
Councilor Pierce
Councilor Varney

Date: September 20, 2010

Re: Proposed Route One Vision and Design Concepts

In late 2002 the Falmouth Town Council directed the formation of the Route One Corridor Committee to study “land use patterns, community design, and traffic volume within Falmouth’s Village Center, and further directed the Committee to make recommendations to Council regarding these issues. The intent of these recommendations was to begin the transformation of the corridor from an automobile-based suburban service center to a pedestrian-friendly, pedestrian-scaled New England village center.”¹

The Route One Corridor Committee finalized its report in 2005, however it was never adopted by the Town Council. The Community Development Committee (CDC) was assigned by the Council to review and finalize the proposed 2005 Route One Study.

The CDC recognizes the value of the 2005 Route One Study and the work done by that committee. It is in agreement with almost all of the study’s recommendations. The CDC has taken the best of the 2005 plan and infused it with its thinking of 2010 and what it learned from the Falmouth Shopping Center Community Event held in October 2009. It is the consensus of the CDC to report these recommendations to the Town Council..

In coming up with these recommendations, the CDC met with several members of the former 2005 Route One Study Committee and had input from the public.

At this time the CDC would like Council feedback on these recommendations before it embarks on developing the required details to support this vision.

VISION

The CDC’s 2010 vision for the Route One area - from the intersection with Route 88 up to the Falmouth Shopping Center – is a dynamic area with diverse uses that is a destination for many people, one which strongly encourages walking for multi-purpose trips and stimulates repeat visits.

¹ Source: Executive Summary, Falmouth Village Center: Proposed Zoning Amendments, May 26, 2005

To that end, the CDC envisions:

- a denser pattern of development of the Route One area with activities day and night,
- a variety of uses, including residential uses,
- an emphasis on pedestrians and sidewalks,
- attractive landscaping that appeals to businesses and shoppers, and
- limiting the size of large stores, so Falmouth can retain its character.

The CDC recommends that these improvements be made at a pace that is reasonable and comfortable to business owners in the area. Some of the proposed changes, such as building setbacks from streets, parking placement and building height, will only be required when a completely new building is designed.

The CDC vision for Route One has a public and a private component:

- The public component consists of investment in, and improvement of, the public right-of-way (ROW) infrastructure of Route One to make it an attractive and functional street.
- The private component consists of land use regulations for new construction on private properties in this area, while retaining ordinance flexibility for building renovations and additions.

RECOMMENDATION OVERVIEW

The CDC envisioned several improvements in road infrastructure that would make Route One more attractive, cohesive, and user-friendly. The CDC recommends that an Infrastructure Improvement Plan be prepared for this section of Route One to help guide investments in this area. Such a plan would focus on all required improvements in the public right-of-way (ROW).

Preparation of this plan and subsequent implementation would be paid for with Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, developer contributions, and State/Federal funds, where applicable, and be coordinated with the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS). Note: The costs, cost share, and timing involved in the preparation and implementation of such a plan has not yet been determined.

Recommended improvements include:

- Completing missing sidewalk links,
- Building sidewalks of consistent materials,
- Constructing striped bike lanes (as part of roadway) or bike paths (as part of widened, joint use sidewalk),
- Placing all existing overhead power lines along Route One underground, and
- Making street tree planting and landscaping improvements.

CDC agreement with 2005 Study:

- All development must contribute to a vibrant, attractive, safe, walkable, human-scaled, mixed-use, around the clock village that is appealing to residents, businesses and consumers alike.
- Larger, higher-intensity commercial activity should be concentrated in the proposed Village Center 1 (VC-1) district (i.e. northerly portion of study area).
- High development density (2 to 4 stories) should be allowed.
- Useable 2nd stories should be required in VC-1 zone.
- Front yard setbacks should be reduced (see also “deviation” paragraph below)
- Residential uses on upper floors should be encouraged.

- There should be a maximum footprint size of buildings (see also “deviation” paragraph below).
- The proposed Village Center – Municipal (VC-M) district is proposed to remain as is, with exception of the Library property if the library relocates and the current Library building is sold. The current library property is proposed to be included in the VC-1 zone.
- The boundary between the VC-1 and VC-2 is proposed to remain as originally proposed.

CDC deviation from 2005 Study:

1. Setbacks:

- a. The 2005 Study recommended reducing the front yard setback in the VC-1 district to a 55 feet “build-to” line to make the fronts of buildings a consistent distance from the street.
- b. The CDC recommends that front yard setbacks should be a min. 0 feet to max. 25 feet from property line for VC-1 and to min. 0 feet to max. 75 feet from property line for VC-2.

