



FLORENCE COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

REQUEST-FOR-PROPOSALS NO. 30-13/14

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES
COUNTY COMPLEX LANDSCAPE AND MASTER PLAN

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2014 AT 3:00
P.M. (ET)

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) 30-13/4
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES
COUNTY COMPLEX LANDSCAPE AND MASTER PLAN**

Florence County is accepting proposals from licensed landscape architects to develop a landscape and master plan, in harmony with the city's design standards and to provide a vision for the preservation and stewardship of the County Complex building located on 180 N. Irby Street, Florence, SC.

The successful firm must be licensed in the state of South Carolina to perform Landscape Architectural Services.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTALS must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. EST on Thursday, June 5, 2014 to the address below in a sealed envelope. Submittals shall contain one (1) original and three (3) copies of the information requested. Submittals received after the deadline will not be opened. Facsimile or e-mail submittals will not be accepted. All submittals should be sent to:

MAILED TO:

Florence County Procurement
Attn: Patrick D. Fletcher
180 N. Irby Street, MSC-R
Florence, South Carolina 29501

HAND-CARRIED TO:

Florence County Procurement
Attn: Patrick D. Fletcher
180 N. Irby Street, Room B-5
Florence, South Carolina 29501

Offerors mailing a qualification statement should allow sufficient mailing time to ensure timely receipt. The County is not responsible for proposals delayed by mail and/or delivery services of any nature. Proposals received after the set time for closing will be returned unopened.

Proposals must be made in the official name of the firm or the individual under which business is conducted (showing the official business address) and must be signed in ink by a person duly authorized to legally bind the person, partnership, company or corporation submitting the qualification statement. Proposals must be valid for a minimum of ninety (90) days.

Proposals may be withdrawn by offeror prior to, but not after, the time set for the opening.

Upon receipt by the County, the qualification statement shall become the property of the County, without compensation to the offeror, for disposition or usage by the County at its discretion. The County shall have the sole discretion in evaluating both the qualification statement and the qualifications of the offerors. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and is not bound to accept any proposals, if the qualification statement acceptance is contrary to the best interest of the County. The particulars of any qualification statement will remain confidential until a contract is signed with the successful offeror(s).

Florence County reserves the right to engage in discussions with any or all responsible responders who submit proposals for the purpose of clarification to assure full understanding of and responsiveness to this request.

This request for proposals does not commit Florence County to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of proposals or to procure or contract for the articles of goods or services. Florence County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to negotiate with any or all qualified offerors, or to cancel in part or in its entirety this solicitation, if it is in the best interest of the County to do so.

Any written questions should be e-mailed to pfletcher@florenceco.org

DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN QUESTIONS IS 5:00 P.M. FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2014.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFERORS

1. Proposals must be made in the official name of the firm or the individual under which business is conducted (showing the official business address) and must be signed in ink by a person duly authorized to legally bind the person, partnership, company or corporation submitting the proposal. Proposals must be valid for a minimum of ninety (90) days.
2. Proposals may be withdrawn by offeror prior to, but not after, the submission deadline date/time.
3. Upon receipt by the County, the proposal shall become the property of the County, without compensation to the offeror, for disposition or usage by the County at its discretion. The County shall have the sole discretion in evaluating both the proposals and the qualifications of the offerors. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and is not bound to accept any proposals, if the proposal acceptance is contrary to the best interest of the County. The particulars of any proposal will remain confidential until a contract is signed with the successful offeror(s).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Recently, the City of Florence Government relinquished their holding in a shared City/County Complex building in downtown Florence, SC. The shared complex is now wholly controlled by the Florence County Local Government. Concurrently, downtown revitalization efforts have taken strong root during the past year with the completion and opening of an anchor hotel, boutique stores and restaurants/cafes. At the advent of 2014, several new rehab projects have been announced and numerous others are in planning. Among the recent announcements are a public and private mixed-use project that will feature a 200 seat restaurant, a sauce bottling facility, a micro-distillery, 15-18 apartments and office space. Francis Marion University also plans to begin construction on a \$15.5 million health sciences facility at the corner of South Irby and West Evans streets in 2014.

PROJECT STATEMENT

The Florence County Government Campus is located in the heart of the downtown revitalization area in Florence, SC. Florence County desires to support the efforts of the downtown revitalization and seeks to remain a corporate citizen in good standing with the public. Therefore, Florence County seeks to develop a landscape and master plan, in harmony with the city's design standards, to provide a vision for the preservation and stewardship of the County Government Campus. The County would like to leverage its physical land holding as a public resource for greenspace, parking support to the downtown revitalization and the Complex facilities and a stewardship trust for the citizens of Florence County.

SCOPE OF WORK PROJECT EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOME

1. A Master Plan of County Campus presented in a format (book, drawings, panels, models) to best convey a design vision for the future to be used for planning not construction purposes
2. Phasing plan for development/execution/implementation of master plan
3. Cost estimate per phase with total cost estimate for complete implementation
4. Project development and completion must be done as quickly as possible

SELECTION CRITERIA AND SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

1. **Qualification of Firm**-Include a firm biography. – 15 points
2. **Qualifications & Experience of Team Members Expected To Work On The Project.** Provide biographies of personnel expected to work on this project. – 15 points

3. **Previous Projects of a Similar Nature.** Include references and overview representative examples of previous projects completed by your firm of similar nature. – 20 points
4. **Timeliness of Completion.** Include Anticipated Project Schedule and Current Workload. - 20 points
5. **Overall Quality of Proposal.** Include list of anticipated deliverables. – 30 points

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS OF EACH EVALUATION – 100 points

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. North/South/East/West plant design
2. Use of indigenous plant species
3. Green space development
4. Light well/atrium park design within deck concept
5. Truck loading dock access at SE corner of property for distillery
6. Employee green space (break area, smoking area at NE corner of building)
7. Trail continuance and connectivity with the city trails system spur to downtown

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection committee will rank each firm based on the overall evaluation point totals.

The cost resumes of the top ranking contractor/firm will be opened and reviewed by the selection committee.

Negotiation will be initiated with the top ranked evaluated firm. If an agreement cannot be made with the top ranking firm, the cost proposal of the next highest ranking firm will be opened and negotiations will be initiated with that firm and so forth.

Upon successful contract negotiation, the committee will recommend one (1) firm to County Council for approval.

All unopened price proposals will be returned to the offeror.

The Only firms licensed to do business in South Carolina and are able to demonstrate professional licensing in the disciplines to be supplied will be considered. Failure to meet this requirement will result in disqualification.

Florence County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Proposals in whole or in part and to amend or supplement this RFP.

NOTE: By submission of your proposal in response to this solicitation, you are certifying that neither your firm nor any of its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or excluded from participation in this procurement process by any governmental department or agency. Further, if such a debarment or suspension occurs during the course of the procurement, you shall so inform Florence County.

NOTE: No proposer shall, directly or indirectly, engage in any conduct (other than the submission of a proposal or other prescribed submissions and/or presentations before the Evaluation or Selection Committees) to influence any employee or elected official of Florence County concerning award of a contract as a result of this solicitation. Violation of this prohibition may result in disqualification of the proposer from further participation in the solicitation for services or goods sought herein, or from participation in future Florence County solicitations or contracts.

PROTEST PERIOD

It is the responsibility of the prospective bidder to review the entire invitation for bids packet and to notify the Procurement Department if the specifications/scope of work are formulated in a manner that would unnecessarily restrict competition. Any such protest or question regarding the specifications or bidding procedures must be received by the Procurement Department not less than five (5) days prior to the proposal submission deadline. These requirements also apply to specifications or instructions that are ambiguous.

PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS AND INDEMNIFICATION

The successful firm(s) shall procure and maintain insurance for protection from claims under workers' compensations acts; claims for damages because of bodily injury including personal injury, sickness or disease, or death of any and all employees or of any person other than such employees; claims for damages because of injury to or destruction of property, including loss of use resulting therefrom; claims caused by professional errors, acts, or omission; and any other insurance prescribed by law. The successful firm shall name Florence County, South Carolina, its elected and appointed officials, officers, and employees "Additional Insured" as their interests may appear but only with respect to services performed or provided by successful firm on behalf of the County under Consultant's commercial general liability insurance policy. The successful firm shall, within 10 calendar days of the full execution of any contract resulting from this RFQ, provide the County's Procurement Officer with a certificate(s) of insurance evidencing the coverage required above and containing an endorsement to the effect that any cancellation or non-renewal shall not be until 10 calendar days after the insurer or the selected firm gives written notice to the County.

Without limiting the provisions of paragraph above, the selected firm shall during the term of any contract resulting from this purchase and maintain insurance with limits not less than those set forth below:

The successful firm(s) shall take out and maintain, during the life of the contract agreement, workers' compensation and employer's liability insurance for all employees to be engaged in services on this project under this agreement in an amount not less than \$1,000,000.00, and in case any such services are sublet, the firm(s) shall require all subcontractor(s) also to provide workers' compensation and employer's liability insurance in an amount not less than \$1,000,000.00 for all of the subcontractor's employees to be engaged in such.

Employer's Liability Insurance - \$1,000,000 each accident, \$1,000,000 disease policy limit, \$1,000,000 disease each employee

Commercial General Liability Insurance - \$1,000,000 per occurrence (bodily injury and property damage) / \$1,000,000 general aggregate

Automobile Liability Insurance - \$1,000,000 combined single limit (bodily injury and property damage), each accident

Professional Liability Insurance - \$1,000,000 per claim / \$1,000,000 general aggregate

Professional Services: The selected firm(s) shall indemnify and hold Florence County, South Carolina, its elected and appointed officials, officers, and employees, harmless from and against judgments, liabilities, damages, losses, costs, and expenses (including, but not limited to, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs but only to the extent otherwise authorized by law) to the extent caused by any negligent act, error, or omission in the performance and furnishing of the selected firm's professional services under any contract resulting from this RFQ, including any negligent act, error or omission of any individual or entity directly or indirectly employed by the selected firm(s) to perform any of the work or anyone for whose acts, errors, or omissions the selected firm(s) may be liable, regardless of whether or not caused in part by a party indemnified hereunder.

