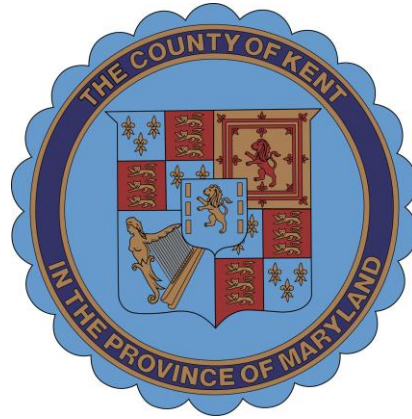


# *Enterprise Zone Application*



*and*



**2023**

## ENTERPRISE ZONE APPLICATION

**Jurisdiction Applying** – Kent County, Maryland and the Town of Betterton

**Name and Location of Proposed Zone** – Worton/Betterton Enterprise Zone, Kent County and Town of Betterton, Census Tract 9502 in Kent County, Maryland

**Name of Application** – New

**Approximate Land Area** – 1,971.401 acres, 525.08 acres in the Town of Betterton and 1,446.321 acres in Kent County that include the Worton Industrial

**Eligibility Criteria Being Used** – Unemployment Rate

**Contact Information:**

Jamie Williams, CEcD, Director  
Kent County, Economic and Tourism Development  
410-810-2168  
[jlwilliams@kentgov.org](mailto:jlwilliams@kentgov.org)

**Signature of Chief Elected Officials:**

Don Sutton, Mayor  
Town of Betterton  
100 Main Street  
Betterton, MD 21610  
410-348-5522

Ronald H. Fithian, President  
Board of County Commissioners  
400 High Street  
Chestertown, MD 21620  
410-778-0400

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- II. Expression of Consent – Kent County
- III. Expression of Consent – Town of Betterton
- IV. Written Confirmation of State Priority Funding Area
- V. Eligibility Requirement
- VI. Maps
- VII. Narrative
- VIII. Size Justification
- IX. Public Hearing Notice and Minutes

DRAFT

**II. Expression of Consent – Kent County**

**\*\*Insert Kent County Resolution\*\***

**III. Expression of Consent – Town of Betterton**

**\*\*Insert Town of Betterton Resolution\*\***

**IV. Written Confirmation of State Priority Funding Area**

**\*\*Insert Maryland Department of Planning Documents (Memo & Map)\*\***

DRAFT

## V. Eligibility Requirement

A qualified applicant for an Enterprise Zone must exhibit at least one of the criteria outlined in Economic Development Article § 5-704. The Kent County's Worton Industrial Area and the Town of Betterton, Census Tract 9502, are eligible to apply for designation of an Enterprise Zone based on the criterion that the unemployment rate of the proposed area of designation is at least 150% above the national average.

The unemployment rate in the Town of Betterton is 9.3%, almost double the poverty rate in Kent County, the State of Maryland, and meets the requirement for Enterprise Zone eligibility. The unemployment rate in Kent County, Census Tract 9502, which includes the Town of Betterton, is 2.5% over the requirement for Enterprise Zone eligibility.

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US24029-kent-county-md/>

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US24029950200-census-tract-9502-kent-md/>

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2407200-betterton-md/>

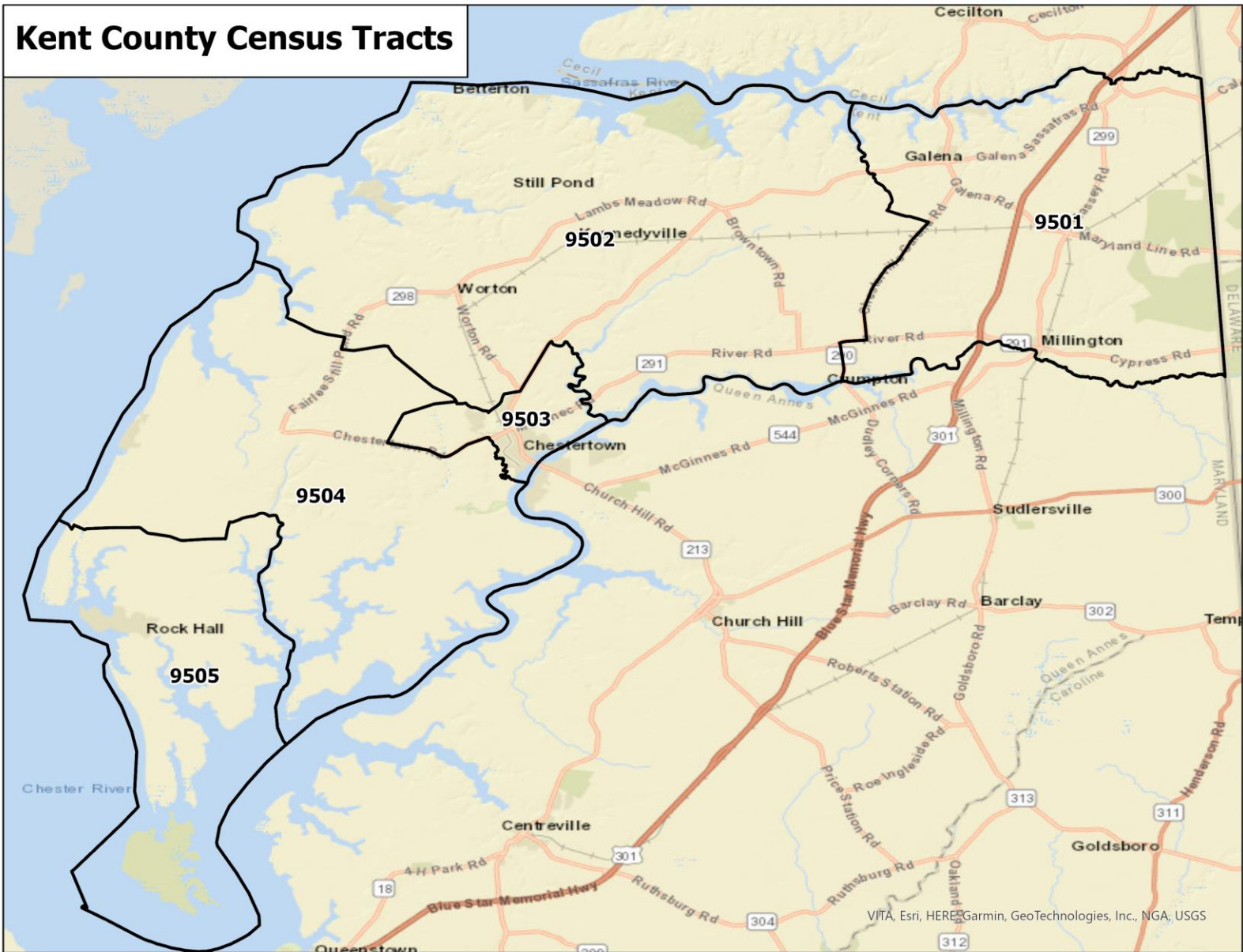
Geography	Metric							
	Poverty Rate	125% Poverty Rate	Unemployment Rate	150% UER	Median Family Income	70% of Families with 80% of MFI	Population	Change
United States	9.1	11.4	4.5	6.8%				
Maryland			5.0	7.5%				
Kent County					\$	69,985	5%	> -10%
Census Tract								
Census Tract 9501, Kent County, Maryland	5.8	FALSE	4.8%	FALSE	31.8%	FALSE	-8%	FALSE
Census Tract 9502, Kent County, Maryland	5.9	FALSE	9.3%	TRUE	39.8%	FALSE	-7%	FALSE
Census Tract 9503, Kent County, Maryland	4.0	FALSE	2.1%	FALSE	47.7%	FALSE	4%	FALSE
Census Tract 9504, Kent County, Maryland	3.0	FALSE	2.2%	FALSE	32.2%	FALSE	-11%	TRUE
Census Tract 9505, Kent County, Maryland	14.5	TRUE	6.3%	FALSE	53.9%	FALSE	-9%	FALSE
Census Tract 9900, Kent County, Maryland	0.0	FALSE	0.0%	FALSE	0.0%	FALSE	-	FALSE

