

Chapel Hill's Southern ETJ

Opportunities and Constraints

Town Council Work Session

April 8, 2026

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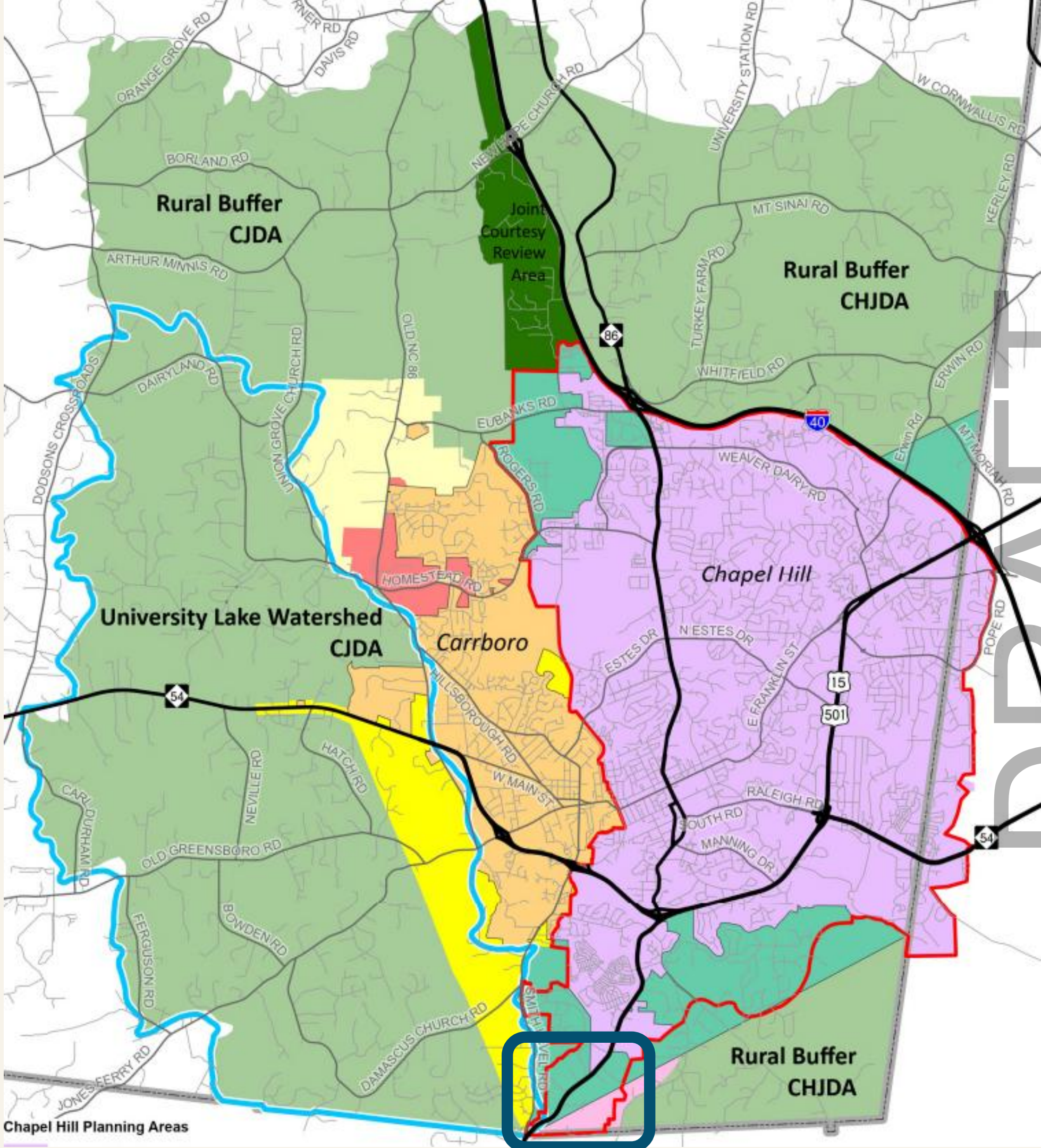
TOWN OF
**CHAPEL
HILL**

Agenda

- Brief History of WASMPBA
- Development Potential
- Sewer Alignment Study

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This discussion focuses on the portion of the Southern ETJ between South Creek/Southern Village and the Chatham County line.



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The WASMPBA expansion opened the door for local planning.

New development will face significant constraints.

Expanding sewer service is feasible, but very expensive.

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WASMPBA

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WASMPBA

Basics

- “Water and Sewer Management Planning and Boundary Agreement”
- Defines OWASA’s service area
- Amendments to the service area require approval from:
 - Chapel Hill
 - Carrboro
 - Hillsborough
 - Orange County
 - OWASA