Other Than Professional Services: With respect to all acts or omissions of the selected firm(s), or any individual or entity directly or indirectly employed by the selected firm(s) to perform any of the work or anyone for whose acts, errors, or omissions the selected firm(s) may be liable, which do not arise out of or result from the performance of professional services, and which may be covered by employer's liability insurance, commercial general liability insurance, automobile liability insurance, or other general liability insurance, the selected firm(s) shall indemnify and hold the Florence County, South Carolina, its elected and appointed officials, officers, and employees, harmless from and against judgments, liabilities, damages, losses, costs, and expenses (including, but not limited to, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs but only to the extent otherwise authorized by law) to the extent caused by or arising out of the selected firm's negligent acts of commission or omission (or those of or any individual or entity directly or indirectly employed by the selected firm to perform any of the work or anyone for whose actions or failure to act the selected firm may be liable) during the performance of this Agreement.

The selected firm shall require any subconsultants (if any) to purchase and maintain insurance with limits not less than those required above to be purchased and maintained by the selected firm. In addition, the selected firm shall require any subconsultants (if any) to assume the selected firm's indemnification obligations under any contract resulting from this RFQ to the extent they relate to the subconsultant's obligations under any contract with the selected firm.

ATTACHMENTS:

- ☐ Three pages of site maps, aerial photos, SketchUp 3D vision drawings, site
- ☐ context photos
- ☐ Proposed County Complex sign redesign
- ☐ Design Guidelines for Downtown Florence info is available at:
(<http://www.cityofflorence.com/departments/planning/downtown.aspx>)
- ☐ Florence Neighborhood Master Plan info is available at:
<http://www.cityofflorence.com/docs/documents-planning/neighborhood-action-plan-finalreport-.pdf>
- ☐ Newspaper articles and editorials regarding downtown revitalization efforts,
- ☐ projects and plans

State recognizes revitalization in Florence

Officials say work on old Florence Library helped spur other revival projects



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GAVIN JACKSON AND THE FLORENCE COUNTY MUSEUM
A split-image shows the current, restored reading room of the Old Florence Library occupied by Turner Padgett Graham and Laney P.A. office building next to an image from 1925 (the year the library opened) of the same reading room at the library. The building underwent a two-year design, restoration and expansion process, opening in spring 2011. On Tuesday Randy Key of Key Architecture, John Chase, attorney Ben Zeigler and developer Chris Scott of Pearce Land Company received a 2013 Preservation Honor Award from the Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation.

Posted: Saturday, June 15, 2013 7:05 pm | Updated: 4:52 pm, Sat Jul 13, 2013.
GAVIN JACKSON, Morning News

FLORENCE, S.C. -- For the first time in the city's history, a group has claimed a top state prize for a historic restoration project that has been lauded as a major, private redevelopment project to help spark downtown revitalization efforts.

Randy Key of Key Architecture, attorney Ben Zeigler and John Chase and Chris Scott with Pearce Land Company received the 2013 Historic Preservation Honor Award from the nonprofit The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation on Tuesday at the Statehouse for the group's work on restoring the old Florence Library building at the corner of South Irby and Pine streets that opened in the spring of 2011.

"It's one of our most significant projects," Key said. "We've done much, much larger scale projects outside of Florence, but because it's such a prominent Florence icon, to us, it was extremely important and gratifying to be apart of."

In 2008, Key, along with developers Chase and Zeigler, began collaborating on how to save the building and as things got rolling, they brought on Scott in 2010. The intricate revitalization work and expansion not only restored the building to its former glory, but upgraded the 88-year-old building to become a functional space for tenants such as the Turner Padgett law firm, which is the lead tenant of the building.

Once things began moving, the roughly \$4.5 million restoration project took about two years to complete with permitting, design and renovation by general contractor All Quality Construction from Lake City. They added 6,000 square feet, maintaining its original appearance and restored the detailed woodwork and ironwork over the windows, as well as updated the windows and channeled new electrical and mechanical systems through the building.

Gov. Nikki Haley gave brief remarks during the ceremony, calling the group and award winners "superstars" for their work in restoring historic buildings that make up the state's cherished heritage.

"When you look at what we're trying to do with our state, so much of it is a balance," Haley said. "A balance of how we're trying to go forward and bring in new jobs and embrace this new future that South Carolina has, but we never want to forget the heritage and the culture and the traditions that makes South Carolina as classic as it is."

The award is significant for Florence, said Michael E. Bedenbaugh, executive director of Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation, because it represents a change from practices of the past.

"It's making something that lives and breathes and helps a community tell its story," Bedenbaugh said. "It's really exciting for Florence because so much has been lost in Florence in past 50 years, so to see this energy among this group of people who are an inspiration about town and are now focusing on the future, a future that reveres the old buildings, that's the type of thing we really want to celebrate."

Bedenbaugh said through awareness, dedicated leadership and now a law strengthening incentives for revitalization, he believes more can be done to save buildings that face challenges in the state.

"For every building that gets an award, 10 to 20 buildings are sitting vacant and derelict and struggle to get the spotlight or get attention and capital to them, and this was a great segway to the South Carolina Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act that governor signed during awards ceremony," Bedenbaugh said.

The bill, which passed with broad bipartisan support, provides a 25 percent tax credit toward the cost of building and rehabilitation costs for a commercial building that has been abandoned for more than five years.

"It's meant to go after buildings that are in so many small towns that are empty and is meant to attract capital back to small towns, and we think this will do it," Bedenbaugh said.

Without historic credits, support and incentives, Scott said such projects like the library building couldn't have been saved since restoration on historic structures is so labor-intensive and expensive.

Scott said the building really sold him on participating in other projects with Key, such as Hotel Florence. "We've all had this longstanding belief in Florence itself and the fact that downtown is the heart of any city and if its heart isn't viable and healthy, then the rest can't be healthy either," Key said.

'Kress' building downtown Florence's next big project?

Categories: [Downtown News](#)

FLORENCE, S.C. -- Come one, come all, developers and planners.

If you have an idea for a major building -- especially if it's for the old Kress building -- in downtown

Florence, now's your chance to be heard.

This week, the Florence City Council approved what's known as a "status quo period" of 60 days for the old Kress store building at the corner of Evans and South Dargan streets. It's the building with the yellow brick exterior.

The special time window will give interested developers time to submit plans for the Kress building, without worrying about it being sold from under their feet.

Ray Reich, the city's downtown director, said the "status quo" was necessary after several developers approached Florence about working on the city-owned building. Any interested party will be able to submit plans to the city for the next 60 days thanks to Council's action.

"It basically just gives the parties interested time to do their due diligence without the fear that someone else is going to come along and buy it," Reich said.

The fact that city believed it needed to implement this special procedure suggests that the interest in the building is serious and significant. Development of the Kress, more or less across the street from the new Hotel Florence/Victor's Bistro development, would add to downtown's growing momentum.

Reich said it isn't unusual for developers to spend thousands of dollars putting together concepts for a building, hence why they would want a chance to show their plans before another person bought the structure.

While he declined to say how many developers have expressed interest in the building, Reich said the interest in the project was enough to warrant Council's action.

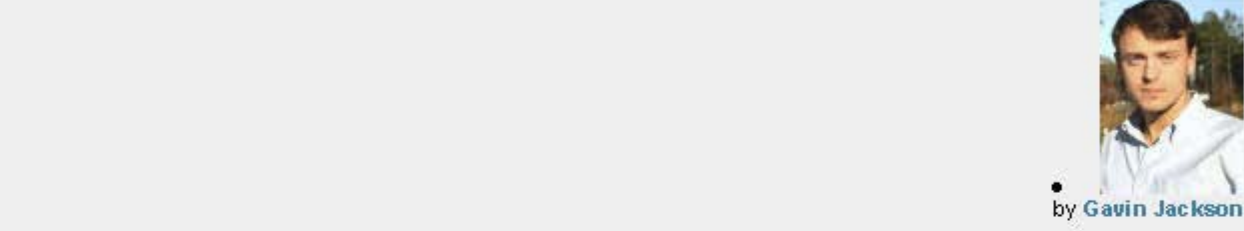
"We've got several parties interested in the property," he said. "Which is a good problem to have."

Reich said downtown continues to grow and develop following last month's grand opening of Hotel Florence and Victor's Bistro on Evans Street.

Florence City Council OKs incentives for mixed-use projects



MORNING NEWS FILE
The Kress building front on Evans Street in Florence, taken June 12, 2013.
Posted: Tuesday, November 5, 2013 10:50 am | Updated: 2:57 pm, Tue Nov 5, 2013.



FLORENCE, S.C. -- The Florence City Council voted to approve millions of dollars in incentives for two development groups that will redevelop several of the largest buildings downtown at a special called meeting Tuesday morning. One development project incorporates the Kress, Woolworth and Kuker buildings on the 100 block of West Evans Street and the Guaranty Bank building on North Dargan Street, roughly 60,000 square feet of space that will be transformed into a live, work and play, public and private mixed-use project.

The development group, New Florence LLC, which includes former Lt. Gov. Ken Ard, restaurateur Dale Barth, attorney Kevin Barth, real estate agent Ken Jackson, businessman Jim Brown and businessman Frank Chisholm, has plans to invest \$10 million in the space, creating a 200-seat restaurant, a sauce bottling facility, a micro-distillery, 15 to 18 loft apartments, office space and a public atrium and rooftop terrace, according to Mayor Stephen J. Wukela. The Kress building was originally put into a 60-day status-quo period this summer by council to allow interested parties to submit their development plans, for the massive, 15,400-square-foot building. The city put a formal public request for proposals out on Aug. 2 and received one application by the deadline of Sept. 5 that also incorporated the surrounding buildings.

Wukela said the project will create some 150 to 200 jobs and keep private investment momentum moving forward. "These two investment groups are very well known, very respected businessmen in the community they are all, frankly putting their money where their mouth is and making this substantial investment in spite of the risks that exists," Wukela said. "And I think it demonstrates to other developers out there considering this prospect that this is a reasonable undertaking, it's a viable undertaking and it's a worthwhile undertaking."

The \$1.98 million incentive package represents a similar percentage and package given to the Hotel Florence group. New Florence will receive a \$200,000 conditional grant for the group's purchase of the Kuker building, \$850,000 in property tax rebates (financed through Tax Increment Financing district dollars) and \$320,000 relative to the city's construction of a public rooftop terrace and atrium. The city is conveying the city-owned Kress (which it received as a gift from the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation) and Woolworth buildings and the Florence Downtown Development Corp.-owned Guaranty Bank building.

The Kuker building was sold to the development group by Bo Osborne.