### Maryland and Kent County Poverty Rates, 2016 to 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Maryland</b>	9.7%	9.4%	9.1%	9.1%	9.0%
<b>Kent County</b>	14.0%	12.8%	12.9%	12.4%	12.0%

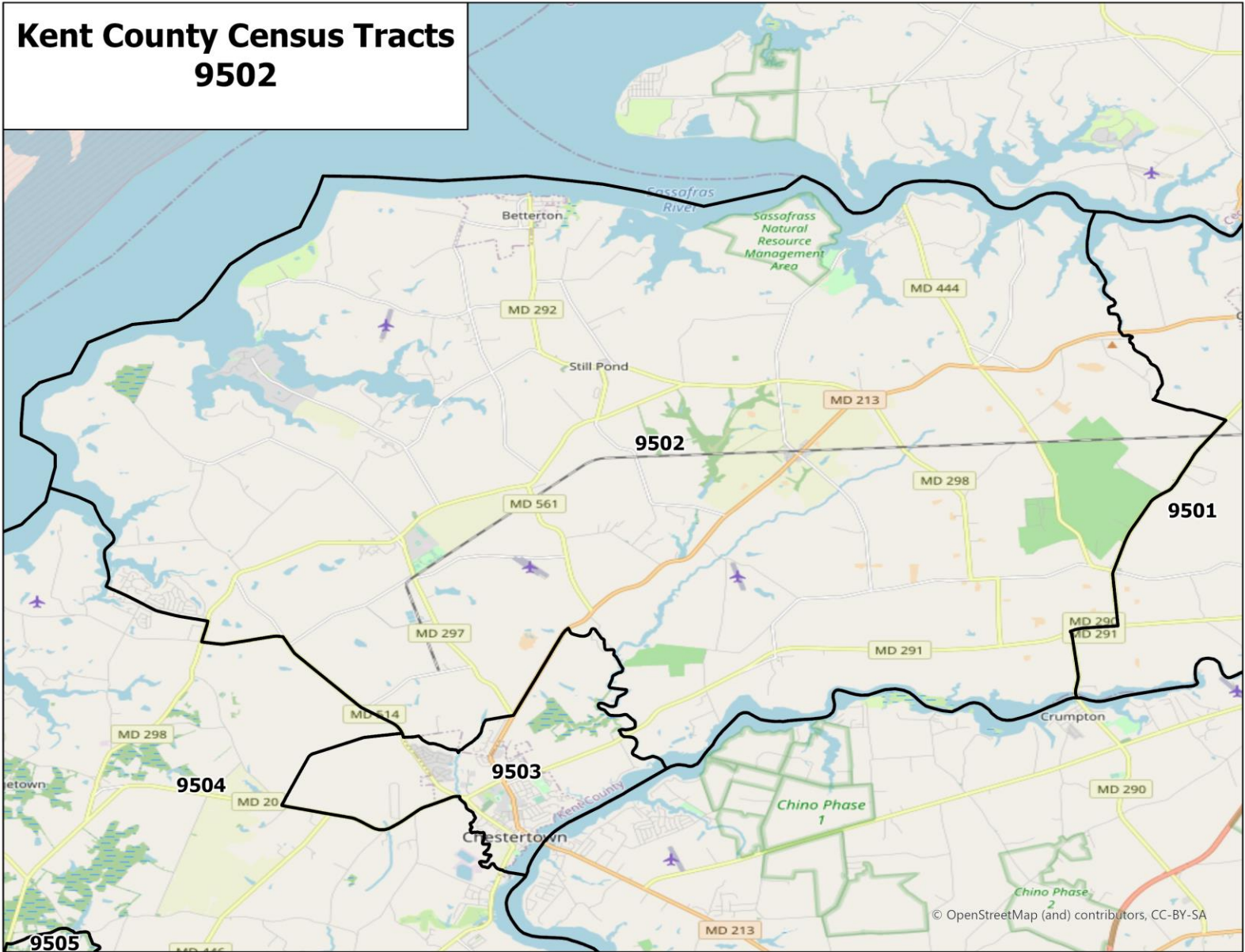
Source: <https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Documents/poverty/2020-SAIPE-Poverty.pdf>