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WASMPBA Expansion

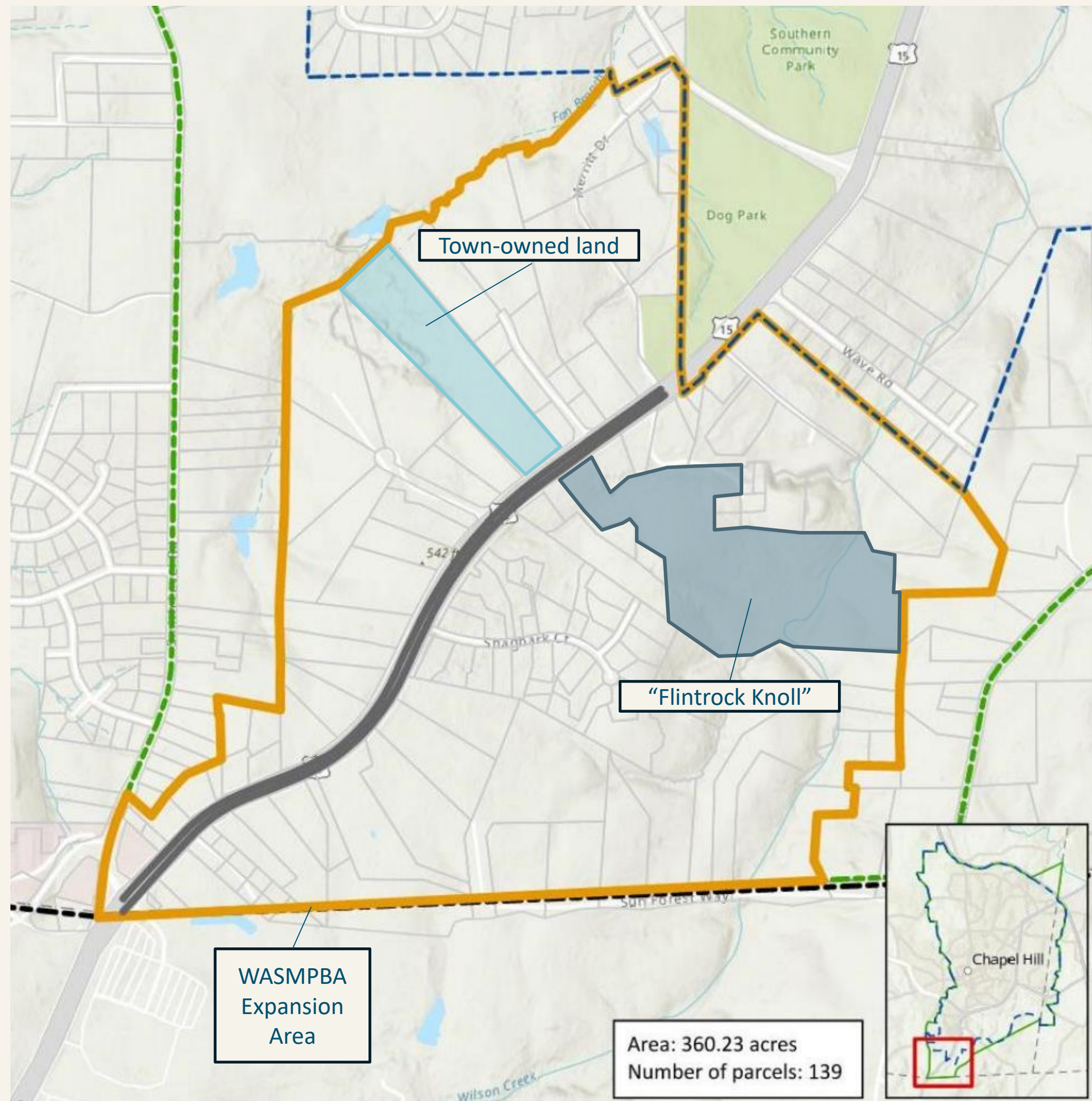
- In 2023, the Chamber for a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro petitioned Council to expand the OWASA service area.
- All jurisdictions approved an expansion of the OWASA service area in 2023-24.

**+ 360
Acres**

**+ 139
Parcels**

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WASMPBA Expansion Area



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Development Potential

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Development Potential

- Town staff originally estimated gross density of 3 to 6 units per acre across the entire WASMPBA expansion area to inform OWASA capacity analysis.
- At their March 12 meeting, the OWASA Board asked the Town to clarify the level of density it expects in the Southern ETJ.
- **Town staff find that the original estimates for the area are reasonable.**
- **Because of environmental and economic constraints, we are likely to see pockets of higher-density development that average out to the estimated densities for the area as a whole.**