Property tax revenue per year from the properties before they were publicly owned was about \$1,000 annually. Wukela said once developed, it will generate \$139,000 in property taxes, however the group will receive 85 percent in property tax rebates for seven years, netting the city some \$20,000 annually. Water and sewer revenue is expected to be \$1 million over 25 years. Estimates did not include hospitality tax revenue generation.

The group issued a statement to the Morning News after the decision that reads in part: "We are unwavering in our commitment to going above and beyond in respecting the great history of this prominent location and creating something that will be a catalyst in moving all of us to a better Florence and Pee Dee region."

Royal Knight

Council approved \$280,000 in incentives to the Hotel Florence group, Downtown Hospitality LLC, to develop the 8,300-square-foot Royal Knight building located across the street from the Kuker building. The project is estimated to cost \$2.5 million and will create extended stay rooms for Hotel Florence on the second floor with retail space, a restaurant and a public restroom on the first floor.

This measure also was approved by council 6-1, with Councilman Ed Robinson voting against it. The incentives include \$180,000 for the city to stabilize the building and bring it into compliance with downtown maintenance and appearance standards as well as \$100,000 toward the construction of a public restroom on the first floor, something Wukela estimated would have cost double if done separately. The city also performed bat abatement on the building this summer.

The FDCC, which bought the building two years ago for \$385,000, will now convey the building to the group, according to City Manager Drew Griffin, who said such investments will come back to the community in several ways. "Through job creation and economic investment," Griffin said. "We estimate that the hotel project created new wealth in Florence of \$29 million. That is no different than the state giving incentives to manufacturing; they do it because of the spin off dollars created. And tourism and hospitality are considered very similarly to manufacturing ... you bring wealth into your community through the production of goods and services, well a restaurant or hospitality tourism does the same thing."

A presentation was also made to council showing the city would be able to obtain a \$20 million bond based on TIF district revenues.

The TIF was created in the event that property tax rates in the TIF district, basically the historic district, would increase over a 2008 baseline, once the TIF is enacted the city will capture those revenues, school district and county revenues for a period of up to 13 years. The city is in the position to determine what those revenues will be to enact the TIF and prepare to do a bond issuance based on those revenues to fund development incentives and other projects like two parking garages, a basketball complex and other projects totaling \$16.1 million. Council will vote on the ordinance in January.

Florence downtown revitalization to get new master plan

Categories: [Downtown News](#)

FLORENCE -- By January at the latest, city officials are expected to receive an updated downtown master plan outlining what needs to be done to keep revitalization efforts moving since it's already fulfilled several current plan projections.

In fact, Phillip Lookadoo, director of Planning, Research and Development for the City of Florence, said consultant group, Kending Keast Collaborative, was impressed by how much the downtown had changed since the first downtown master plan was drafted three years ago and adopted in February 2011.

"We will be able to take the work they do and look at what projects have been completed, what it looks like now and moving forward," Lookadoo said. "To have concrete projects in the ground compared to three years ago when they did the plan gives them a much better ability to give us an idea of where we should be looking. They were very much surprised and fascinated at how quickly things have been moving and how many things we have been able to accomplish."

The original master plan provides a detailed, five-year projection that Lookadoo said the city wanted updated to maintain its vision. Items such as streetscape construction, adopting property maintenance codes, a marketing campaign and a façade grant program have been implemented.

Since completing many immediate and near term goals, Lookadoo said preliminary feedback from the group is focusing on interconnectivity of the downtown historic district with surrounding districts.

"So they're looking at tying in connectivity with museum and performing arts center and kind of reinforcing those ideas and looked at other things originally suggested such as some sort of multipurpose facility they proposed near the Bush's Recycling site and I think they still think we need something like that."

That site, bordered by Darlington, Irby, Lucas and Dargan streets was originally deemed a good site for a "master-planned 'mixed-unit' development" but now is planned to be home to HopeHealth's new, \$10 million medical clinic. Additionally the city of Florence is introducing an ordinance at Wednesday's council meeting to designate 10 acres on that site as surplus.

Despite the land usage, the project represents a significant investment to developing the area that will continue to see further development especially as projects move up North Dargan Street.

Downtown Development manager Ray Reich said an updated plan will help interested developers, too.

"I met with an out-of-town developer yesterday and (soon) when I'm talking with someone on a possible project I'll be able to say 'here's our master plan, here's things happening, here's things we know are going to happen and here's where you fit in with your project,'" Reich said. "So we have this big matrix and we'll just keep filling things in."

And there are items filling in as of this week with two, separate, major building redevelopment projects announcements this week, representing a combined \$12.5 million in mixed-use projects coming to the heart of downtown within the next two years.

Florence City Councilman Buddy Brand mentioned additional downtown interest at the Florence Downtown Development Corp. Board of Directors meeting Thursday.

"We're looking at projects that total about \$30 to \$40 million outside of what's already sold out there within the next six months to a year," Brand said. "Outside money coming in and that doesn't include the medical school."

Francis Marion University plans to construct a new, \$15.5 million health sciences facility where the neglected, yet historic Trust building sits at the corner of South Irby and West Evans streets, if and when a certificate of appropriateness for the building's demolition is issued by the city's Design Review Board.

The board will hold its November meeting in the city courtroom at 2 p.m. next Wednesday, which was announced Thursday.

The rescheduled city council meeting conflicts with the Wednesday DRB meeting, which Lookadoo tried to push to another date in November without luck. Since ample public notification has not been given for the city-owned Trust building issue, it has been scheduled for the Dec. 11 agenda, Lookadoo said.

EDITORIAL: Big deals are a big deal for downtown

Posted: Thursday, November 7, 2013 5:00 am
MORNING NEWS

Close your eyes and picture what downtown Florence used to look like not too long ago. Remember the eyesores? Open your eyes. Look at the progress, particularly on Dargan Street.

It started with a beautiful new library. A sparkling new home for the Florence Little Theater was next.

The next domino to fall toward downtown was the spectacular Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center. Finishing touches are being made now on the new Florence County Museum.

West Evans Street started to transform with the opening of an upscale hotel and restaurant.

Now plans have been unveiled for revitalization of other old buildings in the same block.

Close your eyes. Imagine what downtown Florence will look like five years from now.

More eye-opening redevelopment is on the way.

The Florence Trust building will come down, despite a little kicking and screaming from preservationists who don't seem to understand that it isn't practical to save every old building.

A health and science center will go up, adding to an intriguing mix of old and new in the city center that had been in a sad state of decay.

We suspect we will be hearing soon about parking decks, which will fill a vital need. We hope they blend in well with surroundings that are getting more and more attractive.

The latest development is part of a well-orchestrated redevelopment project that is gaining momentum. The pace is picking up as the snowball grows.

The new action competed for news on Election Day with the surprisingly sweeping passage of the penny sales tax referendum (more on that in a few days).

In a special called meeting Tuesday, the Florence City Council approved of more than \$2.2 million in incentives for two development groups. This news should not be overshadowed.

One group will transform four buildings -- the Kress, Woolworth and Kuker buildings on West Evans Street and the Guaranty Bank building on North Dargan Street -- into a live, work-and-play, public and private mixed-use project. Plans call for a 200-seat restaurant, a sauce bottling facility, a micro-distillery, 15-18 loft apartments and office space, plus a public atrium and rooftop terrace. We are especially pleased to see loft apartments in the mix. This will be just a start for downtown dwelling space.

Another group already is a player in this game. Downtown Hospitality developed Hotel Florence, and now it plans to develop the Royal Knight building on the corner of West Evans and South Dargan streets. The new project calls for extended-stay rooms for Hotel Florence on the second floor, plus retail space, a restaurant and a public restroom on the first floor.

We approve wholeheartedly of the council's approval of incentives. This isn't a \$2.2 million cost. It's a big investment in the city's future.

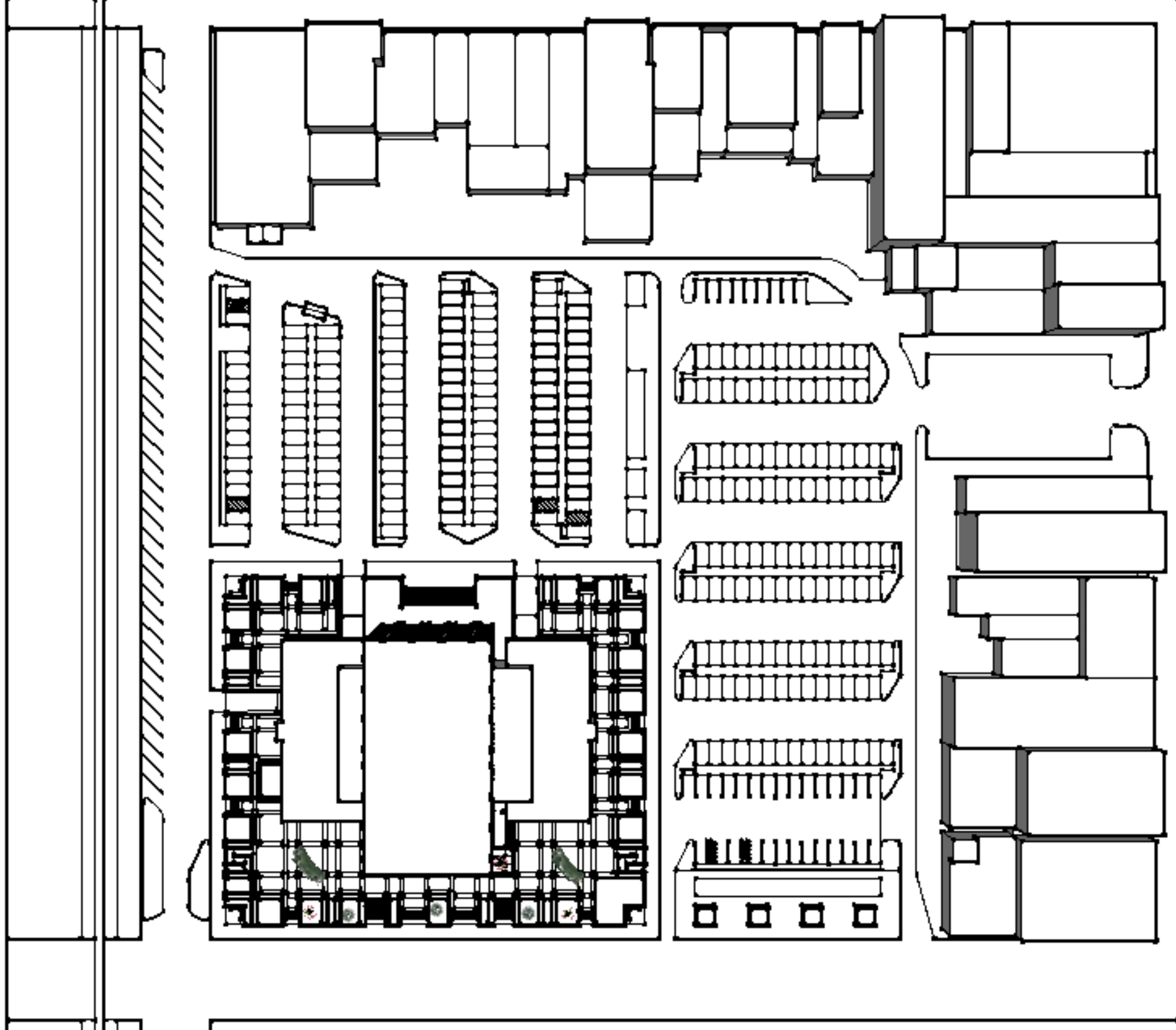
What's next? Now that the penny tax has been extended, we expect to hear more, louder cries about the need for a new county courthouse. We can't imagine preservationists fighting to save the ugly City County Complex that the city moved out of earlier this year. This issue isn't a matter of aesthetics, and progress probably will come only with an increase in property tax that would take courage for council members to propose and support.

