

Activity Center Plans (ACPs): An Overview

Detailed planning efforts for Activity Centers in the County's Development Areas will provide a clear roadmap for identified locations of higher-density development and redevelopment, tax base diversification, and public initiatives as we welcome 31,000 new residents over the next 18 years.

Directly addressing the Big Moves, Goals, Objectives, and Actions established in AC44 and aligning with the County's Strategic Plan, ACPs will identify opportunities for increased density and well-connected mixed-use development, establish multimodal transportation networks and vibrant streetscapes, expand housing supply and affordable housing opportunities, prioritize catalyst projects, and address infrastructure needs and market conditions.

The first ACP will focus on a prioritized area, identified through site-selection criteria. Staff are presenting the location of the first Activity Center planning effort (please see bold text on page 2 below) to the Board at its August 5th work session.

Work on the first ACP is planned to start in FY27 and finish in FY28. The second ACP is planned to start in FY28 and finish in FY29. The third ACP is planned to start in FY29 and finish in FY30. Based on lessons learned from the first ACP, it is possible that the follow-on planning efforts may take less time.

The Relationship Between Activity Center Plans and the County's Master Plans

Albemarle County's master plans established neighborhood-level land use and design guidance that shaped County decision-making for more than two decades. The work done through those plans, and by the community members who helped shape them, laid the groundwork for what comes next.

For the foreseeable future, future planning efforts within master plan areas will be focused on: 1) updating transportation recommendations through the development of the County's Multimodal Transportation Plan; and 2) the development of plans and revalidating specific Land Use Designations for the Activity Centers and immediate surrounding area.

With the adoption of AC44, future land use maps for each for the master plans were updated and consolidated into AC44's Future Land Use Map. With many master plan recommendations already implemented or underway, some of the remaining recommendations will be folded into AC44's Activity Center and Multimodal Transportation Planning efforts. Others will remain in master plan legacy documents or be folded into other chapters of AC44 as appropriate.

Activity Center Location Prioritization and Selection

In spring 2026, the Long-Range Planning Team conducted background research for all major Activity Center clusters across the Development Areas, drawing on existing master plans, recent rezoning activity, area VDOT projects, existing development, property ownership patterns, GIS analysis, online planning resources, and internal discussions.

This effort identified six candidate locations for Activity Center planning. These six locations were evaluated using a three-part scoring framework, with high rankings indicating that an area offers opportunities for Activity Center planning to generate significant community benefits.

From north to south, the six candidate locations are:

- The U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road area north to the county line
- The U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard
- The U.S. Route 29 – Rio Road area
- The U.S. Route 29 – Dominion Drive area south to Hydraulic Road
- South Pantops
- The Southern Neighborhoods