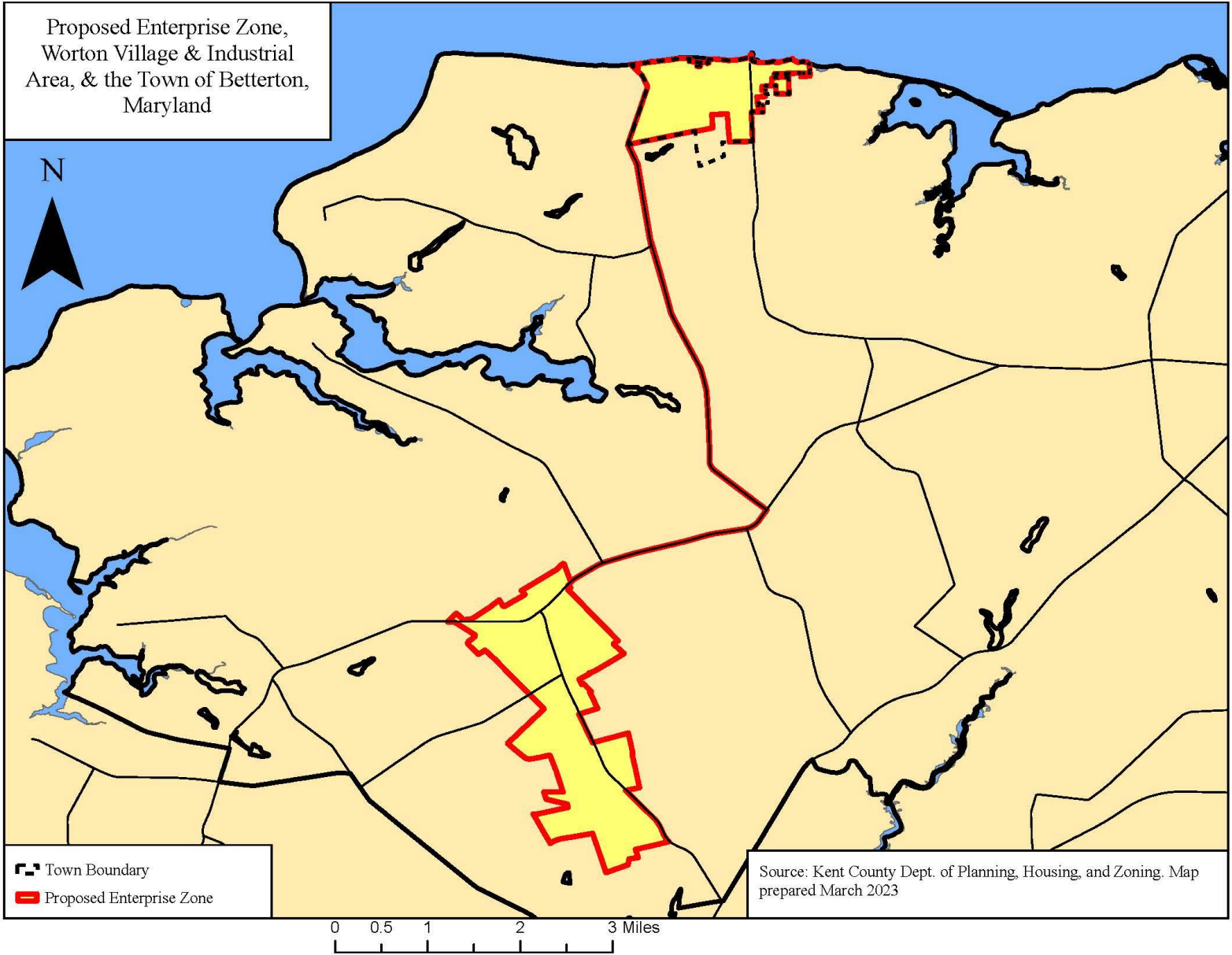
VI. Maps



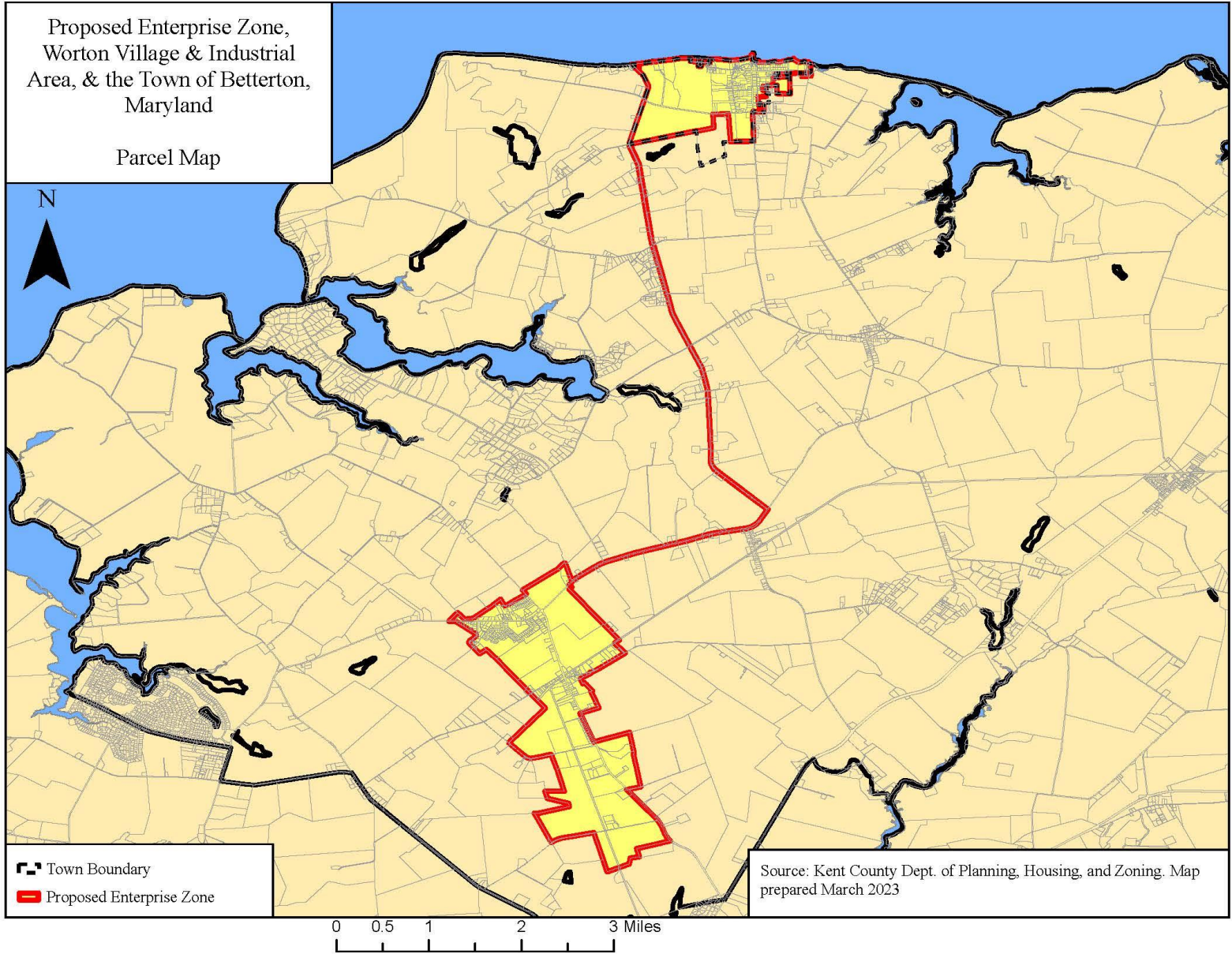


