September 25, 2009

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting: Charrette #1: Existing Conditions/Visioning
Time: 6:30 – 8:30 PM
Data: September 22, 2009
Location: Community Christian School at 2001 Jodeco Road
Attendance: Estimated 50 members of the public, approximately 10 staff or consultants

Introduction and Welcome

An introduction to the planning process was provided by Brecca Johnson of Henry County Planning and Zoning. Mrs. Johnson thanked participants for attending, spoke briefly of the importance of the meeting, and then presented Caleb Racicot of Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates (TSW), Project Manager for the consultant team.

Following Mrs. Johnson's introduction, Mr. Racicot greeted the public, stressed the important opportunity that this study represented to plan for growth, and then introduced the consultant team and their roles in the master planning process. Consultants present included Woody Giles of TSW, Melissa Mailloux and Eleanor Matthews of Marketek, and Kristen Wescott and Jim Brown of URS Corporation. Mr. Racicot then provided a brief overview of the LCI program, its schedule, and its process before commencing on the review of existing conditions.

Please note that presentations and findings can be found at www.henrycountylci.org

Presentation: Land Use & Urban Design

Mr. Racicot provided a summary of key land use and urban design findings, including:
- Existing land uses, which are primarily vacant (57%) or commercial (20%).
- Existing future land use policies.
- Existing zoning, including results of a built-out analysis identifying how much potential development could be constructed under current entitlement.
- Existing environmental factors, including floodplains, creeks, ponds, and woodlands.
- Existing urban design features, of which there are very few.
- Existing historic resources, including one historic building and several landscapes.

Mr. Racicot then asked if there were any questions or comments. No questions were asked, but it was noted that there were rumors of Native American stone formations somewhere west of I-75, and that the consultant team should be aware of this.

Presentation: Transportation and Utilities

Mrs. Wescott provided a summary of key transportation and utility findings, including:
- Existing road classifications and network
- Existing planned projects

- Existing sewer and water coverage

Mrs. Westcott then asked if there were any questions or comments. Questions included:

Q. What is the status of the Jodeco Road Bridge reconstruction project?
A. Mrs. Cheri Matthews of Henry County indicated that the process was moving forward at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and, if all goes as planned and funding is provided, should commence in 2011.

Q. How will the planned widening of Jonesboro Road affect my commute?
A. Mrs. Wescott indicated that GDOT will prepare a plan to minimize construction disruptions.

Presentation: Market Study
Ms. Mailloux provided a summary of market study findings, stressing that all such findings suggest what there is market support for, but not what is actually appropriate for the study area. These include:
- Housing demands
- Retail demands
- Office demands

Ms. Mailloux then asked if there were any questions or comments. Questions included:

Q. How will the plan relate to the Henry County economic development plan?
A. Ms. Mailloux explained that she had read the draft plan and that this LCI study will coordinate with it as recommendations are developed.

Q. You mentioned the “Henry Town Center” in the presentation. Is this the planned mall?
A. Ms. Mailloux indicated that she was referring to the existing shopping center on Jonesboro Road, where Target is. Mr. Racicot then explained that there was a proposal for a major new shopping center on Jodeco Road, but that it was a different project.

Q. Mr. Racicot said earlier that “We know what we want.” How do you know what we want?
A. Mr. Racicot asked in which context the statement had been made. He then indicated that he did not recall saying that, and apologized if he had misspoken. He then stressed that the plan’s vision is based on public input, including the opportunity presented tonight, and that nothing has been determined yet.

Presentation: Image Preference Survey (IPS) Results

Following the presentation of findings, Mr. Racicot presented the results of the image preference survey. A total of 164 people took the survey, which was a strong amount of participation compared with many other communities that TSW has worked in.

Survey results varied, but general themes were evident among all the high-scoring images:
- Participants value green space. All high-scoring images of housing, retail, streetscapes, or the like, including trees and landscaping. This includes landscaping in the front yard, along with street trees.
- Participants want new development to preserve natural features or provide new open space.
- Participants would like buildings reflecting the study area, rather than corporate prototypes.
- Participates would like the area to become more pedestrian-oriented, including both transportation facilities and development design.