The CDC reasoning is:

- Build-to line for lots is an inflexible tool as circumstances are different for each lot and right-of-way widths vary substantially.
- Even alignment of buildings (“street wall”) will not be accomplished, and may not be desirable, as right-of-way widths vary.
- 55 feet setback in VC-1 permits parking in front yard and does not promote pedestrian-friendly development.

2. Parking

- The 2005 Study recommended that “parking lots must be sited to be as unobtrusive as possible,” but did not set any setback limits.
For the VC-1 district the CDC recommends to not allow parking between building and Route 1, i.e. all parking is to be located to side and in rear of buildings. For the VC-2 district, the CDC recommends to allow up to one (1) row of parking between building and Route 1.

3. Maximum Building Footprint:

- The 2005 Study recommended in the VC-1 district a maximum footprint limit of 60,000 sf, and a maximum footprint of 90,000 sf as a conditional use. For the VC-2 district the Study recommended a maximum footprint of 30,000 sf and a maximum footprint of 50,000 sf as a conditional use.
- While the CDC concurred with having a maximum footprint limit, CDC opinions on such a limit ranged from 65,000-90,000 sf in VC-1 district and 50,000-75,000 sf in VC-2 district, and not have any conditional use limits.

4. Renovations and Additions:

- The 2005 Study recommended that additions and renovations be required to adhere to certain design guidelines. “When the existing building is below the quality of these design guidelines, and the redevelopment threshold is exceeded, the entire structure must be upgraded.”²
- The CDC recommends that the proposed setback, parking, and building height standards apply only to new construction. The CDC recommends flexibility for all renovations and additions. The necessary details for this will be prepared as a next step by the CDC.

All of these recommendations, except for the one noted above, represent the consensus of CDC members.

What follows are specific physical aspects and proposed land use regulations that will guide future private development in this area.

PROPOSED LAND USE REGULATIONS

Note: The permitted uses below include all of the permitted uses recommended in 2005 study as well as most of the proposed conditional uses from the 2005 study.

Permitted Uses VC-1 and VC-2 Districts:

- Retail and service establishments
- Business and professional offices
- Commercial sales and services
- Public/municipal uses
- Restaurants, excluding drive-through
- Convenience stores with gas pumps
- Auto repair and service facilities
- Residential dwelling units only on upper floors for parcels with Route One frontage, and on all floors for parcels without Route One frontage.
- Farmers Markets
- Theatres
- Wholly enclosed places of assembly, amusement, recreation and government
- Private clubs
- Medical offices
- Veterinary clinics
- Hotels
- Outdoor recreational facilities
- Public utilities
- Outdoor eating areas
- Day care centers
- Structured parking

² The threshold that requires that certain design standards are adhered to included:

- The floor area of an existing structure is expanded by up to 50% of its existing floor area;
- Any new free-standing primary-use structure is constructed;
- Internal renovations of 10,000 s.f. or greater of any existing structure are undertaken, or;
- Site improvements with a construction cost in excess of \$100,000 are undertaken.

- Accessory buildings and uses

Permitted Uses VC-2 District Only:

- Automobile sales
- Greenhouses and plant production facilities

Conditional Uses VC-1 and VC-2 Districts:³

- Drive-through restaurants
- Outdoor sales and storage of equipment and materials

Conditional Uses VC-1 District Only:

- Religious institutions

Conditional Uses Village Center 2 (VC-2) District

- Outdoor sales and storage of equipment and materials
- Drive-through restaurants

Village Center 3 (VC-3) District Boundaries

- The VC-3 district is proposed to be incorporated in the VC-1 District.

Village Center M (VC-M) District Boundaries

- The Falmouth Memorial Library property, located in the 2005 proposed VC-M district, is proposed to be placed in the VC-1 District, if the library relocates and the current Library building is sold.

Building front setback for new construction in VC-1:

- Minimum: 0 feet
- Maximum: 25 feet

Building front setback for new construction in VC-2:

- Minimum: 0 feet
- Maximum: 75 feet

Building Orientation and Pedestrian Entrances in VC-1 and VC-2:

Buildings, and their pedestrian entrances, shall be oriented towards Route One.