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Density Assumptions

3 – 6 units per acre

x

360 acres

≈

1,100 – 2,200 units

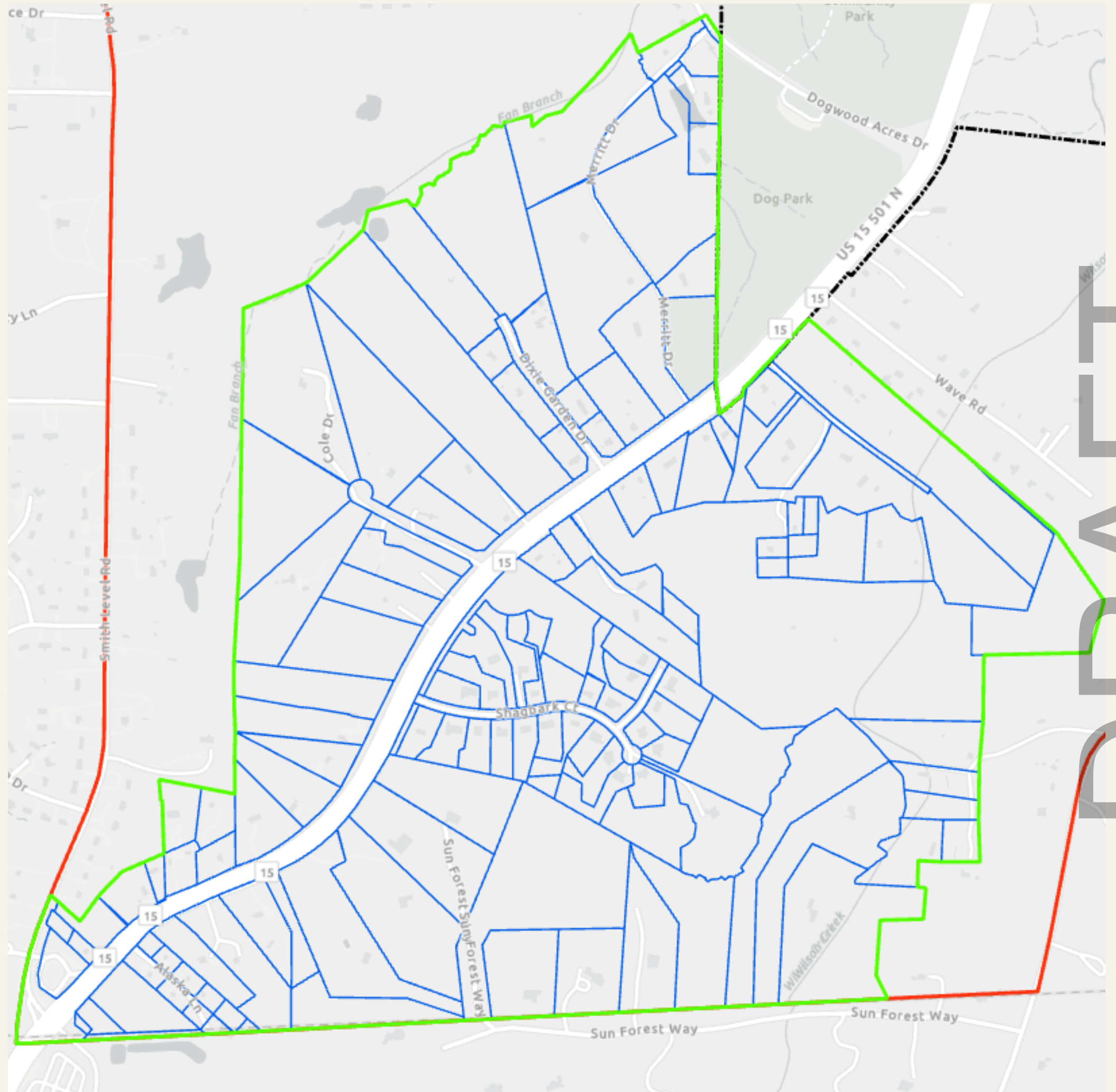
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Available Land