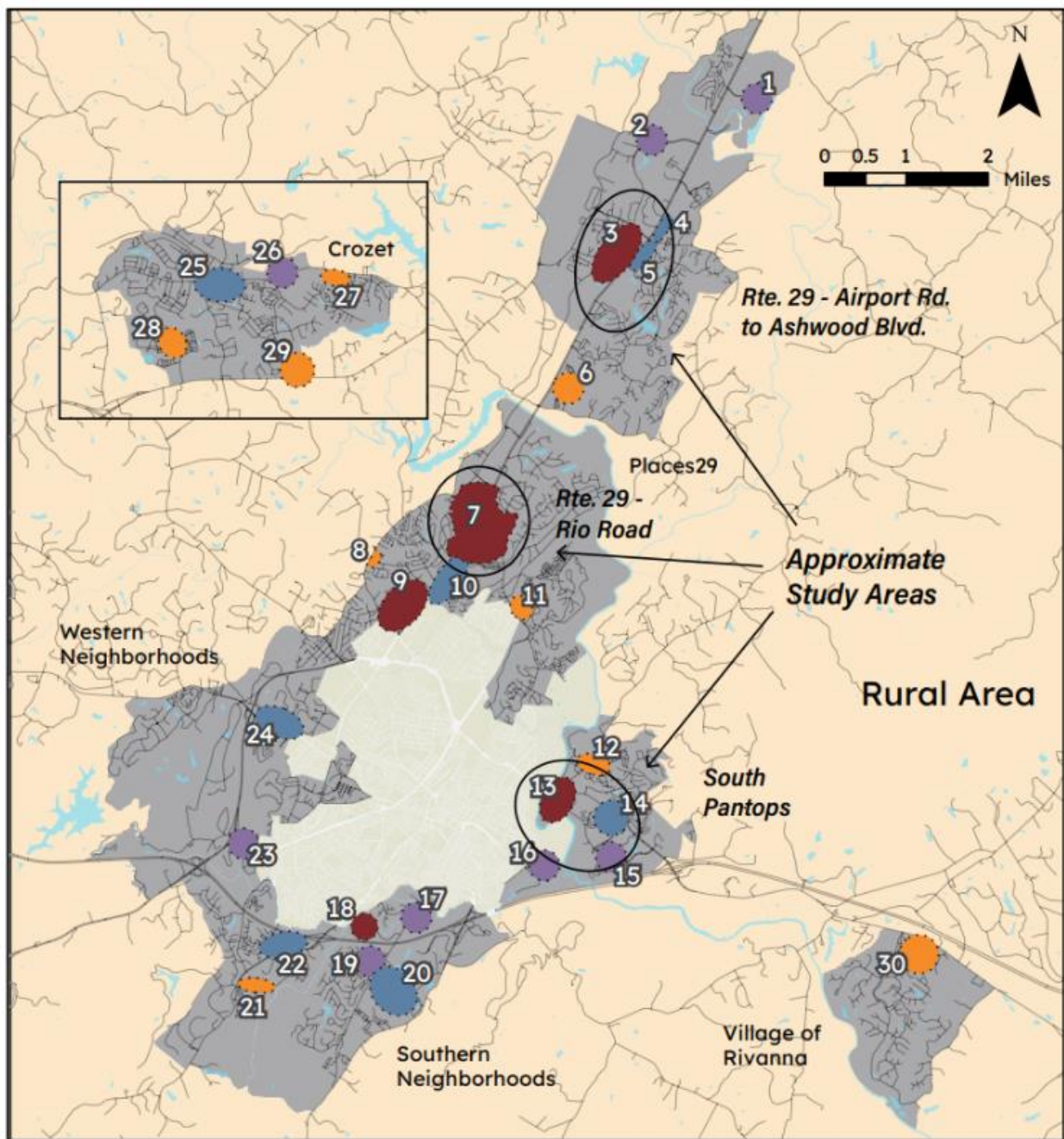
Locations not carried forward into the scoring analysis included the Village of Rivanna, Fontaine Research Park and county areas along Ivy Road, and Crozet. Research indicated that these areas were recently master planned or do not experience significant development or redevelopment potential at this time.

The analysis identified three areas with similar, high-ranking scores, qualifying each as priority candidates for Albemarle's first ACP:

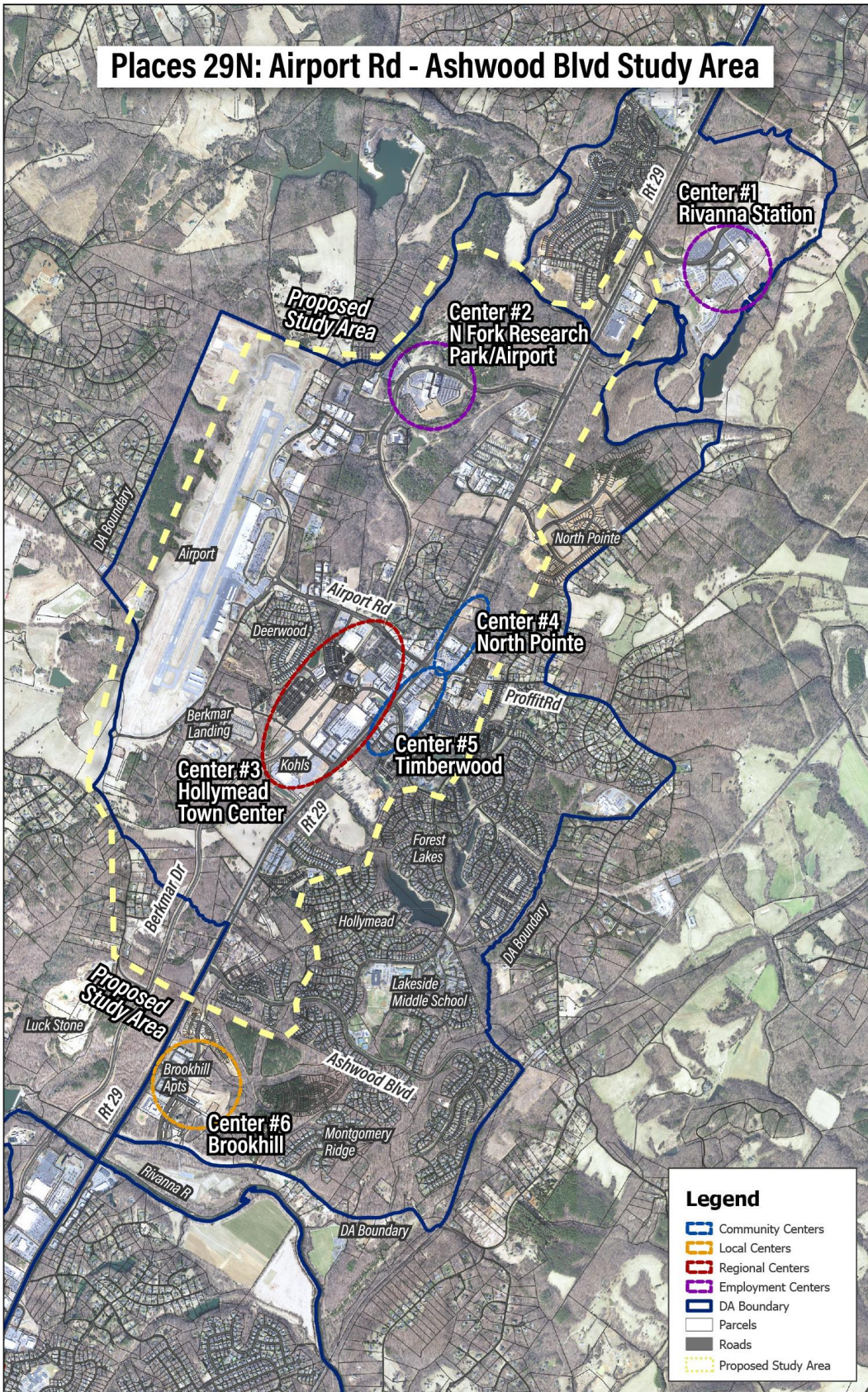
- The U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard
- The U.S. Route 29 – Rio Road area
- South Pantops

Following a work session with the Planning Commission on June 9 to review the three priority locations and additional information gathering, staff have selected the U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard as the location for the first ACP.

A map and more information on each of the three priority locations are provided below. General locations are shown for the three priority study areas on the map. Study area boundaries will be refined further during the Activity Center planning process.