³ Conditional uses may be granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals after considering the characteristics and location of the proposed use and of other properties in the surrounding neighborhood, provided that the proposed use is, among other criteria (see section 8.3 of the Zoning and Site Plan Review Ordinance):

- compatible with the general character of the neighborhood with regard to design, scale, and bulk of proposed structures;
- will not have a significant detrimental effect on the use and peaceful enjoyment of abutting property as a result of noise, vibrations, fumes, odor, dust, light or glare.
- will not have a significant adverse effect on adjacent or nearby property values;
- will not result in significant hazards to pedestrian or vehicular traffic or significant traffic congestion; and
- will be served adequately by, but will not overburden, existing public services and facilities, including fire protection services, sanitary sewers, roads, water and storm drainage systems.

In addition, site plan approval will be required from the Planning Board.



Figure 1: Example of an internal street, Maine Street Station, Brunswick

- If an internal street is proposed, buildings, and their pedestrian entrances, shall be oriented to that internal street.
- Where buildings front Route One as well as an internal street, orientation to Route One shall take precedence.
- Additional pedestrian entrances (e.g. from side and/or rear parking areas) are permitted.

Building height for new construction:

Village Center 1 zone (VC-1):

- Minimum: 2 stories, useable space both stories
- Maximum: 4 stories

Village Center 2 zone (VC-2):

- Minimum: 2 stories, upper story may be vacant space and building may be one story with peaked roof and architectural features to give appearance of 2 story height.
- Maximum: 4 stories



Figure 2: Two-story Maine Medical Center office on Bucknam Road



Figure 3: Multi-story mixed-use building on Clearwater Drive (7,484 sf footprint)

- No parking is permitted between the building and the front property line, i.e. all parking is to be located to the side and rear of buildings
- A maximum of one double-loaded parking aisle is allowed between the building and the side property line.

- Parking on the side of buildings shall not extend closer to the street than the front façade.
- The space between the end of the side parking lot and the roadway shall be landscaped to screen the side parking lot.

Location of parking for new construction in VC-2:

- A maximum of one (1) single parking row is permitted between the building and the front property line.
- All other parking is to be located to the side and rear of buildings.
- Exception: parking area which is used for the display of vehicles for sale.
- A maximum of one double-loaded parking aisle is allowed between the building and the side property line.
- Parking on the side of buildings shall not extend closer to the street than the front façade.
- The space between the end of the side parking lot and the roadway shall be landscaped to screen the side parking lot.

Landscaping for new construction in VC-1 and VC-2:

- Locate landscaping so as to reduce visibility of parked cars as viewed from Route One.
- Landscaping may be located partially in ROW (Note: The Planning Board currently allows, with written MDOT permission, landscaping to be located in the ROW; i.e. this is not a new concept.)

Recommended, but not required, features for specific uses for new construction in VC-1 and VC-2:

- Banks should be recommended and encouraged to install a pedestrian-friendly ATM with 24-accessibility.
- Restaurants should be encouraged to install outdoor seating between building and street.

Utilities for new construction in VC-1 and VC-2:

- Require underground electrical service connections for new construction as well as renovations above the development threshold level (TBD).

Maximum Building Footprint: ⁴

⁴ In considering this section, the CDC referred to the size of existing footprints for certain commercial buildings in Falmouth and southern Maine:

Falmouth

• Falmouth Shopping Center	216,300 SF
- Old Shaw's	50,800 SF
- Current Shaw's	71,900 SF
• Wal-Mart complex	116,000 SF
• Shops at Falmouth Village (4)	76,150 SF
• Hannaford's Plaza	63,600 SF

Southern Maine

• Kohl's, Westbrook	89,000 SF
• Home Depot, Topsham	95,000 SF
• Target, South Portland	120,000 SF
• Target, Topsham	124,500 SF
• Lowe's, Portland	137,000 SF



Figure 4: Home Depot in West Lebanon, NH (source: <http://www.bigboxevaluator.org/e-design.php>)

While all members agreed that there should be a maximum building footprint for single-tenant buildings in VC-1 and VC-2, opinions differed what that square foot footprint should be. The individual recommendations by the CDC members are stated below.