- Participants view the area as becoming primarily commercial or mixed-use, with few single-use residential areas.

Prize Drawing
Before breaking into the breakout session, a drawing of assorted prizes donated by Chick-fil-A at 301 Jonesboro Road and BJ's was held. Four prized were awarded.

Visioning Breakout Session

Charrette attendees were then given an opportunity to share their ideas about the study area's future at a series of focused breakout tables dedicated to different topics. Ideas could be expressed either verbally or by drawing on maps. The following is a summary of ideas that were discussed and includes both maps and text.

Please note that these ideas reflect public comments given at specific breakout tables. They have not been categorized by topic, nor are they endorsements of specific recommendations. All comments will be taken into consideration by the consultant team and Henry County as draft recommendations are developed.

<u>Markets & Economics Table</u>
Participants expressed the following desires for the study area:
- *The area needs something similar to Atlantic Station – a shopping area with a mix of national retailers ("mall" stores) and specialty boutiques.*
- *There needs to be something for families with children – children's clothing stores, toys, etc. and recreational activities for kids and families.*
- *Housing should include a mix – homes w/ yards for families and kids AND condos/townhouses etc. that would appeal to older adults.*
- *Retail should be along Patrick Henry Parkway.*
- *The area needs a 5-star hotel.*
- *The identity should be like Peachtree City – "a mixed-use place where all your needs can be met within the community."*
- *Minimize traffic to make area more pedestrian-friendly, perhaps with elevated crossings.*
- *No tattoo parlors or strip clubs*
- *No strip malls*
- *Create attractive noise barriers and landscaping along I-75.*
- *To meet needs of older adults, make new development close together and easy to get to.*
- *Provide a trolley – something more attractive and easier to use than city buses. Two may be ideal – one that serves the study area and one that goes to McDonough or Stockbridge.*
- *Build mid-range restaurants – something better than fast food, but not overly fancy.*
- *Provide a variety of restaurants and cuisines.*
- *Offer high-end retail and some high-end restaurants*
- *Include an arts venue – performance and visual arts – similar to Cobb Energy Center. This will increase demand for restaurants and retail.*
- *Build an amphitheater like Peachtree City.*
- *Ensure attractive landscaping around new housing, and perhaps fountains.*
- *Establish quaint retail with a southern theme.*
- *Encourage developers to build space for local merchant.s*
- *Build yoga studio or exercise studio smaller than LA Fitness.*
- *Start up a neighborhood pub.*
- *Make surrounding subdivisions feel included in planning to reduce negative attitudes.*
- *We want the area to feel like a combination of small communities/neighborhoods rather than a larger urban area.*

- *Define town center and existing surrounding neighborhoods w/ gateways and other markers.*
- *The area is well-served in terms of personal services (dry cleaners, hair salons).*
- *Everything that is built, whether it is condos, apartments, etc., must be high quality.*
- *Keep high-density development in the north part of the study area, where several projects have been approved but stalled following economic downturn.*
- *Keep an architectural theme throughout.*
- *Make pedestrian-friendly development with parks.*
- *We need some sort of community center with meeting space for local organizations.*
- *Offer sidewalk cafes where diners can be part of community and activity on the street.*
- *Make sure fire and police service is adequate for new development. Potential for satellite police and fire sub-stations or new stations should be considered.*
- *Housing shown on pg. 15 of visual preference survey handout is most appropriate.*

<u>Vehicular Transportation Table – See scan of working map on page 7.</u>
Participants discussed the following options and ideas:

- *As the area develops, building an internal grid where appropriate.*
- *Build a north-south parkway with a landscaped median west of I-75 between Hudson Bridge Road and Jonesboro Road; it will benefit locals.*
- *Instead of a parkway, build a lower speed boulevard that is more pedestrian-friendly.*
- *Include sidewalks and bicycle facilities with the parkway; separate them from vehicle lanes.*
- *Extend the parkway/boulevard south of Jonesboro Road.*
- *Do not build a north-south parkway or boulevard west of I-75; the area should stay natural.*
- *Add a north-south streetcar or trolley; this could be rail or rubber tire.*
- *Lower speeds on Jodeco Road east of I-75 from 45 mph.*
- *Improve access to and from the Meadowbrook neighborhood by fixing intersections; of particular need is the intersection of Jodeco Road at Meadowbrook Drive.*
- *Provide non-motorized access to the planned Summit shopping center from neighborhoods to the southwest.Locations could include from Chambers Road or where Pond Drive intersects with Mt. Olive Road.*
- *Flippin Road (outside of the study area) provides higher speed north-south access, but we still need the parkway in the study area.*