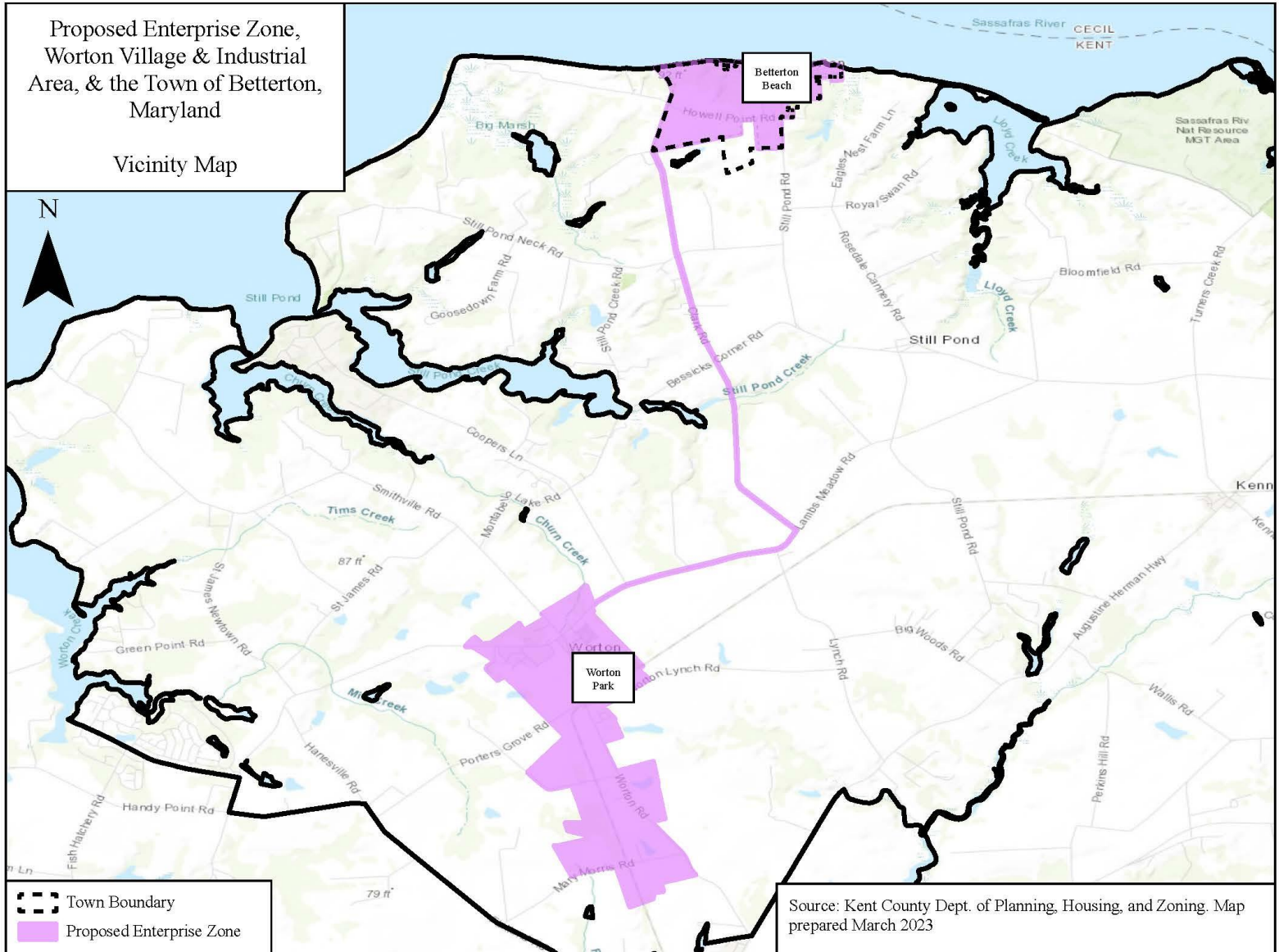
# Kent County Census Tracts 9502



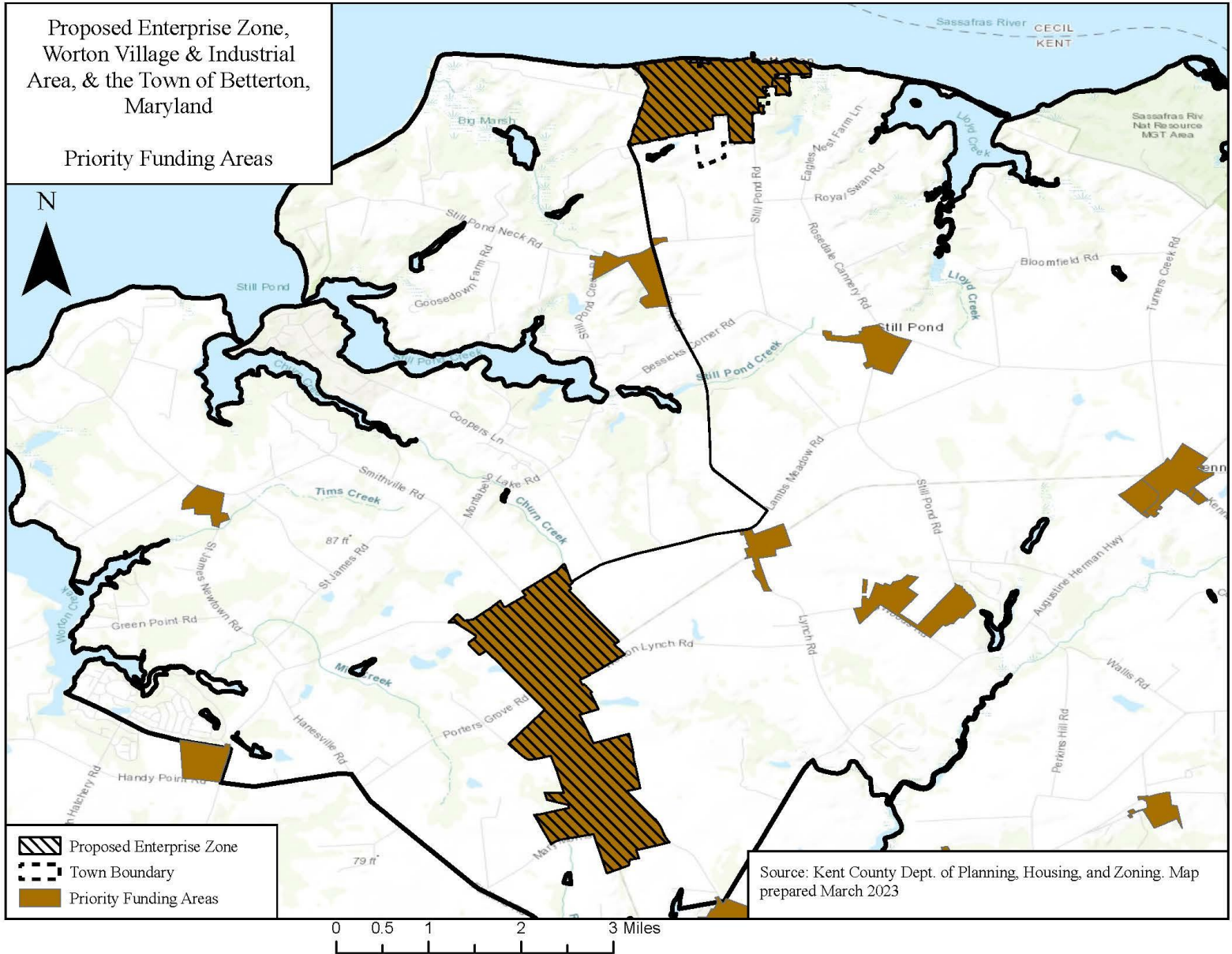