Single-tenant buildings:

- VC-1: Permitted use -Max. 65,000 sf (Pierce)
- VC-1: Permitted use -Max. 75,000 sf (Rodden)
- VC-1: Permitted use -Max. 90,000 sf (Varney)

- VC-2: Permitted use -Max. 50,000 sf (Pierce/Rodden)
- VC-2: Permitted use -Max. 75,000 sf (Varney)

There was agreement on the maximum size of multi-tenant buildings:

Multi-tenant buildings:

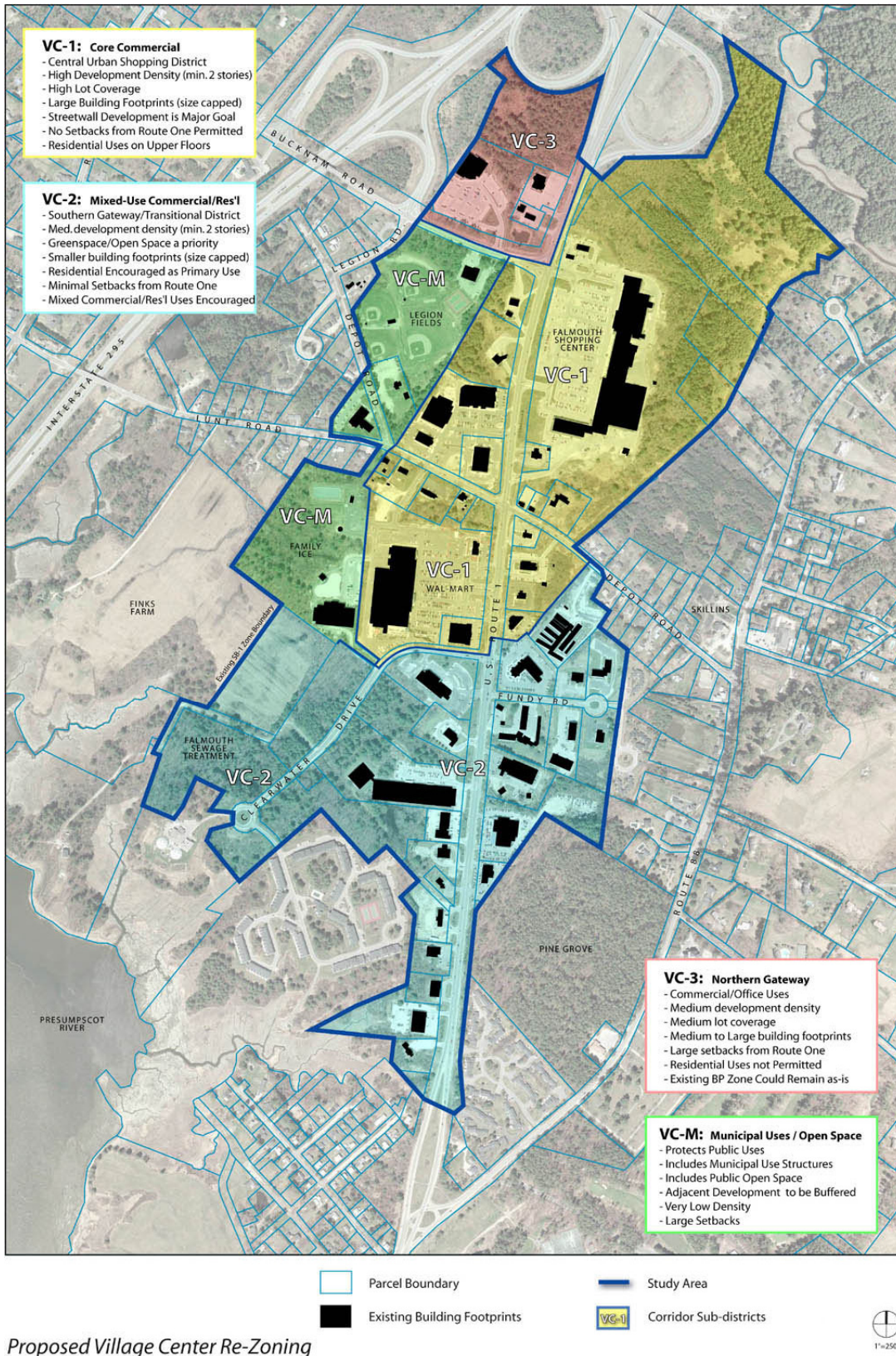
- VC-1: Permitted use – Max. 120,000 sf (no single tenant to exceed a maximum footprint of 60,000 sf)

- VC-2: Permitted use – Max. 90,000 sf (no single tenant to exceed a maximum footprint of 50,000 sf)

Renovations and additions in VC-1 and VC-2:

- Renovations and expansions are exempt from the following standards stated above:
 - o setback,
 - o parking, and
 - o building height standards.
- Note: All other proposed standards stated above (such as maximum building footprint, permitted uses, landscaping, utilities) and other existing and applicable standards will continue to apply for renovations and expansions. This will be clarified in the detailed ordinance language that will be prepared.
- Renovations and expansions that voluntarily meet the setback, parking, as well as building height standards for new construction may be eligible for a property tax incentive (e.g. Credit Enhancement Tax Increment Financing). The specific incentive and conditions that will govern them have not been determined.