<u>Non-Vehicular Transportation Table - See scan of working map on page 8.</u>
Participants discussed the following options and ideas:

- *Build sidewalks where missing along Patrick Henry Parkway and Jodeco Road.*
- *Provide sidewalks along the new north-south parkway.*
- *Create a multi-use bicycle/pedestrian connection from the potential north-south parkway to Patrick Henry Parkway at either: 1) Pates Creek (underpass), or 2) mid-way between exits 222 and 224 (bridge).*
- *Build a multi-use greenway trail along Walnut Creek, the creek behind Henry Town Center.*
- *Build a bicycle connection from the Walnut Creek greenway into Morgans Pond via Cypress Lane.*
- *Existing bicycle lanes on Hudson Bridge Road are too narrow and too close to traffic. There is also a problem with the high number of curb cuts.*
- *Build bicycle facilities along the potential north-south parkway, along Patrick Henry Parkway, and along Jonesboro Road (west of Mt. Olive Road).*
- *Create multi-use trails accommodating GEM electric vehicles having a maximum speed of 25 mph.*
- *Reduce school car and bus trips by building more bicycle and pedestrian alternatives.*
- *The planned GRTA Xpress park and ride lot should be a parking deck or paved with pervious pavement.*

Land Use: North Area Table (Hudson Bridge Road area) - See scan of working map on page 9.
Participants discussed the following options and ideas:

- *Provide more playgrounds and kid-friendly elements*
- *Patrick Henry Parkway needs to be pedestrian friendly; perhaps with a walk/bike path.*
- *The population is aging and needs opportunities to be active.*
- *Traffic along I-75 is noisy, so residential next to it is a bad idea unless sound barriers like those on GA 400 are provided.*
- *Hudson Bridge Road is ideal for high-rises; it would have good downtown views.*
- *Haphazard strip development has to stop.*
- *There needs to be more landscaping with new development.*
- *Do not build Atlantic Station-type buildings. Instead, respect "McDonough-type" architecture and its rural feel.*
- *Green space is important, but different types should be provided, with some wild, some more developed.*
- *An amphitheater would be nice.*
- *Develop a performing arts center around the large pond.*
- *There should be no residential between Patrick Henry Parkway and I-75.*
- *We need places to bicycle and rollerblade.*

Land Use: Central Area Table (Jodeco Road area) - See scan of working map on page 10.
Participants discussed the following options and ideas:

- *Provide space along Jodeco Road, on the north side, for a fire/rescue facility.*
- *Move Feucht Road west.*
- *Develop a mixed-use center north of Feucht Road with offices, housing, and above ground parking decks behind buildings.*
- *Put upscale restaurants and hotels along Patrick Henry Parkway, north of the planned GRTA Xpress lot.*
- *Create a village around the pond at the end of Feucht Road, including retail along the pond and higher-end rental housing for the elderly or empty-nesters.*
- *Develop the large tract south of Jodeco Road into a mixed-use area focused around a central park. Said park should include a dog park, perimeter multi-use path 2 miles in length, seating areas, walking paths, and amphitheaters. Surrounding the park should be high-end restaurants such as Maggiano's Little Italy, Cheesecake Factory, or Carrabba's, along with recreation, such as a Dave & Buster's. At the south end of the site, create a recreation center with pool, tennis, racquetball, etc., along with recreation facilities for small children and an ice cream shop, such as Dip 'n Dots.*
- *Provide a green buffer along the north side of Mt. Olive Road.*
- *Relocate Mt. Olive Road east of Pond Drive to the north.*

Land Use: South Area Table (Jonesboro Road area) - See scan of working map on page 11.
Participants discussed the following options and ideas:

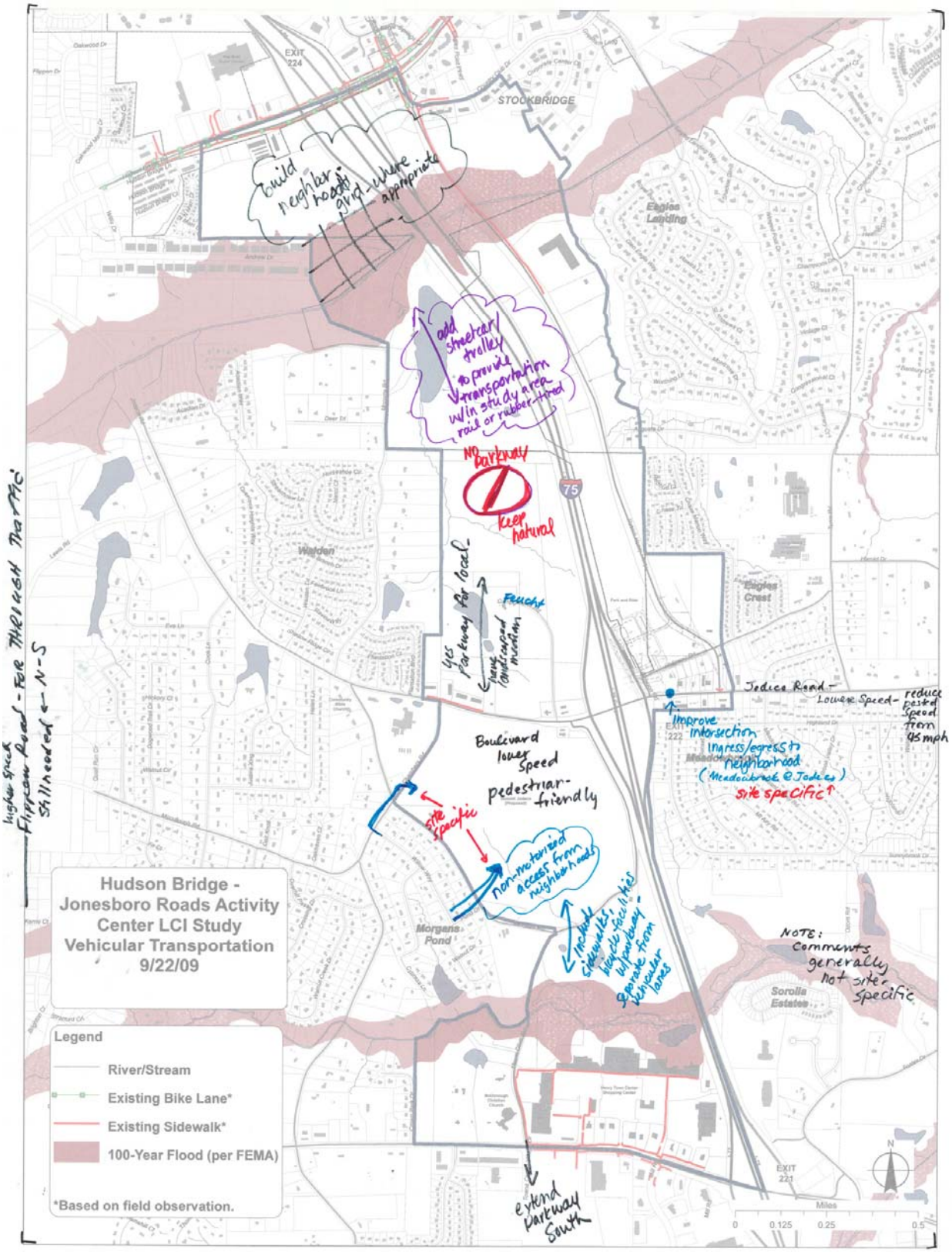
- *Plan for the eventual redevelopment of the Henry Town Center. Allow existing stores to be reused, but allow gradual redevelopment of the parking into mixed-uses and streets.*
- *Preserve the flood zone along Walnut Creek as open space.*
- *Build housing, possibly townhouses, behind the Henry Town Center fronting the proposed Walnut Creek open space if/when the shopping center transitions to other uses.*
- *Create new streets along the edges of both sides of the Walnut Creek open space to increase access and visibility.*
- *Create a walkway/path from Mt. Olive Road, along Walnut Creek, to the Morgans Pond subdivision.*
- *Convert Mt. Olive Road to a parkway with preserved green space on its side in this area. This would reflect the rural history of the area.*