Total Acreage	360
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Density

Min w/ 1,100 units	Max w/ 2,200 units
3 units/acre	6 units/acre

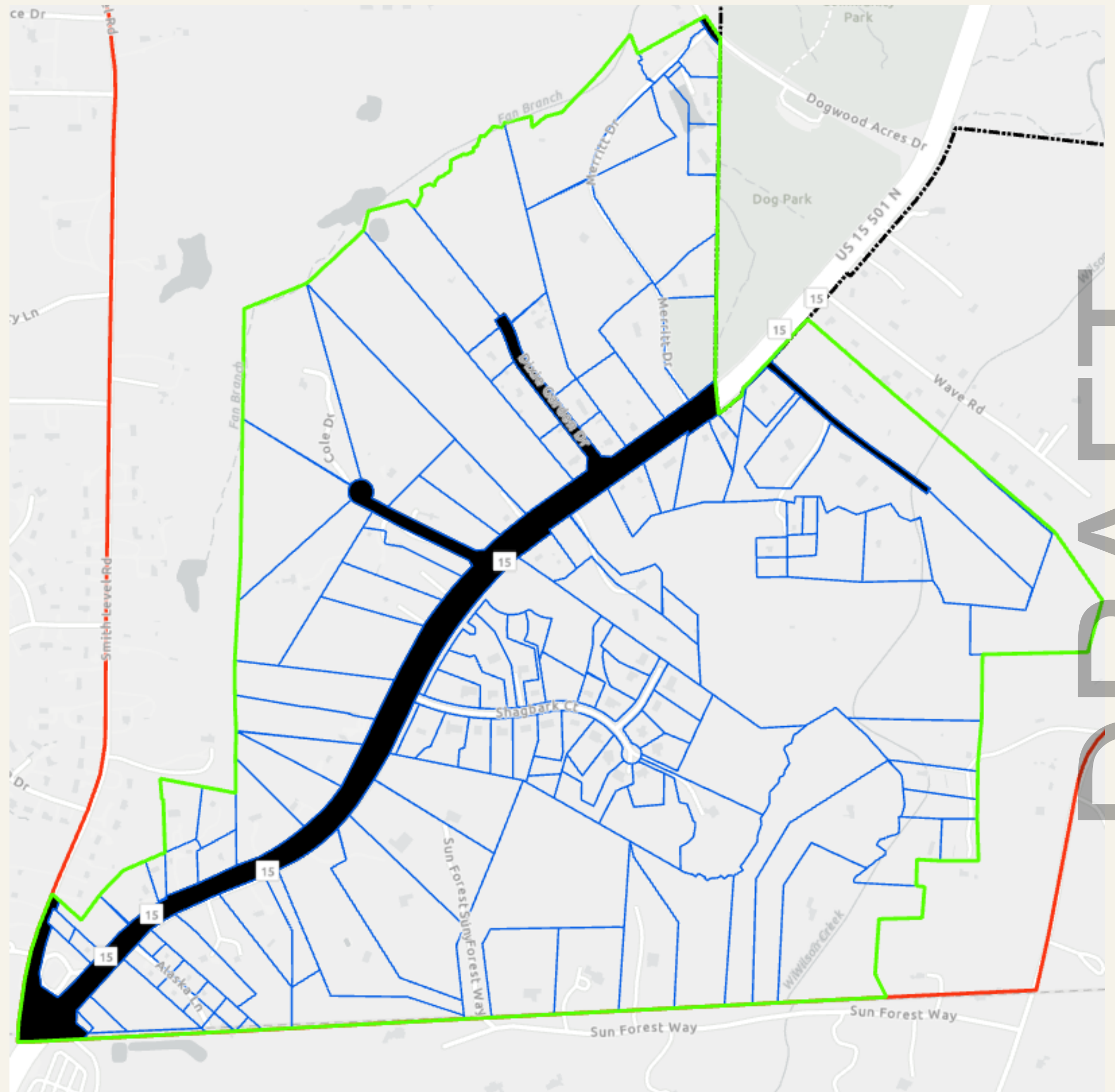


Available Land

Total Acreage	360
Right of Way	(18.6)

Density

Min	Max
w/ 1,100 units	w/ 2,200 units
3.4 units/acre	4.4 units/acre

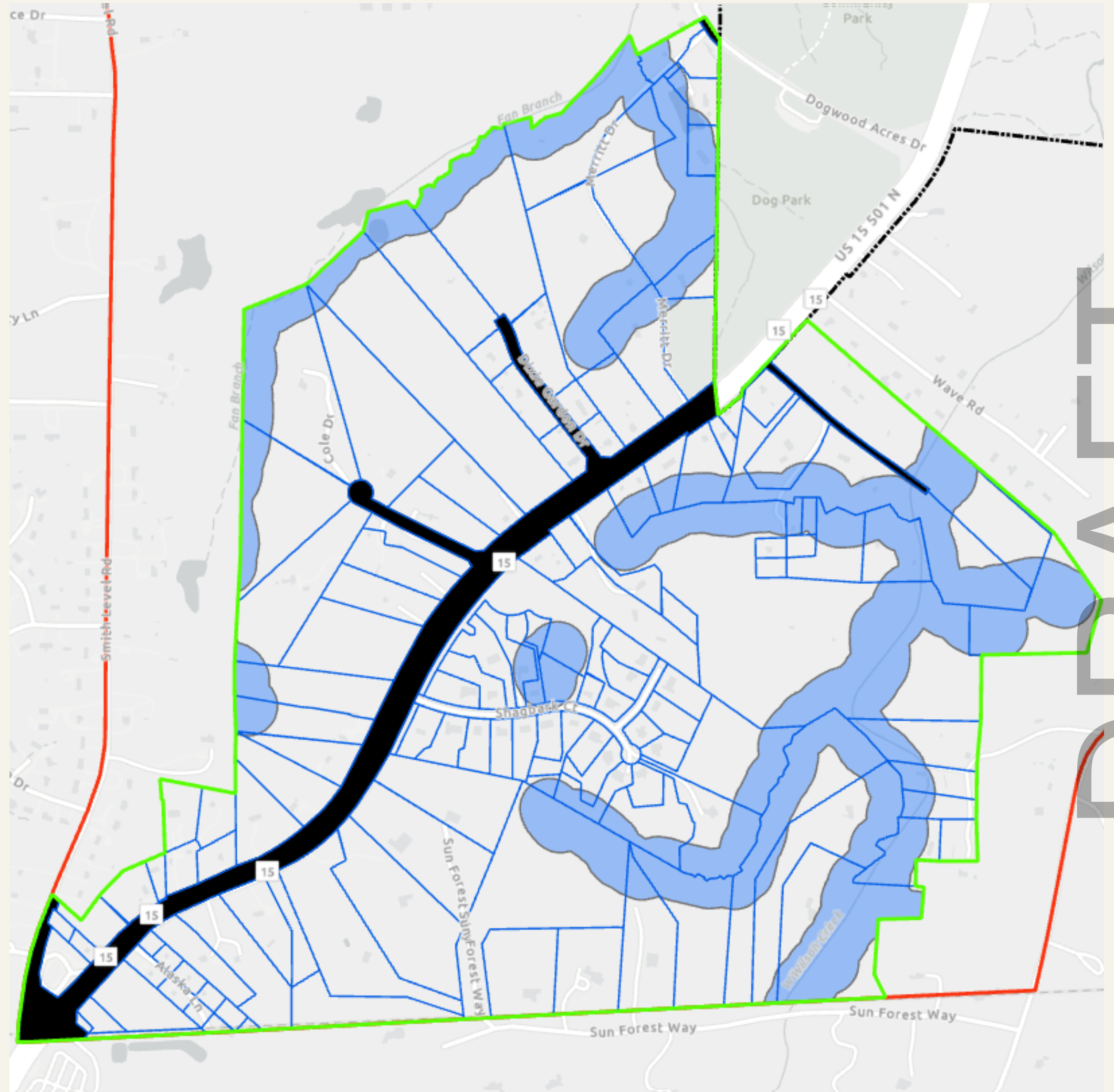


Available Land

Total Acreage	360
Right of Way	(18.6)
Perennial Stream Buffers	(85.5)