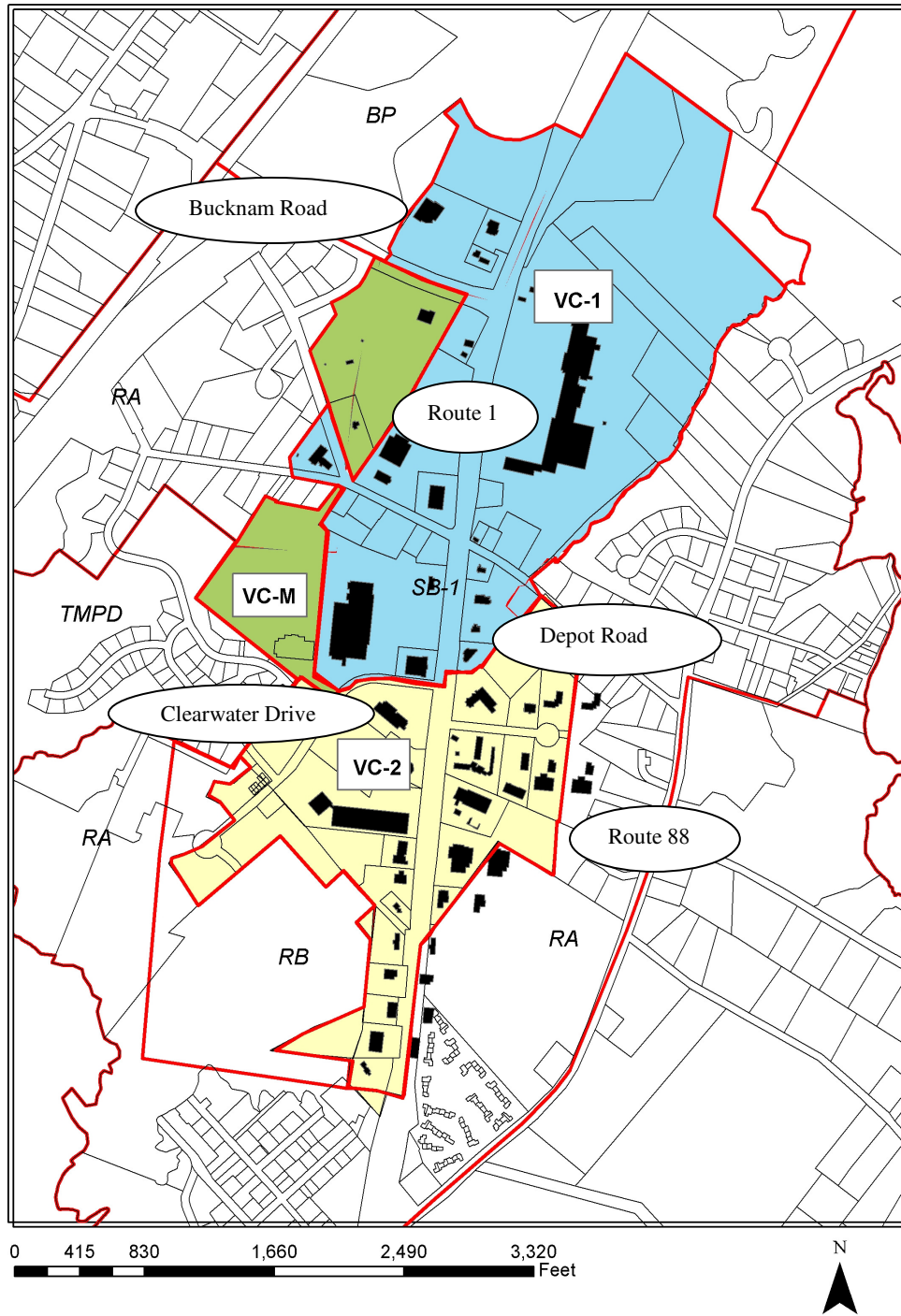
Figure 5: Proposed Zoning Map in 2005 Plan