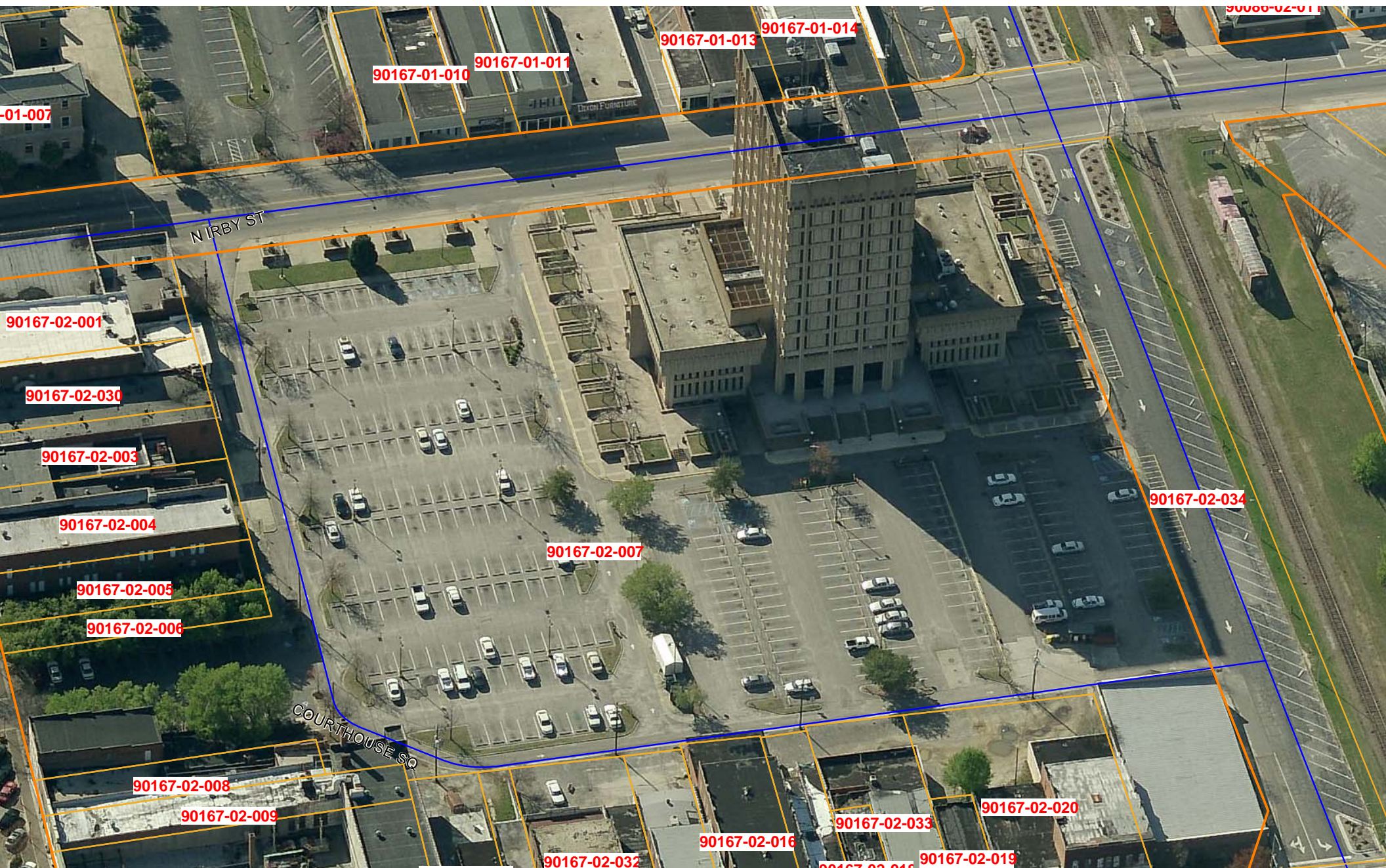
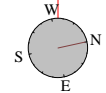
But let's argue those merits another day. Today, let's applaud more public-private success. Two big deals are a real big deal for downtown.

Unsigned editorials represent the views of this newspaper. Editorial board members are: Stephen Wade (regional publisher), Don Kausler Jr. (regional editor), Kimberly Ginfida (online editor), Matt Tate (news editor) and David Johnson (regional circulation director).

© 2014 SCNow. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

BACKGROUND HISTORY

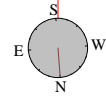




Copyright ©2011 Pictometry International Corp.