- *Preserve the Mt. Olive Baptist Church site and cemetery; retain rural character.*
- *Create a mixed-use or commercial center east of the parkway, on the current campground. Include a focal point around existing pond and new streets. Uses can be flexible, but should be residential along Mt. Olive Road and with a rural setback.*
- *Relocate Mt. Olive Road north of the church to property proposed for the Summit project.*
- *Incorporate roundabouts on side streets, but not the parkway.*
- *Develop the land west of McDonough Christian Church into commercial or mixed-uses.*

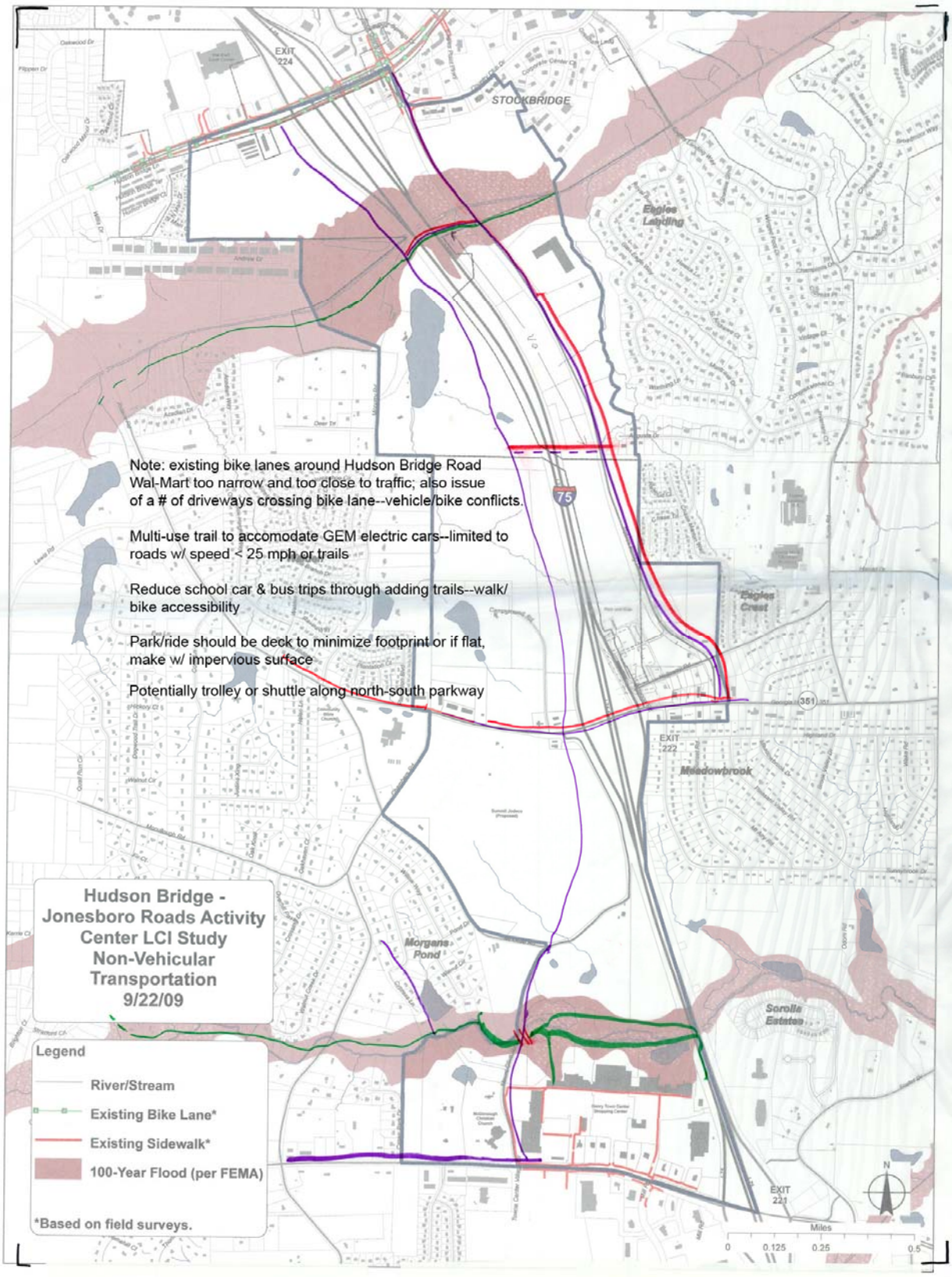
Meeting Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 8:40 PM when the last member of the public left.