Density

Min w/ 1,100 units	Max w/ 2,200 units
5 units/acre	9 units/acre

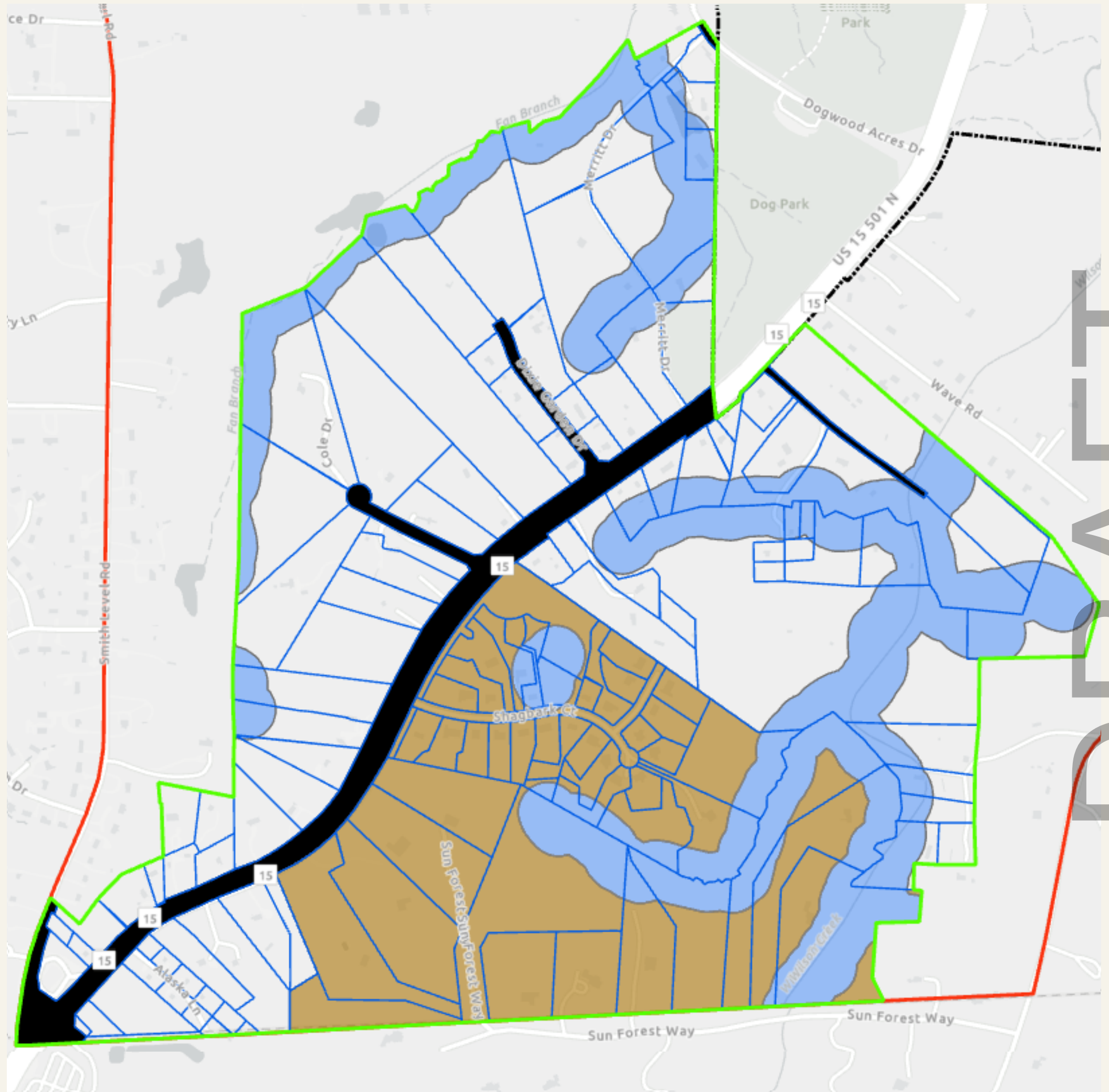


Available Land

Total Acreage	360
Right of Way	(18.6)
Perennial Stream Buffers	(85.5)
Sun Forest and Shagbark	(86.4)