The U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road Area South to Ashwood Boulevard

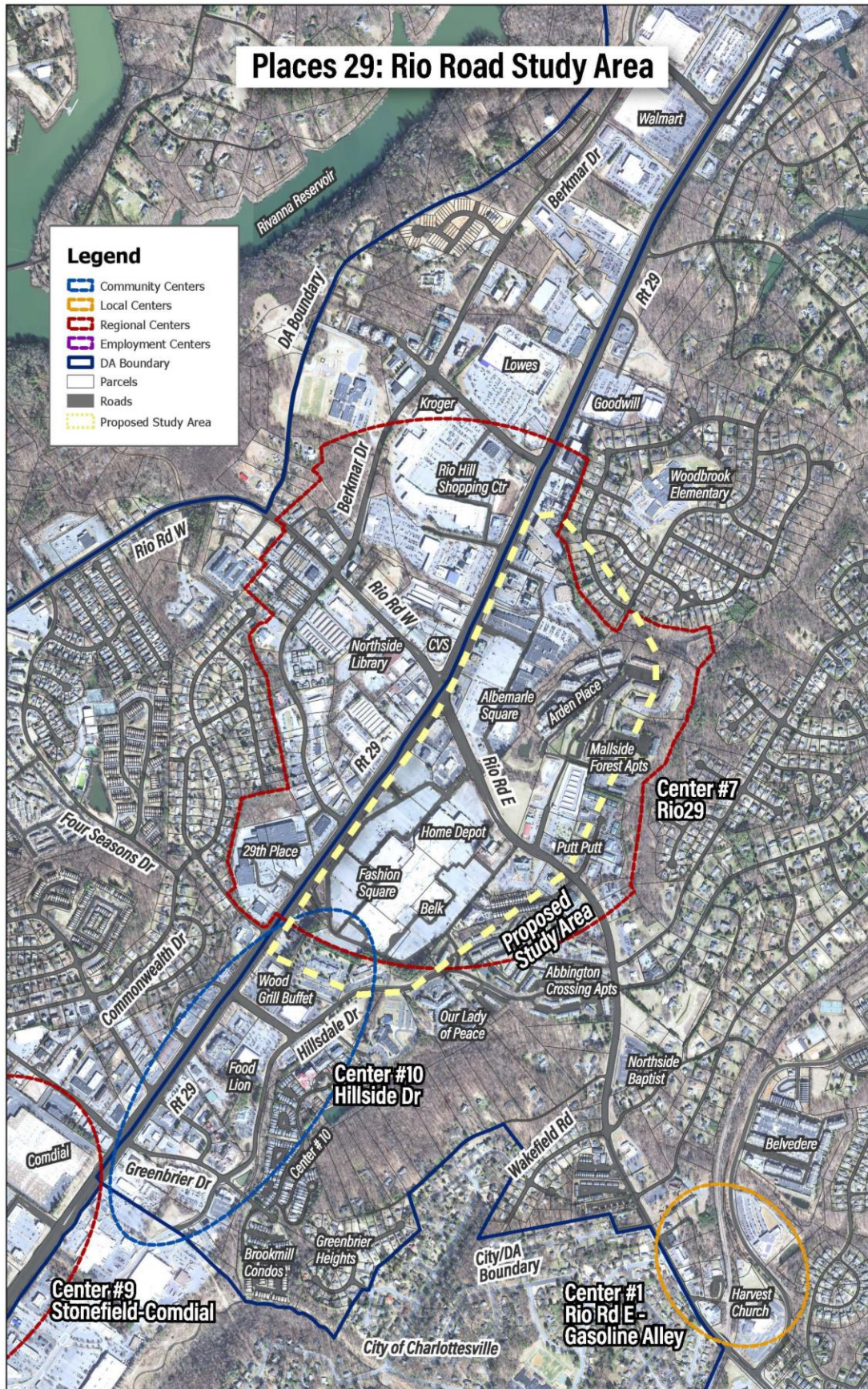


This area spans the Route 29 corridor between areas just north of Airport Road and Ashwood Boulevard to the south, anchored by Hollymead Town Center, Charlottesville Albemarle Airport, and the Berkmar Drive corridor to the west and commercial areas to the east. It features significant areas of planned residential development, a County-owned parcel with trail easement potential, undeveloped land in the Rural Area between Route 29 and Berkmar Drive, and the forthcoming extension of Berkmar Drive to Lewis and Clark Drive that will improve north-south connectivity. The County has also requested that VDOT study Route 29 at Airport Road as part of the next round of STARS and Project Pipeline studies in 2027.