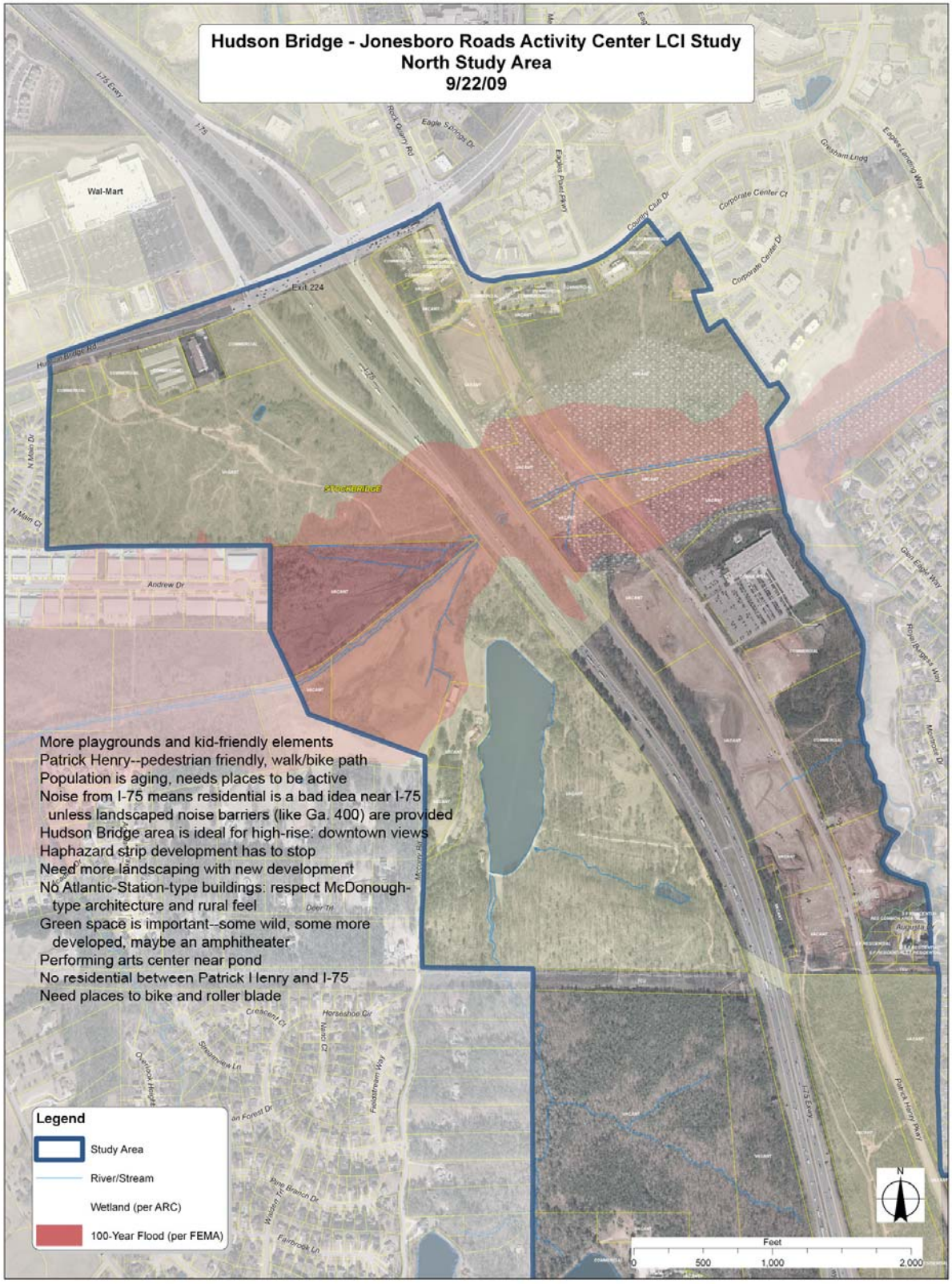
Vehicular Transportation