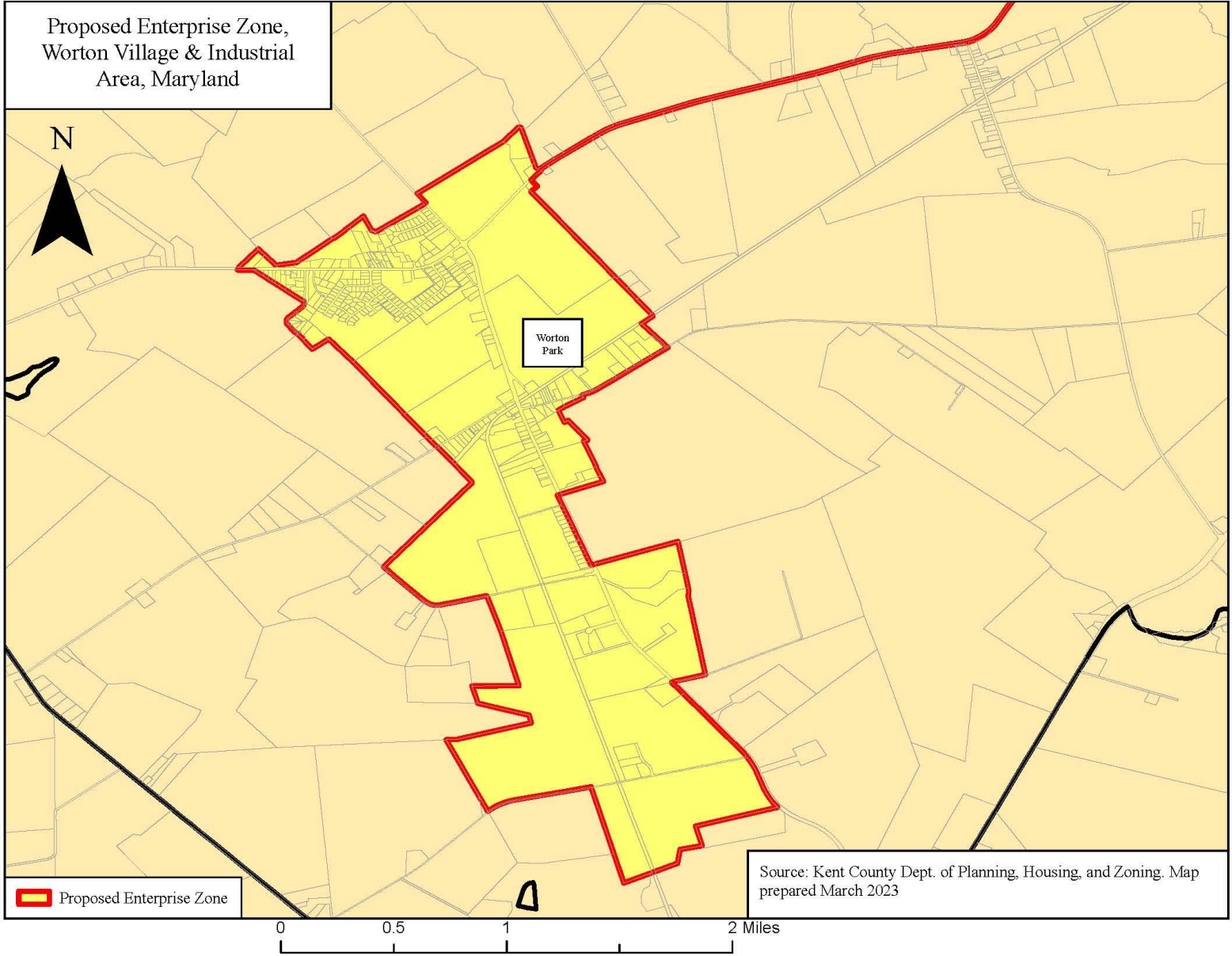


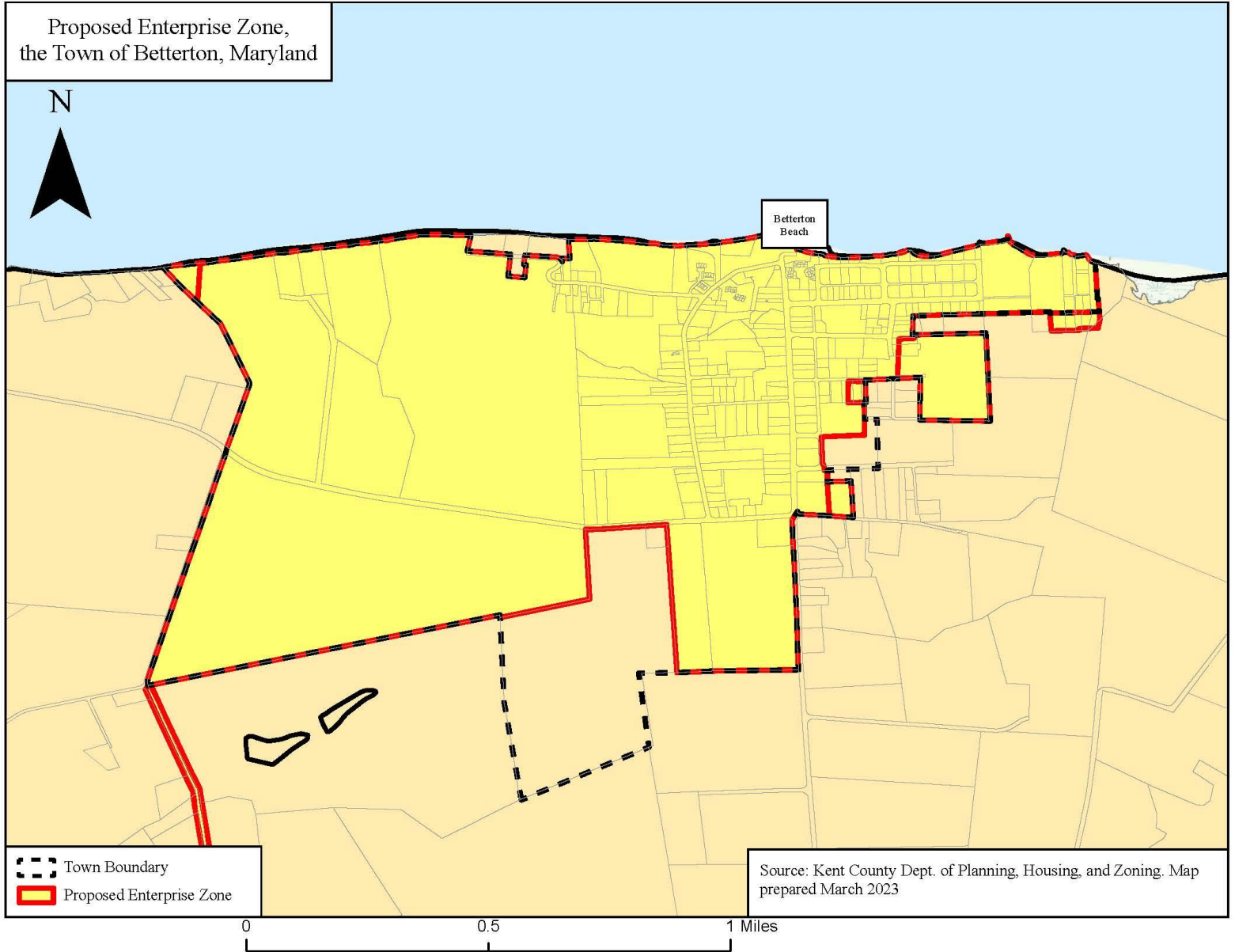