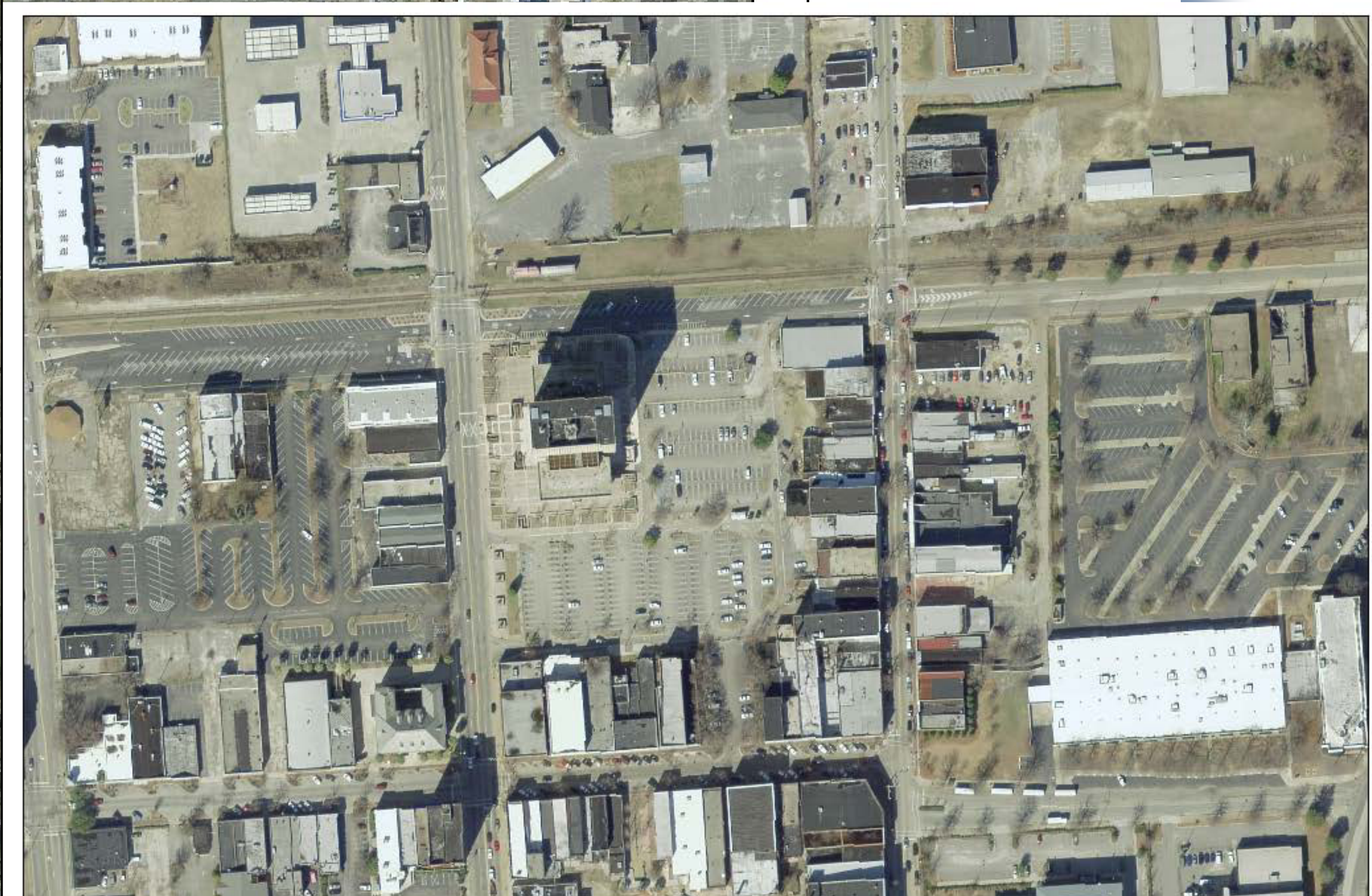
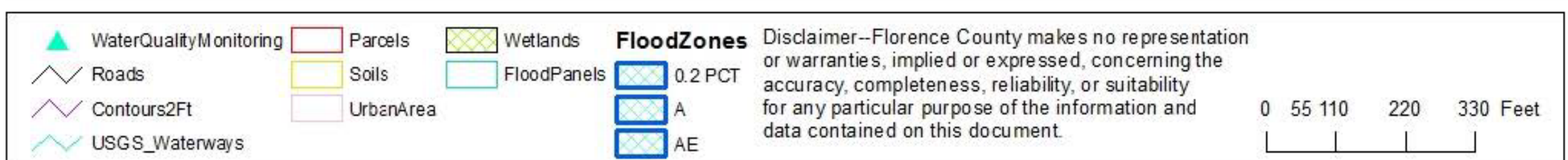
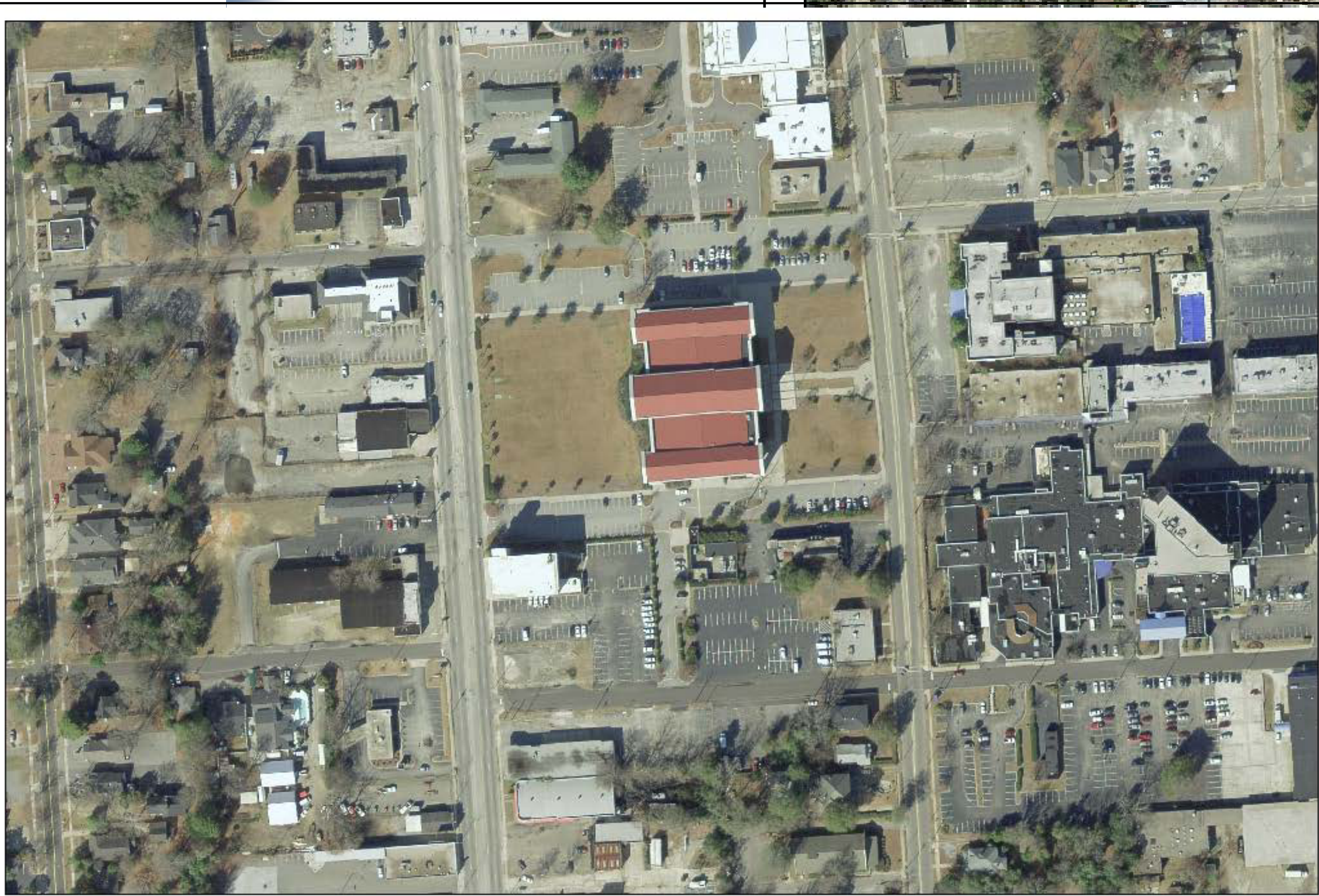
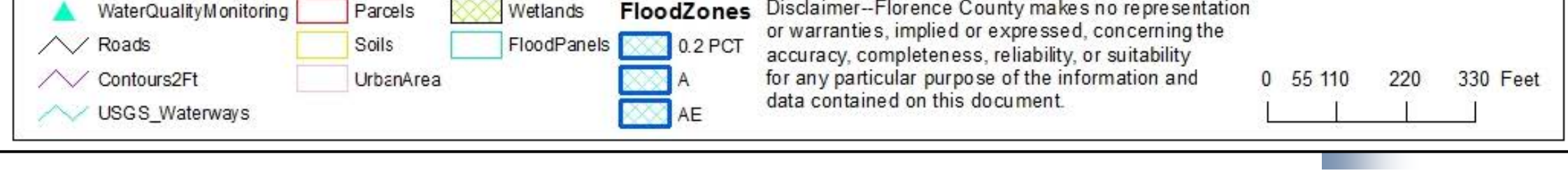
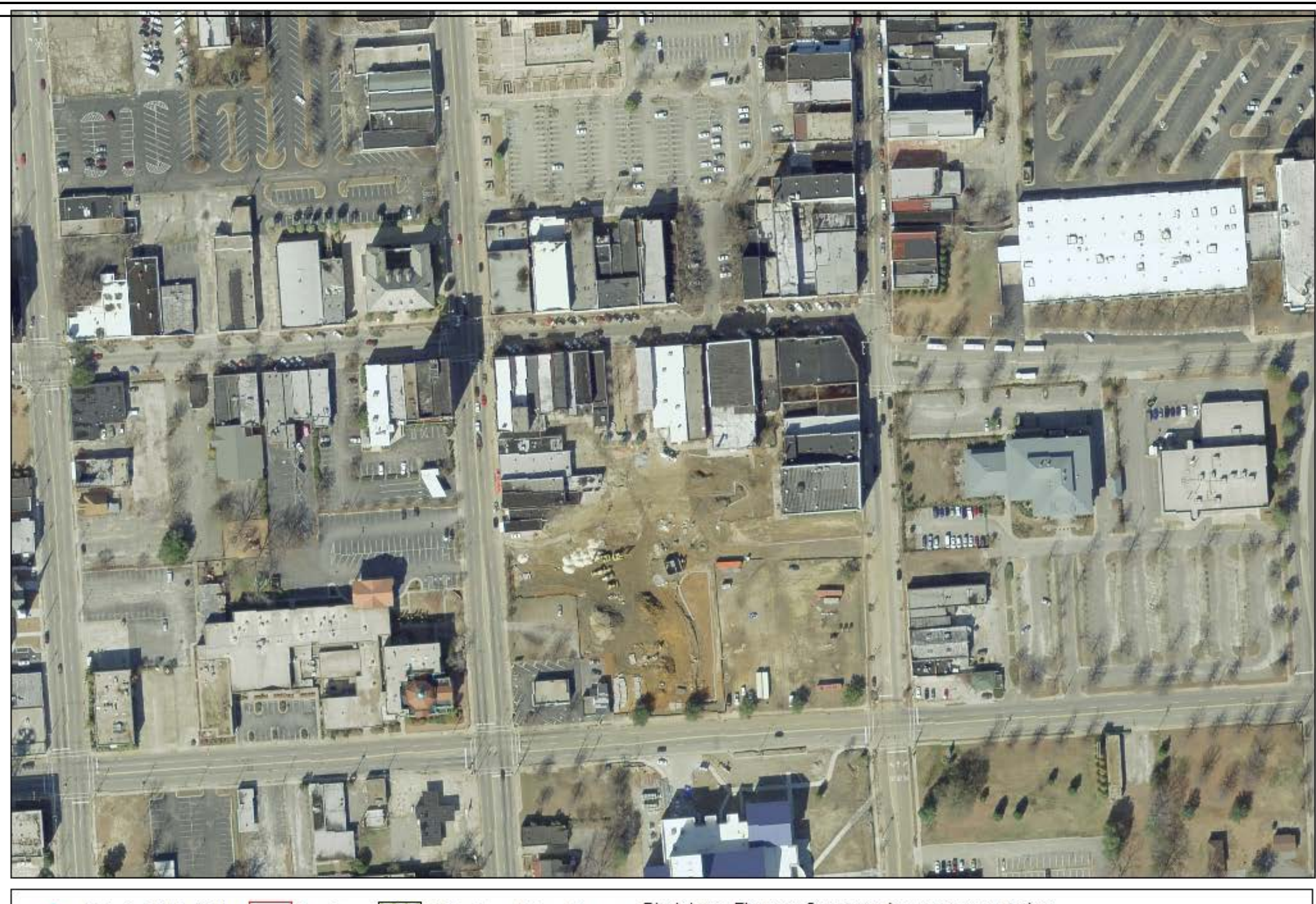
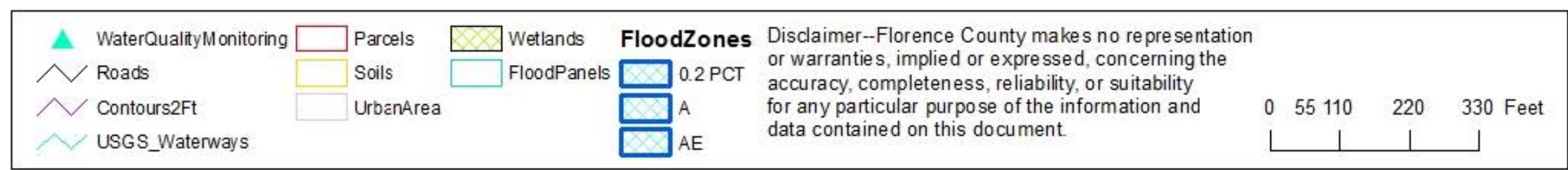
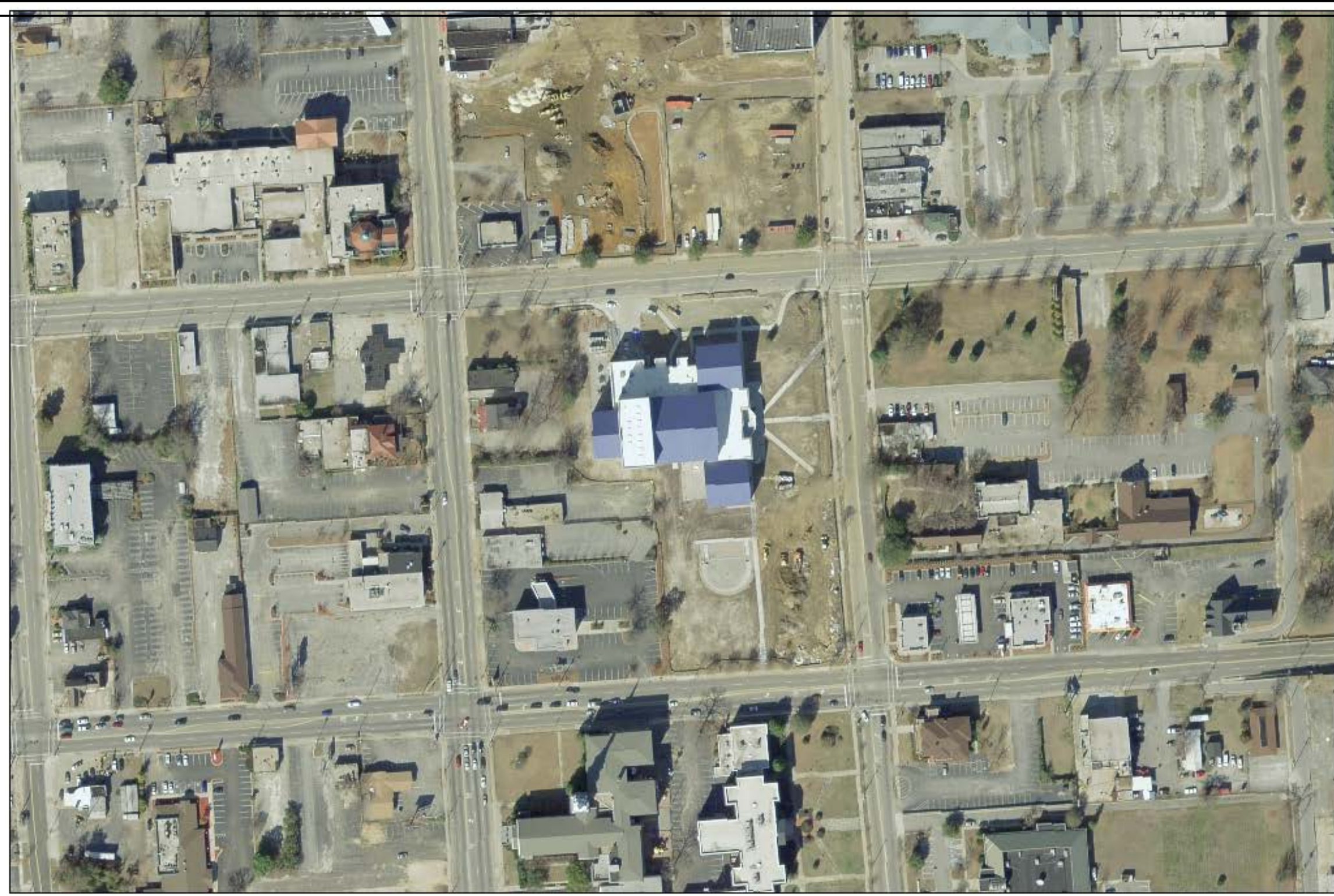
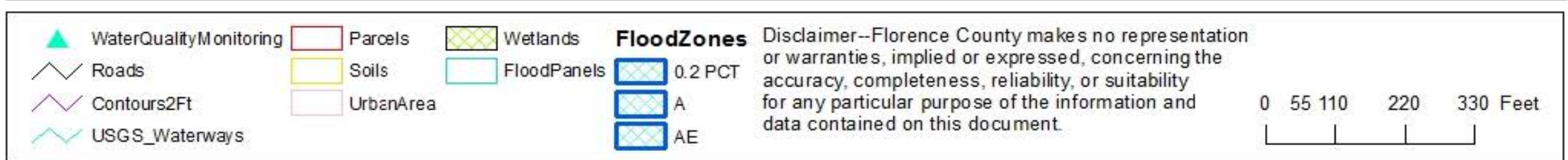
Average Scale: 1 inch = 70.6 feet