Density

Min	Max
w/ 1,100 units	w/ 2,200 units
7 units/acre	13 units/acre



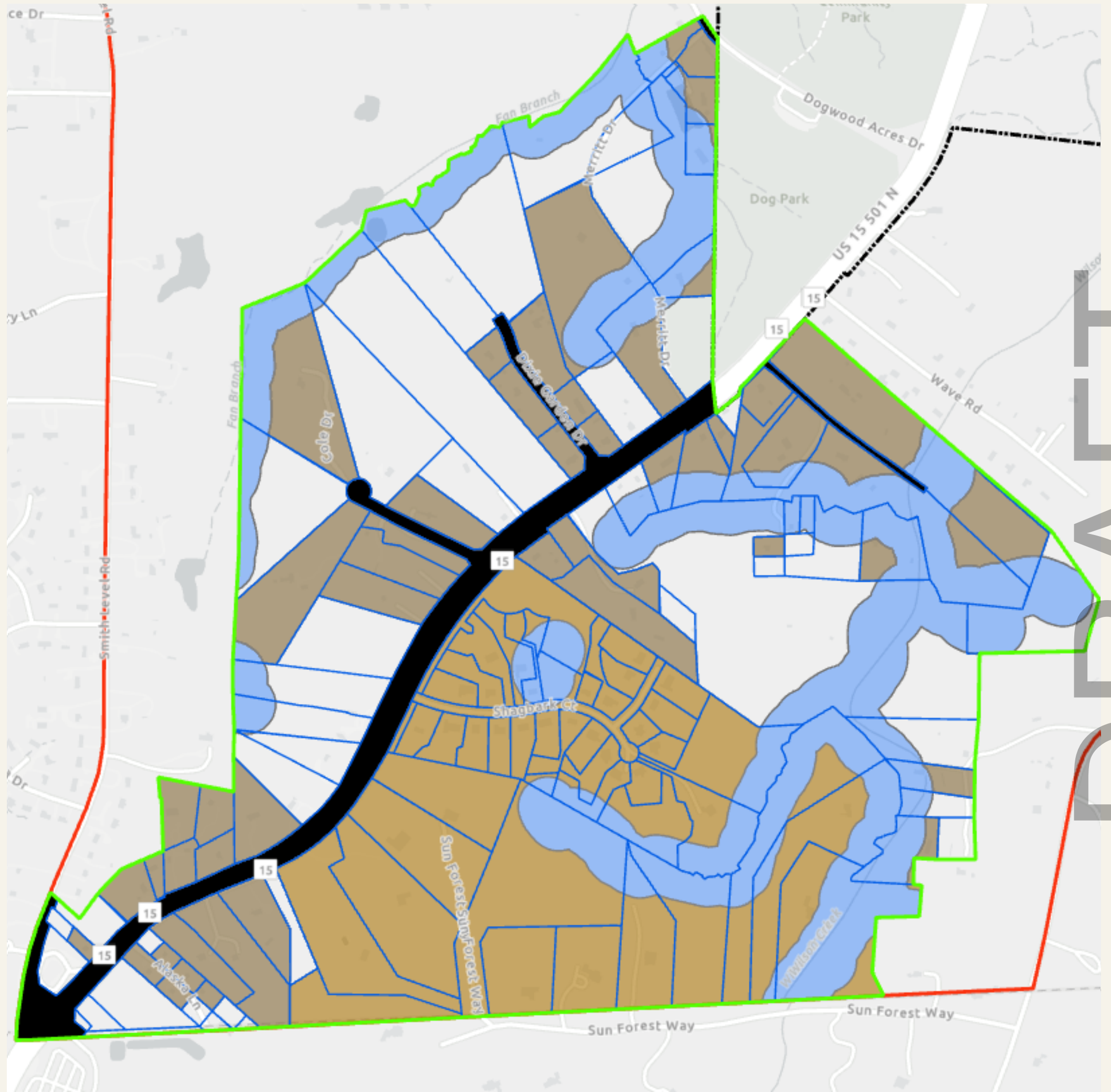
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Available Land

Total Acreage	360
Right of Way	(18.6)
Perennial Stream Buffers	(85.5)
Sun Forest and Shagbark	(86.4)
Higher Value Buildings	(75)