With the Places29 Master Plan more than a decade old, strong private-sector interest from multiple landowners, and major nearby investments underway at North Pointe, North Fork, and Rivanna Futures, the area is ripe for a fresh planning effort to address land use, multimodal connectivity, affordable housing, and other community priorities in a coordinated way. The County could consider expanding services and facilities in the area (e.g., a recycling facility, County offices, healthcare facilities, education facilities, police, fire and rescue facilities) to serve as a northern hub for new residents and businesses in the area. Additionally, the County could evaluate the potential use of resources from the County's Affordable Housing Investment Fund for a County-led affordable housing effort.

The major constraints facing an Activity Center planning effort in the area include staying ahead of significant development pressures and growth as well as current market conditions that favor residential projects over commercial retail, office, mixed-use, and light industrial projects, which are desired for employment generating uses and tax-base diversification.

The Route 29 – Rio Road Area

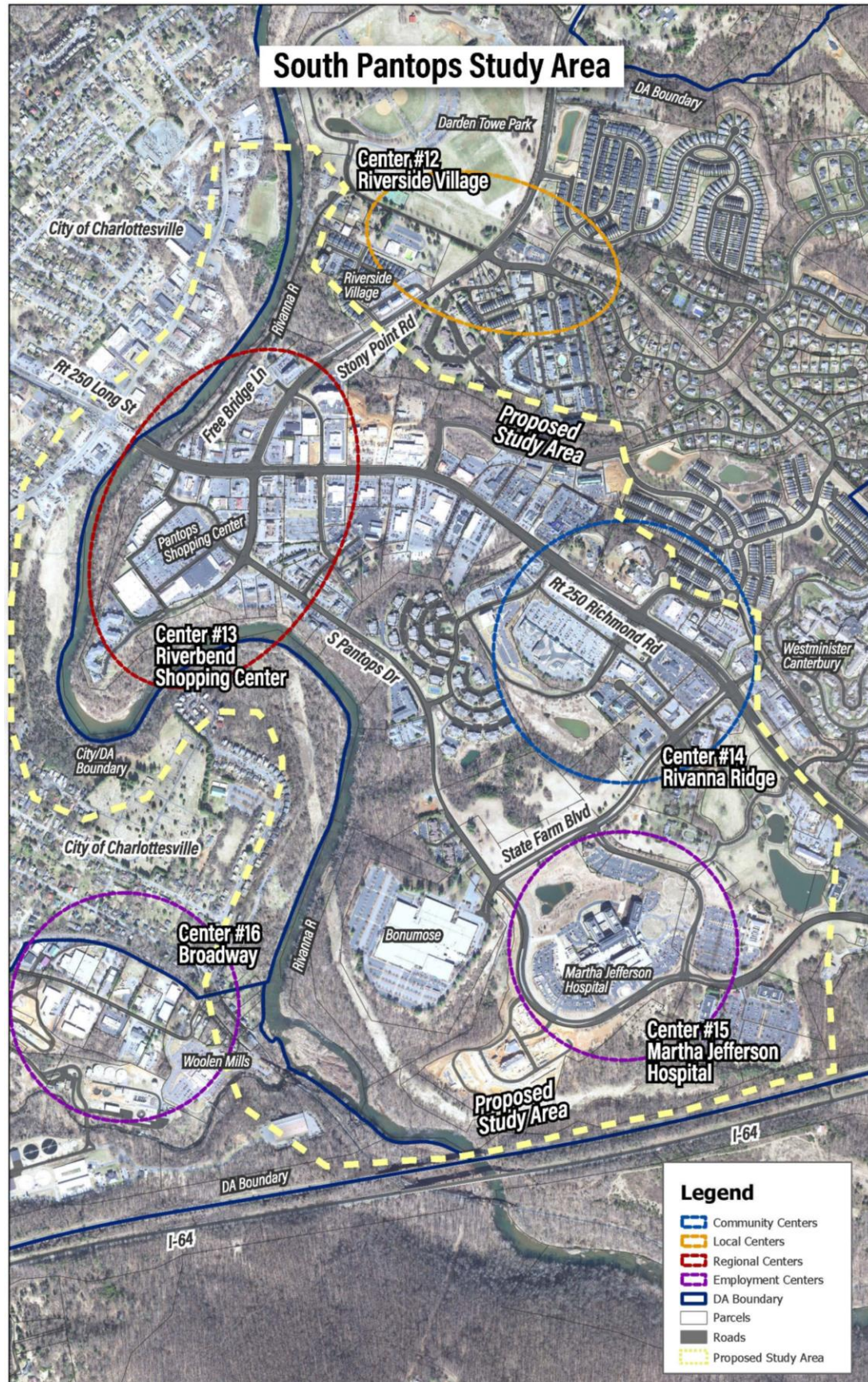


This underperforming commercial corridor (aging buildings, vast surface parking, declining retail) includes the Albemarle Square Shopping Center, the Fashion Square Mall area, and the Arden II property. The area has been studied extensively by the County. For example, the 2018 Rio29 Small Area Plan focused on turning the Route 29-Rio Road intersection into a walkable, mixed-use urban center. It promotes dense, multi-story development, transit, and pedestrian amenities, with updated form-based codes under review in 2026 to guide future design.

Recent development (Home Depot), active development proposals (e.g., a Sheetz gas station), areas with redevelopment potential (the Putt-putt property, aging housing such as Mallside Apartments), County leadership support, and strong multimodal potential make this an area where an ACP could help the County address multiple priorities. The County could also take the lead in addressing the need for public services and park/recreation/open space facilities in the area, building on the Hillsdale Pocket Park, and serving as a catalyst for renewed private-sector interest.