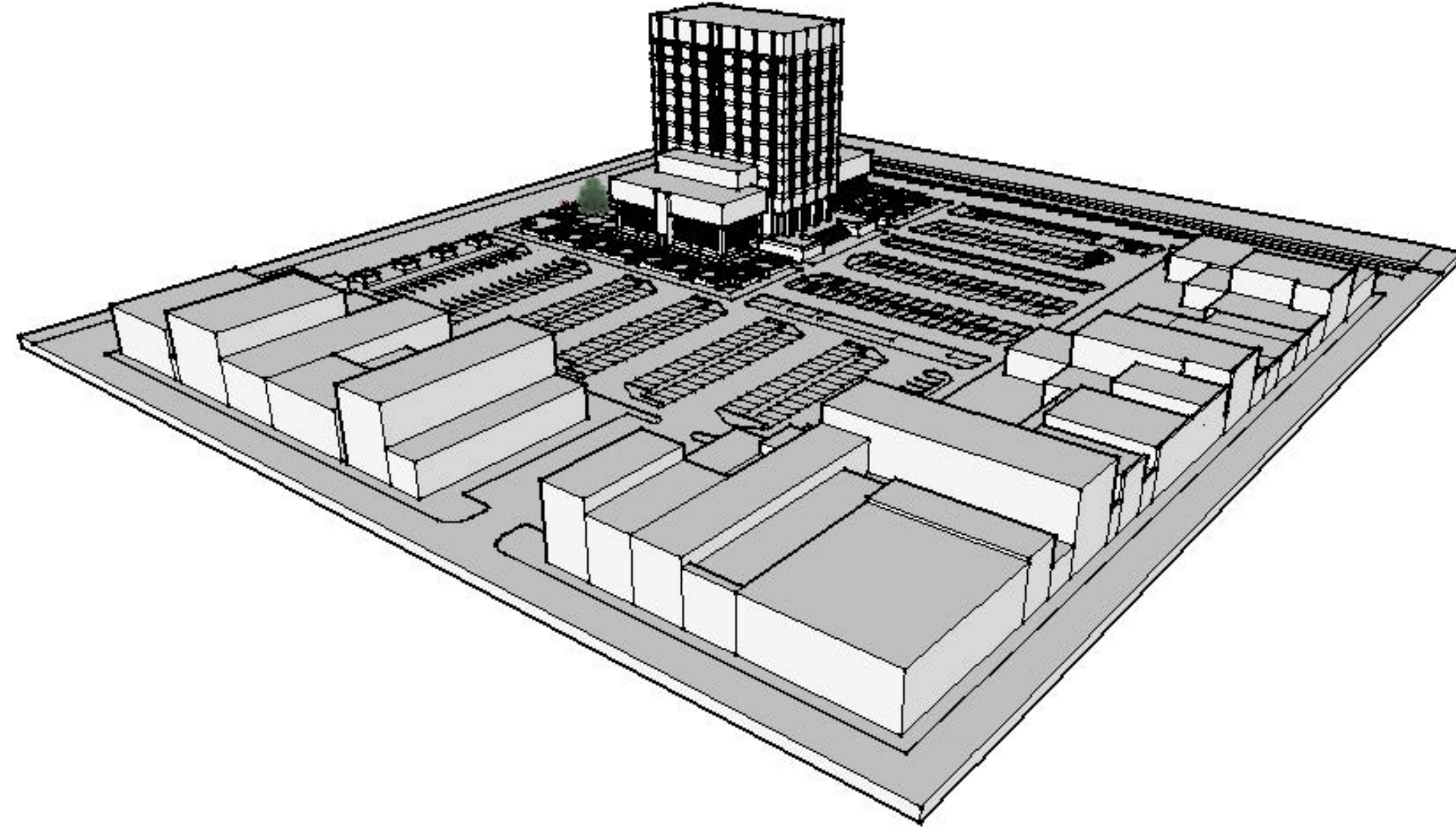
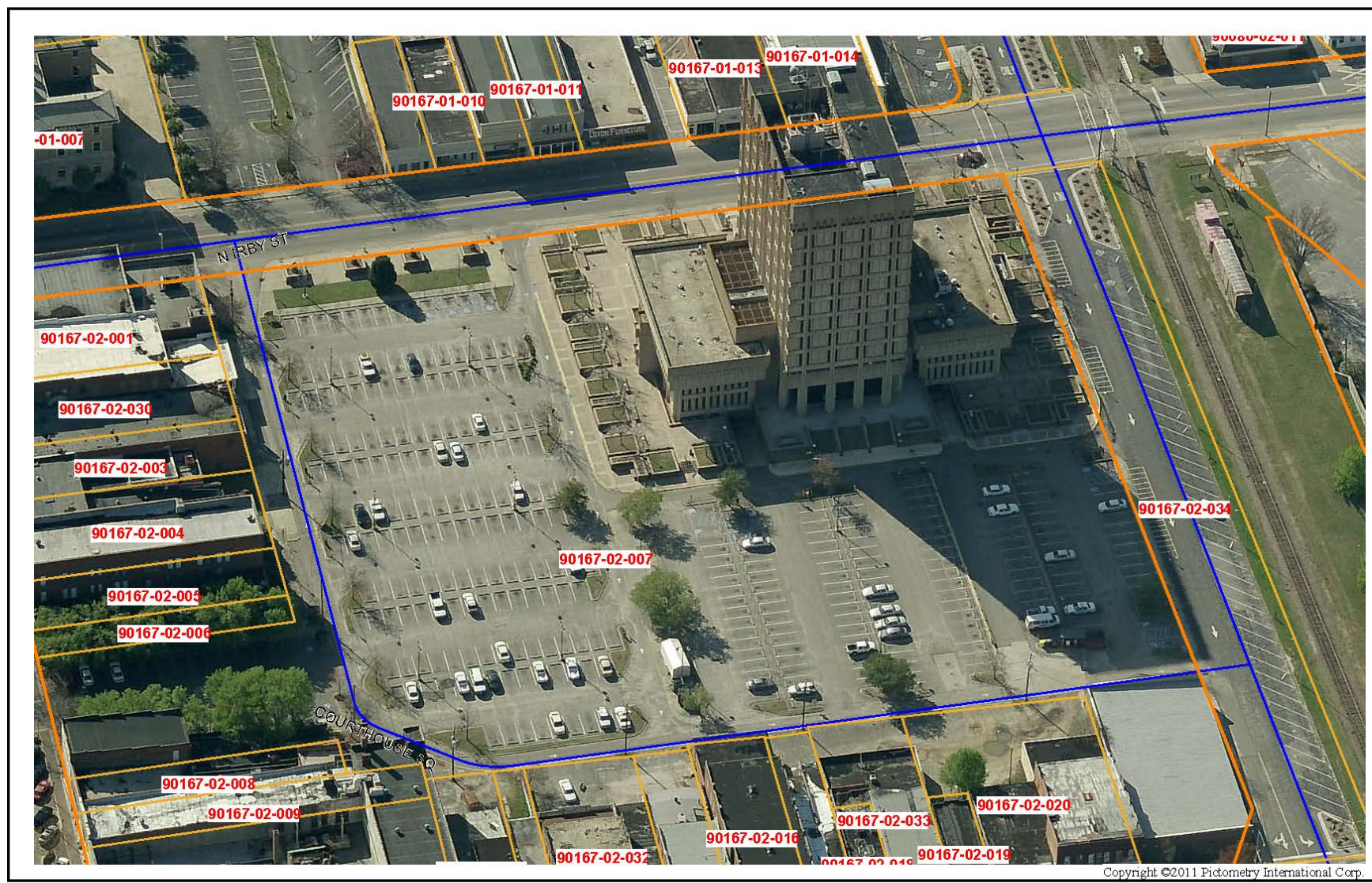
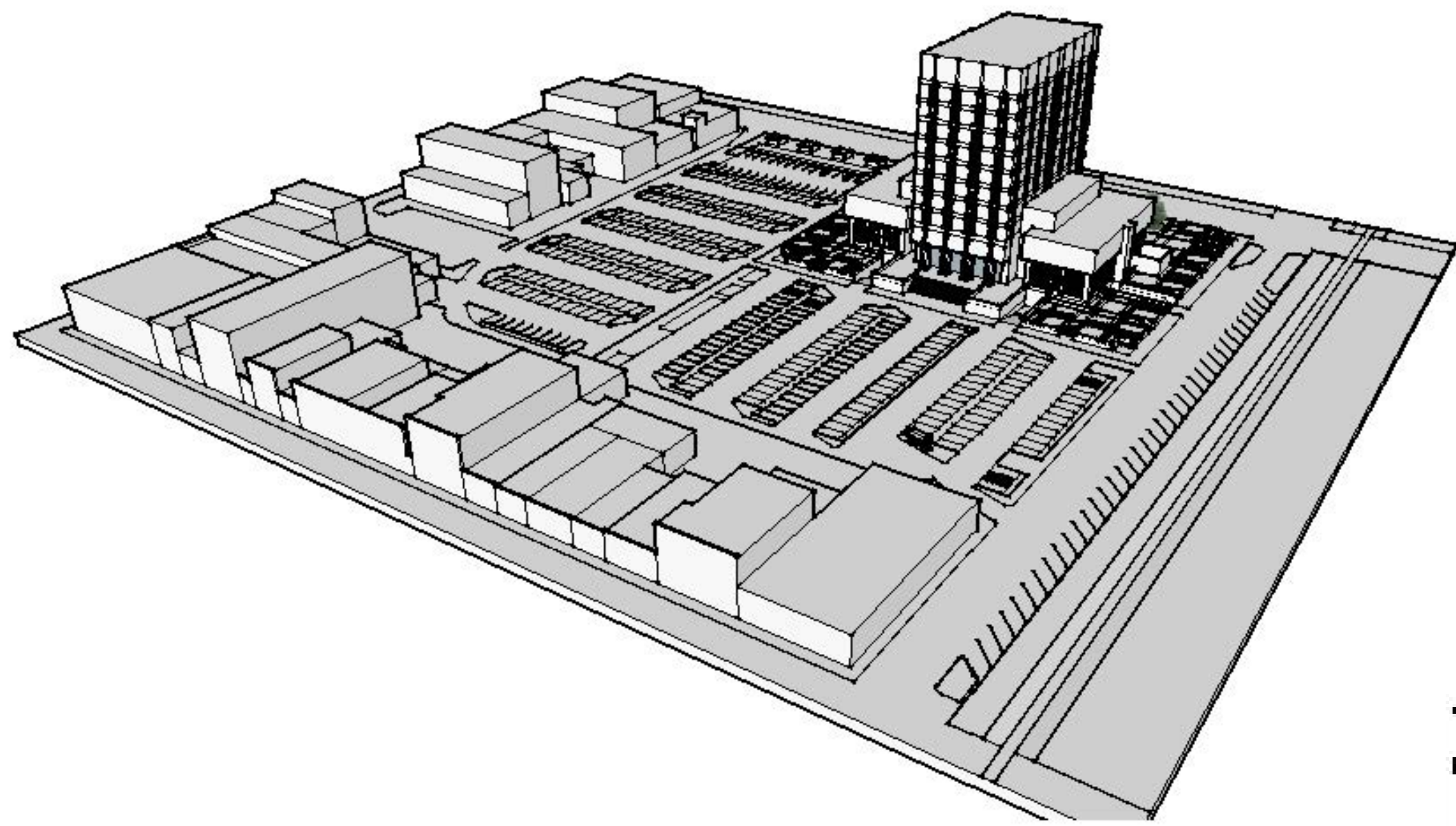