Density

Min	Max
w/ 1,100 units	w/ 2,200 units
12 units/acre	23 units/acre

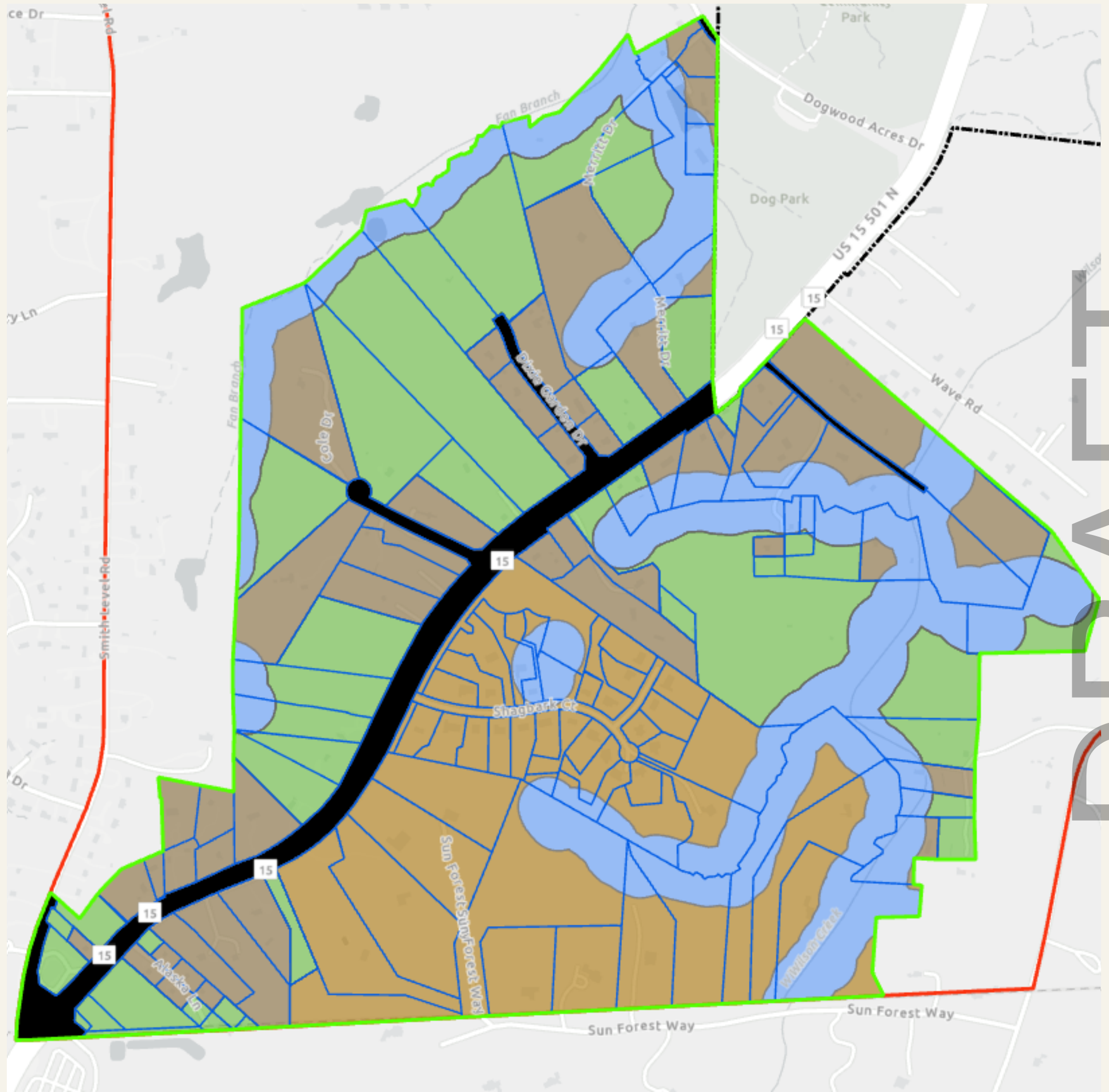


Available Land

Total Acreage	360
Right of Way	(18.6)
Perennial Stream Buffers	(85.5)
Sun Forest and Shagbark	(86.4)
Higher Value Buildings	(75)
Likely to Redevelop	95

Density

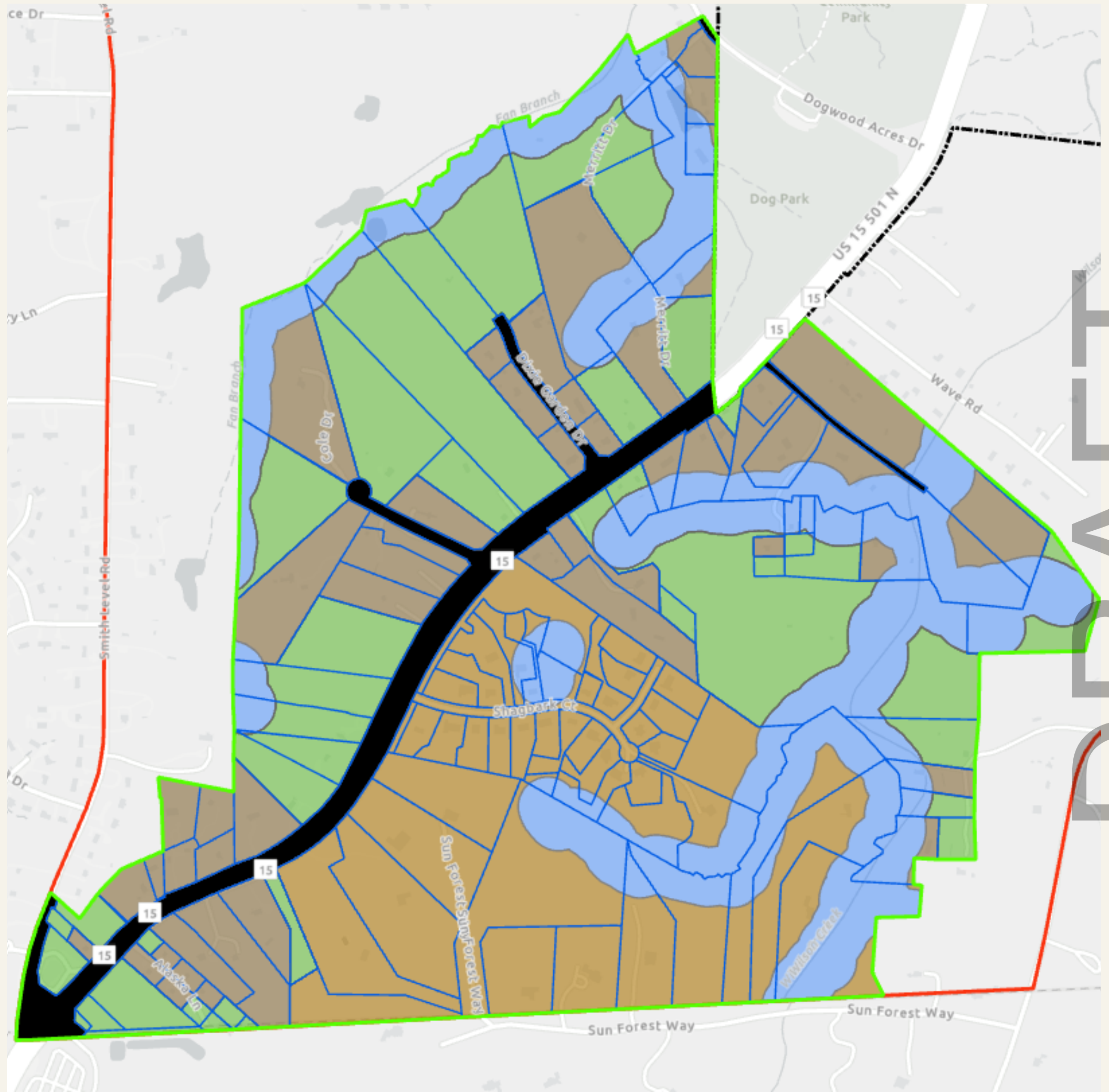
Min	Max
w/ 1,100 units	w/ 2,200 units
12 units/acre	23 units/acre



We are likely to see distinct pockets of development in the WASMPBA expansion area.