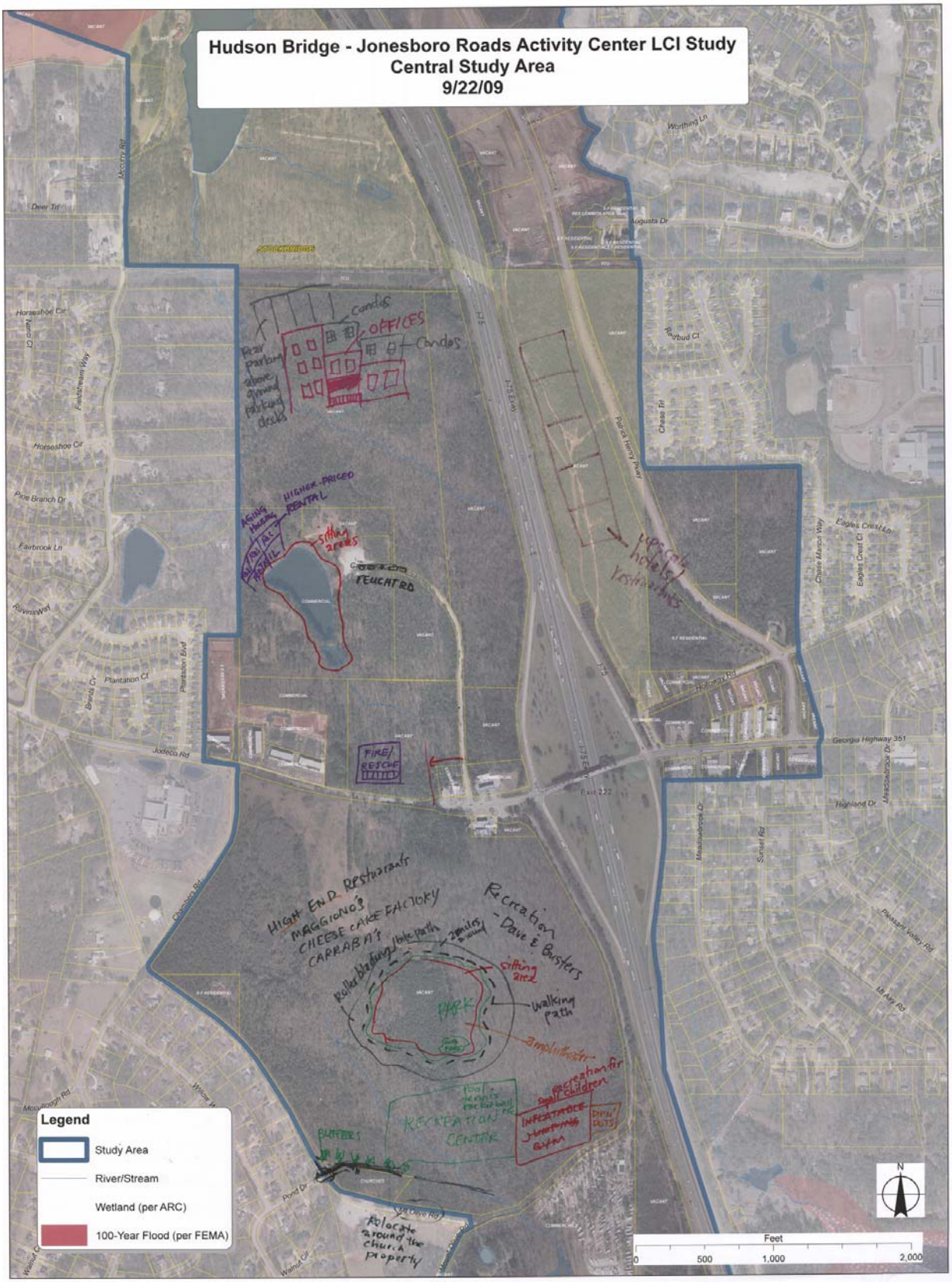
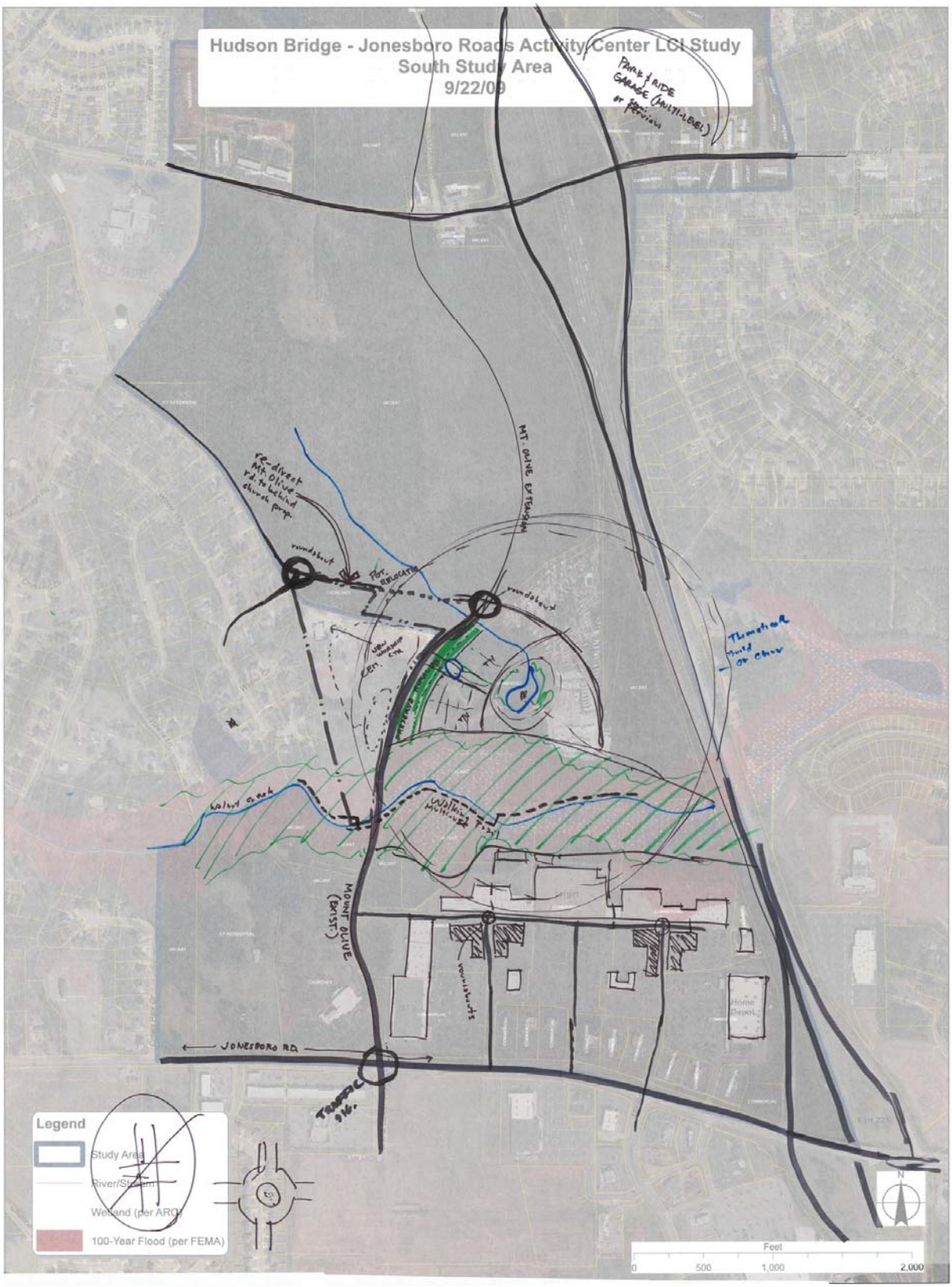
Non-Vehicular Transportation



North Study Area



Central Study Area



South Study Area