# Parcel Table

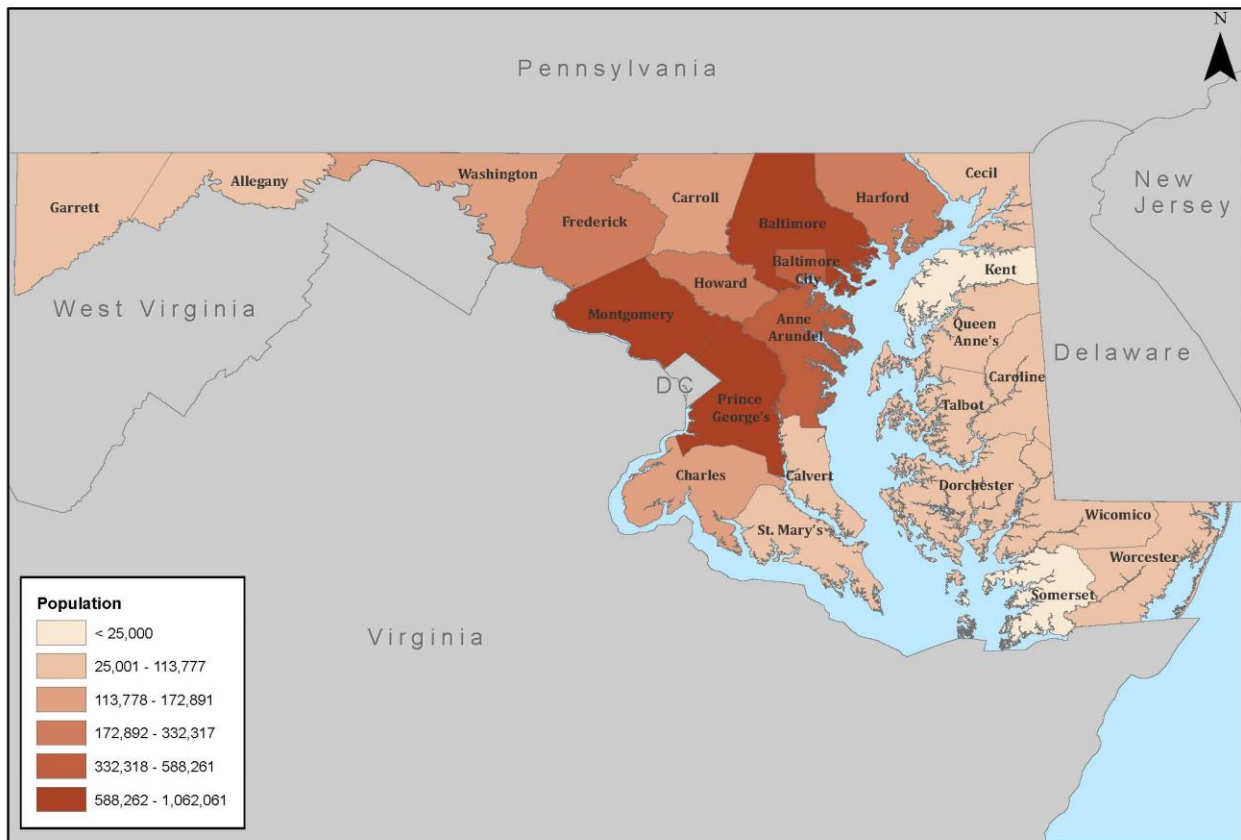
(16-page addendum in pdf format)