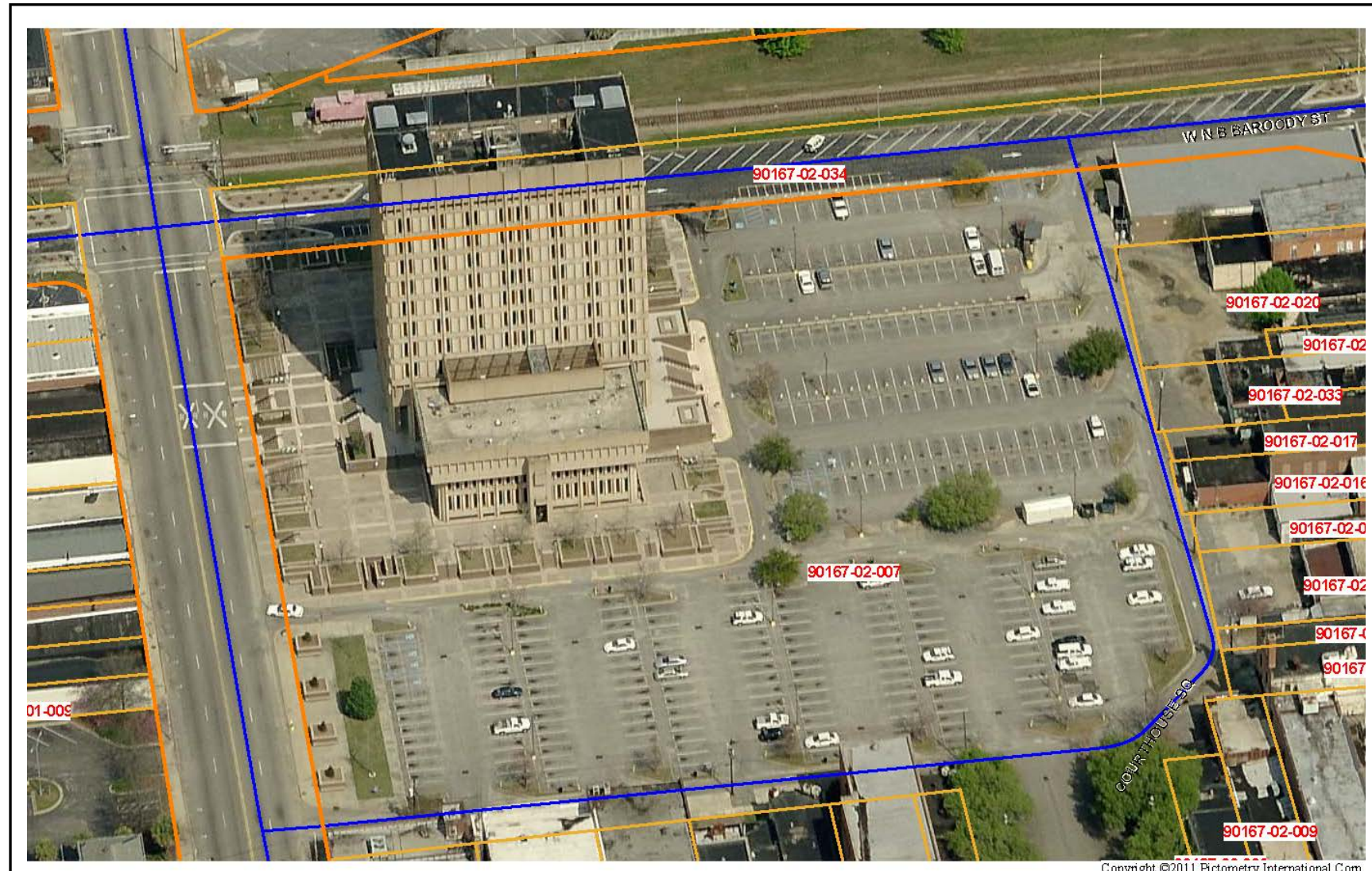
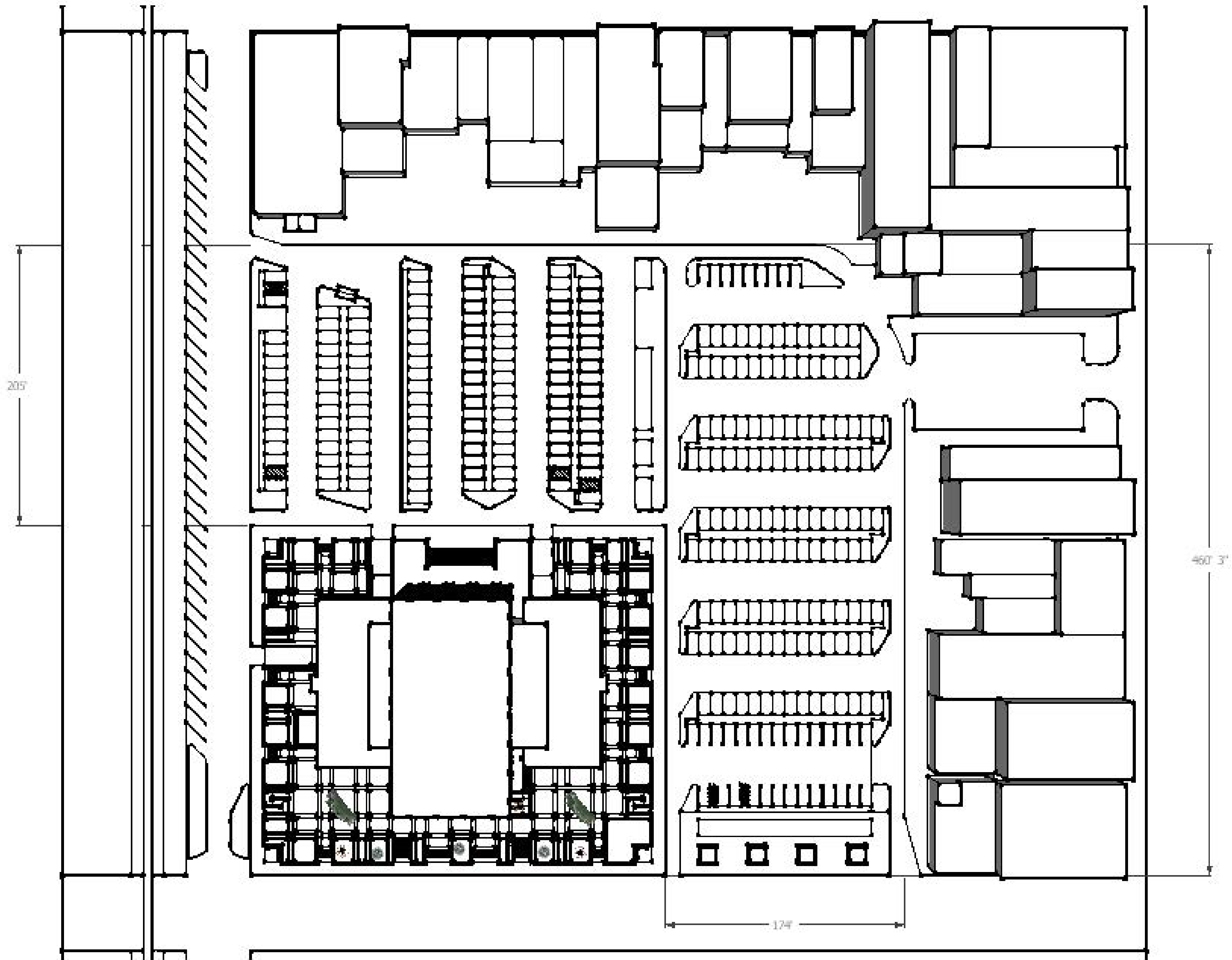
Copyright ©2011 Pictometry International Corp.