Constraints facing an Activity Center planning effort in the area include high through-traffic volumes, limited transit access, uncertain property owner interest/timelines for redevelopment of Albemarle Square, and high current and projected future demand for County services (EMS calls, Premier Circle transitional housing, high resident turnover in temporary housing).

South Pantops



This fast-growing, destination-rich corridor along Route 250 east of the Rivanna River includes the underutilized Pantops Shopping Center, major nearby institutional anchors (Sentara/Martha Jefferson Hospital, Peter Jefferson Place), significant undeveloped landholdings (Worrell Development and Sentara parcels flanking South Pantops Drive and State Farm Boulevard), possibilities to coordinate with the City around Free Bridge, and extensive natural and recreational resources along the Rivanna River, including the new Free Bridge Lane pedestrian amenity.

It also poses several challenges: Free Bridge remains a regional traffic bottleneck, making Route 250 difficult and unsafe to cross on foot or bike, State Farm is vacating 41,000 square feet of office space with leases expiring in 2028, and over 95% of residents commute by car. An ACP here would focus on the redevelopment and reorientation of Pantops Shopping Center area so that it relates to the Rivanna River as well as a focus on the South Pantops Drive-State Farm Boulevard corridor, supporting mixed-use redevelopment. Desired multimodal improvements would include a pedestrian/bike bridge across Route 250, city-county coordination around the Rivanna River, a potential new bridge across the Rivanna River, and catalytic engagement with major property owners. The County has requested that VDOT study Route 250 at South Pantops/Free Bridge as part of the next round of STARS studies in 2027.

If the City and major property owners are interested in engaging over the longer term, it may work well to designate this Activity Center planning effort for the future and spend the intervening time laying the groundwork for the effort with project partners, including VDOT, alongside Activity Center planning efforts for one of the other two areas discussed above.

Recap: Selection of the First ACP Location

Based on the site-selection analysis and evaluation of the three priority candidate locations described above, staff have selected the U.S. Route 29 – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard as the location for Albemarle County’s first Activity Center Plan.

As noted above, the area is ripe for a fresh planning effort to address land use, density, multimodal connectivity, housing, County services, and other community priorities.