**VII. Narrative - Economic, Social, and Demographic Data**

The Worton Industrial Area is one of only two designated growth areas in Kent County and Census Tract 9502 includes the Town of Betterton. The Town of Betterton has one of only two beaches in the County. By population, Kent County is the smallest county in Maryland. The 2020 Census population was 19,198, a decrease of 999 from 2010. Betterton is home to many second homeowners and tourism, agriculture, and maritime are the economic drivers for the Town and surrounding areas. Unemployment rises during the winter months because of the seasonal nature of these industries. The per capita income in the Town of Betterton is \$31,860 and the poverty rate is 10.1%. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2407200-betterton-md/>

**2020 Population Distribution**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
Map Created: 9/23/2021



In Kent County, 66% of students receive free and reduced meals. Kent County has shuttered two elementary schools in the past five years. Four of the five schools in Kent County qualify for Title I, Part A, a federal government program that provides financial assistance to schools with high numbers of children from low-income families.

Agriculture, maritime enterprises, and tourism have traditionally been Kent County's economic drivers. Kent County has 346 farms with 134,262 acres of land dedicated to farming, with a market value of products sold totaling \$111 million (2017 Census of Agriculture). In 2020, tourism generated \$46.9 million in sales, a 26.6% decrease from 2019, and accounted for 530 jobs, a 25% decrease, both due to the pandemic. Maritime interests are thriving in Kent County, which boasts nearly 350 miles of shoreline and more than 30 marinas operating on the Chesapeake Bay and the Sassafras and Chester Rivers.

The three largest employers in Kent County are based in the Town of Chestertown: Washington College, University of Maryland Shore Regional Health, and Dixon Valve. The three business sectors represented by these employers are education, healthcare, and manufacturing and provide approximately 1,000 jobs each. The Washington College campus is home to about 1,026 students from September through May, and hosts summer programs that bring young campers, scholars, and athletes along with adult learners into the County.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Increase Employment Base**

The Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development has formed numerous partnerships with the Maryland Department of Labor, the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, Chesapeake College, Washington College, the Kent County Department of

Social Services, and various organizations to encourage job growth and assist in decreasing the unemployment rate. The Enterprise Zone will benefit the County and the businesses that locate within the designated Zone by providing well-paying job opportunities.

### **Business Retention and Expansion**

Retention and expansion of our current businesses are essential to the economic health of Kent County. The Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development will assist current businesses with growth and expansion projects, provide resources, technical assistance, and help with site selection.

### **Increase Tax Base**

Encouragement in capital investment in existing and new businesses increases the property tax revenue that contributes to an enriched quality of life for all Kent County residents and businesses. Kent County is rural and has several large tracts of land located within the Enterprise Zone that would benefit from the tax incentive through development, therefore increasing the property tax revenue and creating jobs in Kent County.

### **Stimulate the Development and Investment in the Worton/Betterton Enterprise Zone**

Currently, Kent County does not have many properties that are shovel-ready for business attraction. The Worton Industrial Area is one of only two locations in Kent County that is designated for growth. There are already more than ten businesses located in this area, which is two to three miles outside the Town of Chestertown, the County Seat, and the largest population center. The new Animal Care Shelter provides care for the animals and the community with on-site veterinary care, and education programs for all ages on animal care and enrichment, including summer day camps, spay and neuter services, and more. The Animal Care Shelter is a \$6+ million project on 5 acres and will increase traffic to the area,

making it more attractive for development.

Economic and Tourism Development relies on properly zoned and shovel-ready properties to attract new investment. Water and sewer are two critical infrastructure needs, the Worton plant has the capacity, and funds are necessary to extend the lines to the properties zoned for development.

## **LOCAL STANDARDS**

The local standard for qualification for businesses to qualify for real property tax credits in the Worton/Betterton Enterprise Zone will be a minimum capital investment of \$25,000. The local standard will ensure that the tax credits are offered to substantial projects only and will help provide clarity about the types of projects that may benefit from the program.

## **ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES AND INITIATIVES**

The Worton Industrial Area and the Town of Betterton within Kent County are ready for growth. The Worton wastewater treatment facility has a design capacity of 250,000 gallons per day and is operating at 70,000 gallons per day. The Worton Water plant has an average daily capacity of 125,000 gallons per day and is operating at 61,000 gallons per day. There are two elevated storage tanks on the system with a total of 375,000 gallons of storage for fire protection.

The Town of Betterton wastewater treatment facility has a design capacity of 150,000 gallons per day and is operating at 30,000 gallons per day. The facility was built in 2019 and won the wastewater system of the year award from the Maryland Wastewater Association. Wheeler Avenue has been completely reconstructed, replacing all water and sewer connections and the drainage system, utilizing rain gardens. This project also included new sidewalks.

Erisson Avenue is being reconstructed now with funding support from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. USDA will be another partner in this project moving forward and state funding has been requested. The Erisson upgrades to the sidewalks will include new energy efficient street lighting.

Betterton docks have long been utilized for a ferry to Aberdeen Proving Ground for employment opportunities and upper bay dredging projects. Capital improvement projects in Betterton include the construction of a 1,400 revetment on the Bayside bluff to mitigate erosion and preserve the natural beauty of the Town. County funding has been allocated to stabilize and beautify the Rigby bluff visible from the Beach.

Major upgrades at the Betterton Beach include new bathhouses and new stairs to the Pavilion overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. On schedule for FY2024 are upgrades to the current boardwalk with additional access for populations with mobility issues, allowing more residents and tourists access to this rare amenity. Recent recreational additions include a new playground, new tennis and pickle ball courts, and the best basketball court in Kent County.