Proposed Village Center Re-Zoning

Falmouth Route One Corridor Study

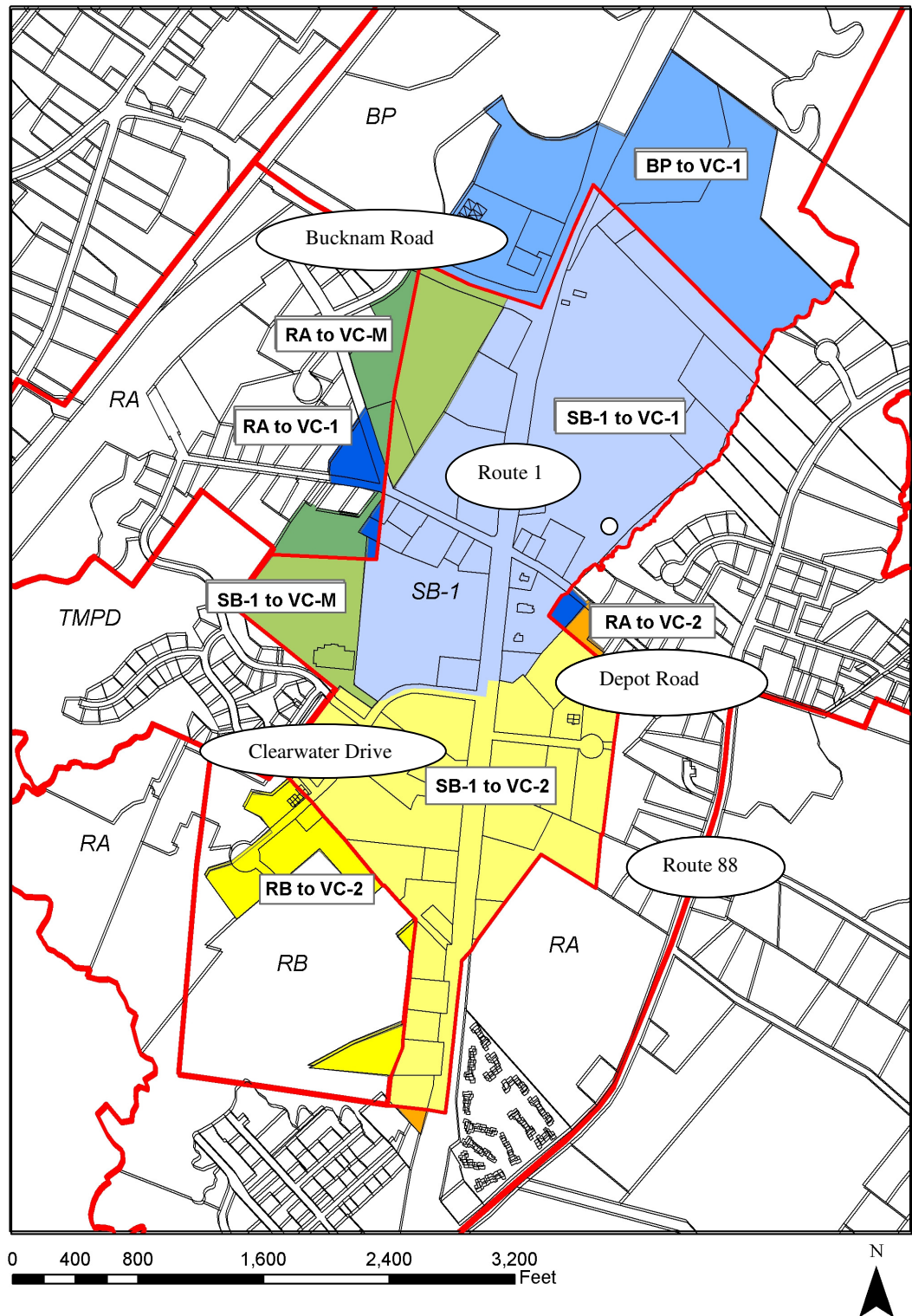
Figure 6: Proposed zoning map in 2010



Proposed Zoning for Route One, Falmouth

Draft: September 8, 2010

Figure 7: Map of proposed zoning changes required



Proposed Zoning for Route One, Falmouth

Draft: September 8, 2010