Average Scale: 1 inch = 67.8 feet

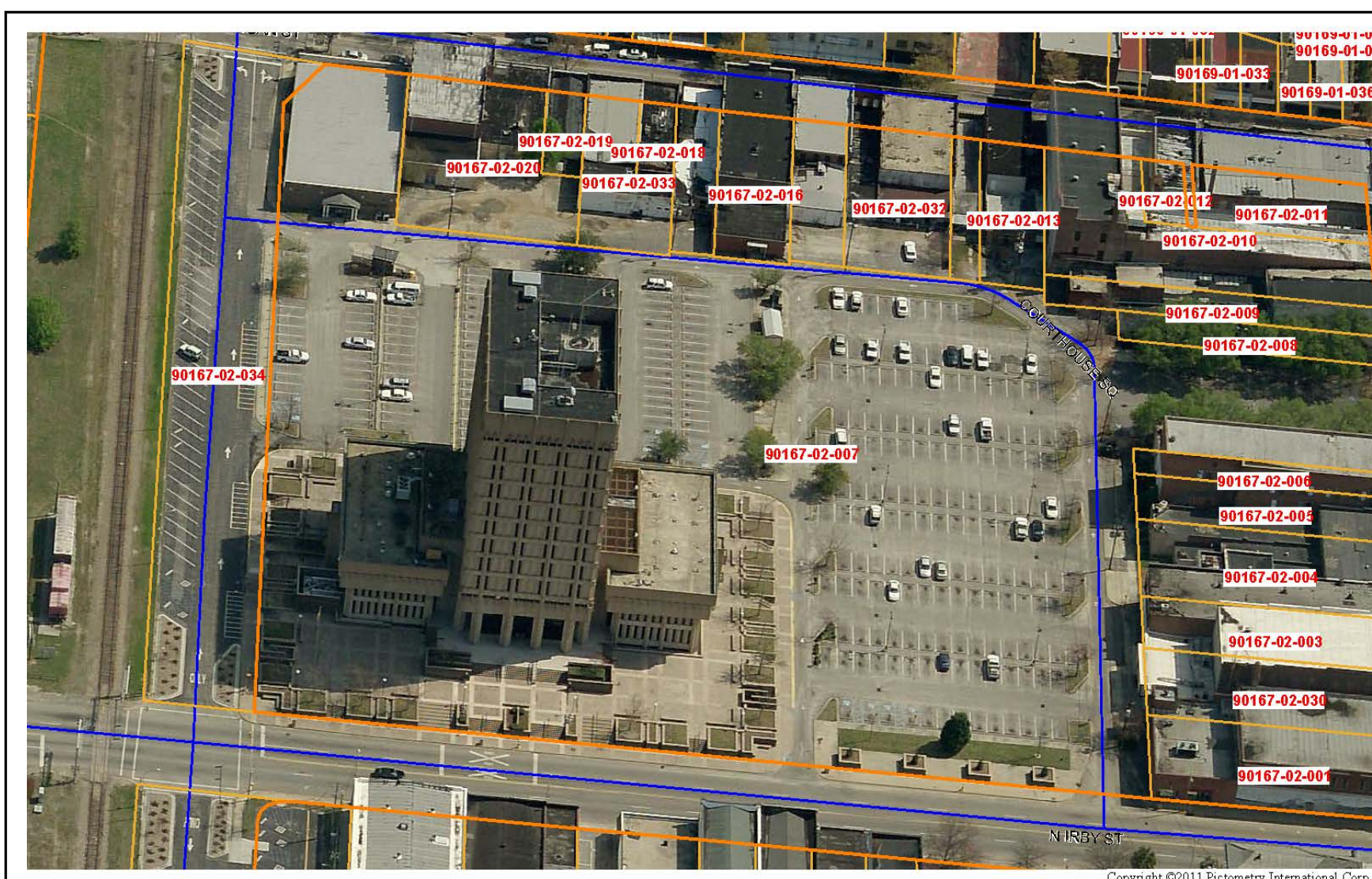
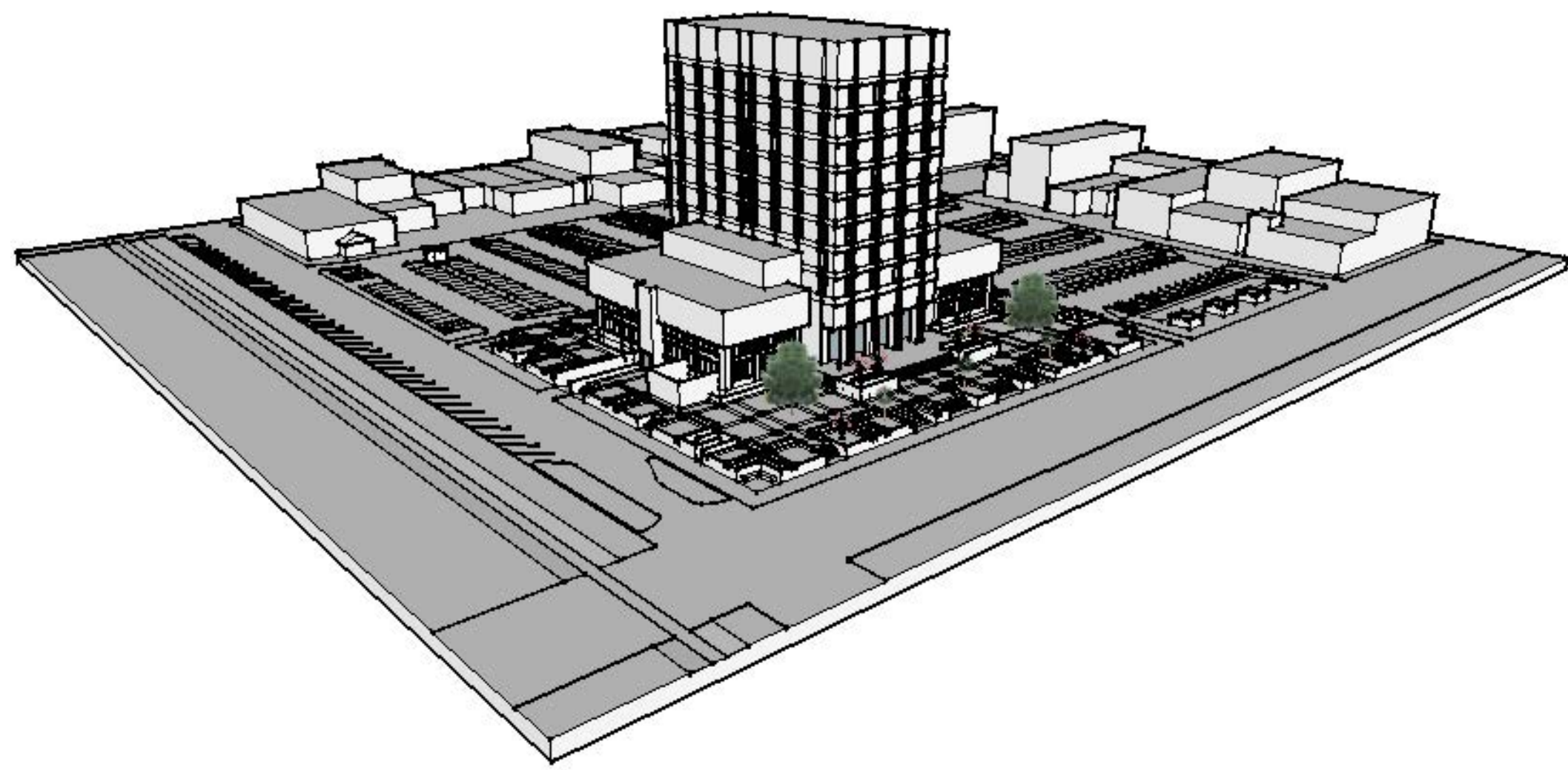




Average Scale: 1 inch = 67.8 feet



Average Scale: 1 inch = 60.7 feet



Average Scale: 1 inch = 68.1 feet