In December 2020 the Kent County Commissioners demonstrated their commitment to Economic Development by re-structuring the departments of Economic Development and Tourism and creating the Department of Economic and Tourism Development, and fully staffing the department with a Director, an Economic Development Manager, a Tourism Manager, an Administrative Assistant, and an Intern. Allowing talents and expertise to be capitalized on and shared across disciplines. In August 2022 a Housing and Transportation Coordinator position was added to build capacity.

Kent County partnered with Kent Fiber Optic Systems to build a fiber-optic broadband network throughout Kent County. Think Big Networks, an Internet Service Provider, is

delivering 1GB service to businesses and residents in the county. A second fiber company, Talkie Communications, is also building a fiber network within Kent County and beyond, providing more and more high-speed internet service to the rural areas in Maryland. Kent County invested over \$7 million in the network and continues to partner with State and Federal partners to reach even more remote areas within Kent County.

Betterton Community Development Corporation is a non-profit organization that began 20 years ago to restore the Betterton Fishing Ark. The organization started Betterton Days and the annual celebration continues today. Activities include curating the Betterton Museum, leading Town beautification efforts, and organizing community events. The mission statement includes teaching others about the history of the area and supporting community efforts to increase tourism and improve the quality of life for all citizens.

The Town of Betterton is a year into updating their Comprehensive Plan that features upgrades to the current water system and efforts to create a Main Street that will be designated by the State. Attracting business and increasing population have been major emphasis during this process.

## **EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

Workforce readiness and development are a priority for the Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development. There are many partners to ensure our workforce is ready to work and trained to meet the current and future needs of businesses. Initiatives include “Innovation Internships” with Washington College and partnerships with Kent County High Schools’ CTE programs; the Department of Labor; the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board; Chesapeake College; the Department of Social Services, the Upper Shore Regional

Council, etc. Dialogue and open exchange of information will assist in planning for the future needs of the business community.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Worton/Betterton Enterprise Zone will be administered by the Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development. Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development will be responsible for all administrative functions related to the enterprise zone, including.

- Processing businesses' applications to claim tax credits under the program.
- Coordinating documentation and approval of tax credits with the County tax office.
- Answering questions about the program and assisting businesses with their applications.
- Submitting annual reports to the Maryland Department of Commerce.

## **MARKETING**

The Worton/Betterton Enterprise Zone will be promoted by the Town of Betterton and the Kent County Department of Economic and Tourism Development.

## **PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE ENTERPRISE ZONE**

Through the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund and the Upper Shore Regional Council, the County will extend planned water and sewer in the Worton Industrial Area. The project is estimated to cost about \$1.7 million. The project will incentivize development of the adjoining industrial zoned properties by reducing offsite improvements for



water and sewer service which is essential for the development of the properties. The properties to be served are in a designated Priority Funding Area and included in the County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. The water and sewer lines will utilize existing County and State right of way. The County will need to purchase a small parcel for placement of the pump station.

### **VIII. Size Justification**

The Worton Industrial Area and Town of Betterton are very rural, and properties tend to be large and quite spread out. It is critical to include properties in the downtown area as well as properties of businesses located outside the Town limits. The proposed area for the Worton/Betterton Kent County Enterprise Zone consists of properties located in the Worton Industrial Area, the Town of Betterton. The designation of an Enterprise Zone will help attract businesses to areas designated for growth and expansion. In addition to attracting new businesses to Kent County, the Enterprise Zone can spark capital investment in properties that need revitalization.

Kent County is facing the challenges of declining enrollment in our public schools, declining population, and changes in healthcare that threaten the inpatient services provided at our local hospital.

Kent County remains a strong draw for residents who enjoy the natural beauty of the area. The well-preserved colonial architecture of Chestertown, the charm of our five towns, the proud Chesapeake Bay boating and fishing culture, and the intellectual and cultural offerings of Washington College.

Founded in 1782, Washington College is one of the nation's oldest liberal arts colleges. Increased employment opportunities would entice more of Washington College's graduates to remain in Kent County.

The Enterprise Zone designation would provide Kent County and the Town of Betterton with incentives to help existing employers expand their businesses and would be a valuable tool for attracting new businesses. An Enterprise Zone designation gives Kent County additional means to compete with nearby Delaware in attracting and retaining businesses.

The Town of Betterton has had many inquiries about vacant properties; however, current owners are not incentivized to sell or lease. A tax credit may encourage the current property owners to move forward with renovations or give potential buyers additional motivation to purchase a building for commercial purposes and make the capital investments needed.

#### **IX. Public Hearing Notice and Timeline**

A joint public hearing with Kent County and the Town of Betterton and Kent County was held on April 4, 2023. The public hearing was advertised in the Kent County Newspaper and posted online at [www.thekentcountynews.com](http://www.thekentcountynews.com) on March 23, 2023. The public hearing was periodically promoted on social media via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn from March 23, 2023, through April 4, 2023.



**The County Commissioners of Kent County**

Ronald H. Fithian, President | Albert H. Nickerson, Member | John F. Price, Member  
Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator | Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney

NOTICE OF A JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the County Commissioners of Kent County and the Town of Betterton will hold a public hearing on April 4, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland. The purpose of the hearing is to obtain citizen input on a Joint Application by the County Commissioners of Kent County and the Town of Betterton for an Enterprise Zone Designation.

The agenda will be published at [kentcounty.com/commissioners/meeting-agenda](https://kentcounty.com/commissioners/meeting-agenda) 24 hours in advance of the hearing. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the Public Hearing process. If you require communication assistance, please contact the County Commissioners' Office at (410) 778-4600 and press 4 or visit Maryland Relay at [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org) no later than noon on March 31, 2023.

The Worton/Betterton Kent County Enterprise Zone Designation Application and supporting documentation are available for review on the County's website at <https://www.kentcounty.com/business/business-support/incentives/tax-credits/304-enterprise-zone>. Contact Jamie Williams, Director of Economic and Tourism Development at 410-810-2168 or [jlwilliams@kentgov.org](mailto:jlwilliams@kentgov.org) for further information.

By order of:

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF KENT COUNTY,  
MARYLAND

Sondra M. Blackiston  
Clerk

PUBLISH: KCN 03/23/23

**\*\*Insert Certification of Publication in KCN\*\***

**\*\*Insert Public Hearing Sign In Sheet\*\***

**\*\*Insert Public Comment Speakers Sheet\*\***

**\*\*Insert Public Hearing Minutes\*\***

DRAFT