These developments will need to be dense enough to support the high upfront costs of expanding sewer infrastructure.

They will also need to generate enough revenue to make the expansion of infrastructure and services financially sustainable.



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Sewer Alignment Study

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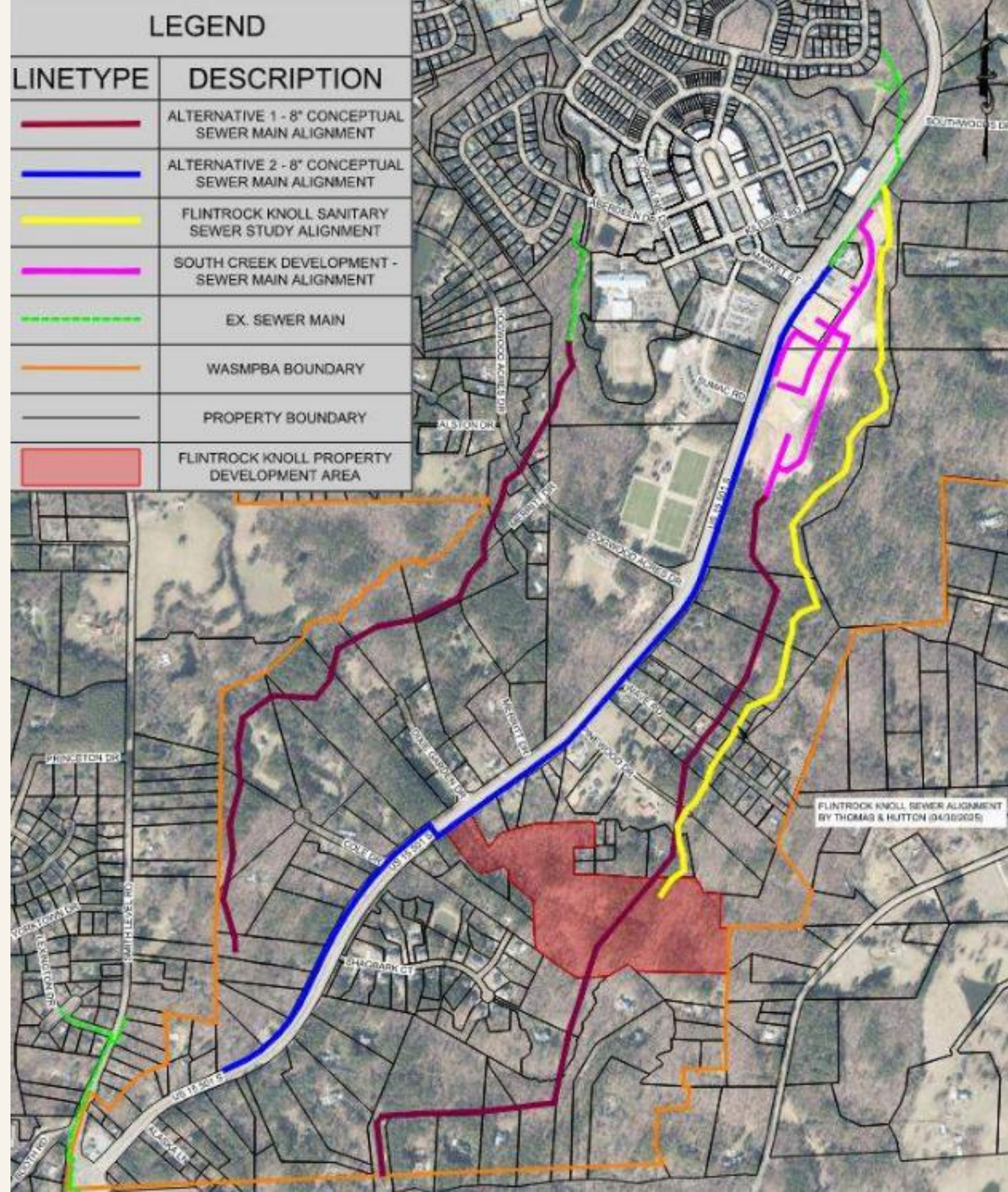
Sewer Alignment Study

OWASA and Town staff collaborated to identify potential sewer alignments in the WASMPBA expansion area.

Understanding constraints on sewer service helps us understand feasible development patterns.

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Sewer Alignment Alternatives



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Preferred Alignment

The “creekside” alignment is the preferred option.

- 50% lower total costs
- Able to reach 75% of the service area with gravity sewer
- Avoids RCD buffers to the maximum practical extent
- Significant number of private easements required.

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Takeaways

High construction costs will be a major barrier for new development.

Unlikely that individual missing-middle development can bear the upfront costs of expanding sewer infrastructure.

Appendix

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