Overview: Activity Centers with Multimodal Transportation Networks

Activity Centers are places that have a variety of businesses, services, and housing (either now or in the future) where community members can gather, shop, stroll, and go to meet daily needs. They should be walkable and bikeable; ideally it should take 10 minutes to walk from end to end. Development is expected to follow the Neighborhood Model Principles and include a variety of housing types, a mix of uses, multimodal transportation networks, access to trails and parks, and placemaking elements.

Multimodal transportation planning refers to the development of a transportation system that supports a variety of transportation options for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to access employment, educational, and other opportunities safely and efficiently. Transportation options may include walking, biking, transit, and using a personal vehicle.

Multimodal transportation planning is also critical for addressing climate change. In 2018, greenhouse gas emissions from transportation accounted for approximately 52% of Albemarle County's calculated emissions total. Between 2015 and 2019, three quarters of County residents commuted to work by driving alone, while less than 6% walked, bicycled, or used public transit, which indicates significant room for improvement in transportation infrastructure and behavior.

With the Activity Center approach, multimodal street typologies could be developed for each center place type to encourage a safe and connected multimodal network with future development and redevelopment.





Examples of future activity centers with approved developments in the county, with Southwood shown on the left (photo credit: Southwood Code of Development) and Brookhill shown on the right (photo credit: LPDA)

There are several steps for **identifying draft Activity Centers** in the Development Areas, which are identified based on existing development patterns, known planned projects (the development pipeline), recommendations in Development Area Master Plans, and current and future activity levels (jobs and people):

- An activity intensity analysis is used to identify current areas of activity. The analysis estimates the number of people and/or jobs per acre across the county and shows the results using a heat map of activity intensity. The heat map of current activity intensity is then updated with potential future areas of activity by reviewing current centers in the Master Plans, the land use buildout analysis, and known development in the pipeline.
- Potential activity centers are then refined with staff/stakeholder review and community, Planning Commission, and Board input. Centers are expected to be areas of higher activity and intensity of uses than the underlying land use designation(s). Each activity center is assigned an Activity Center place type, ranging from Neighborhood to Destination Center. The Activity Center place type informs recommendations for building height, form and scale, parking options, multimodal transportation, and open space.
- The multimodal transportation network starts with the current pedestrian, bike, transit, and road network. It then incorporates future recommendations from the Master Plans, other local plans, and relevant regional plans. Community input will be used to help identify major gaps in the network and provide recommendations for what types of transportation improvements are needed (e.g. a protected bike lane to feel safe).
- The result is a coordinated land use and transportation plan that supports connected neighborhoods and centers, a mix of uses, and multimodal transportation options.







The following draft Activity Center place types were developed based on guidance from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT)'s Multimodal Systems Guidelines and a review of recommendations in the County's Master Plans.

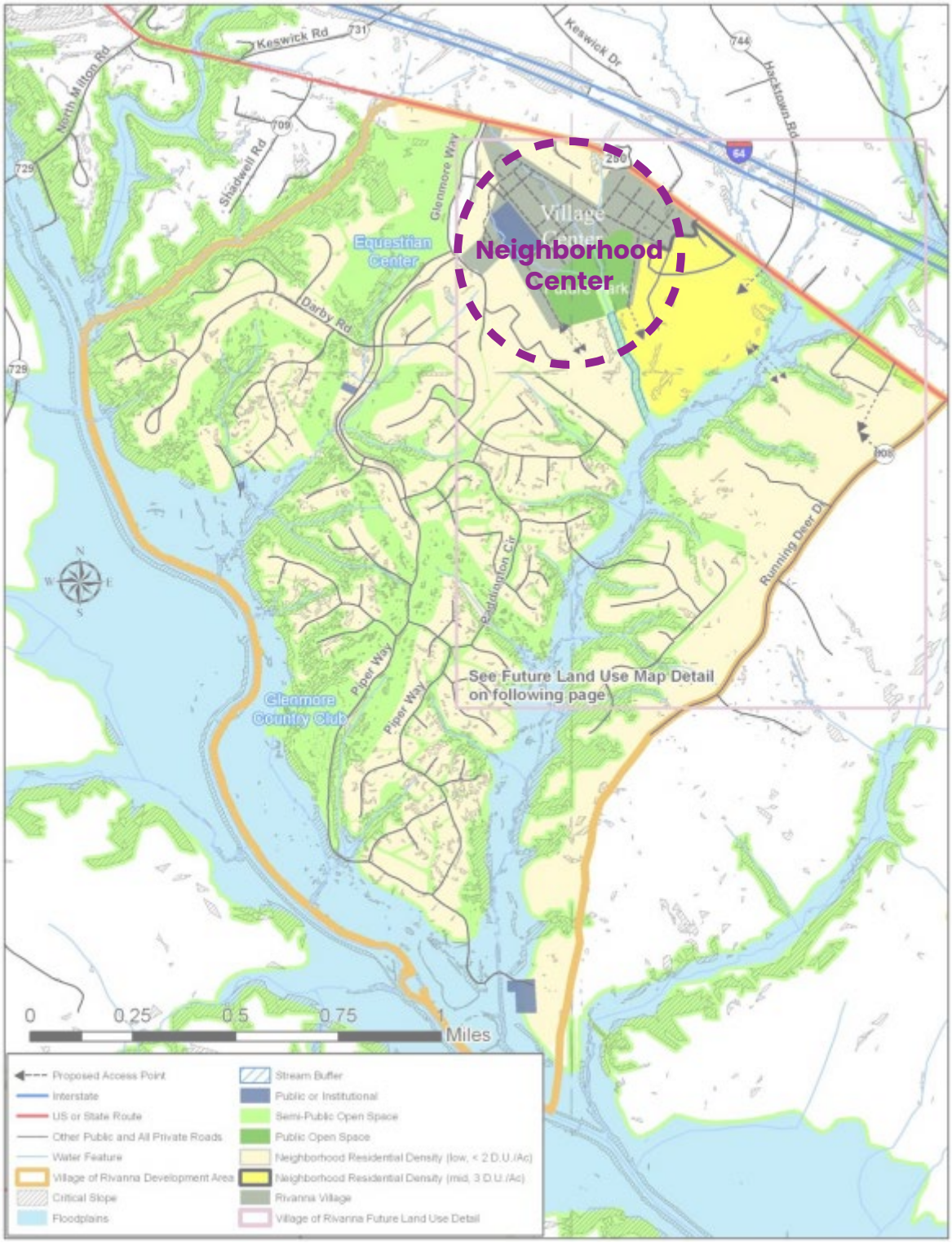
	Neighborhood Center	Town Center	Destination Center
Intent	Provide smaller-scale areas of activity that support surrounding neighborhoods. They may not necessarily have a more intense 'core area' (like Town and Destination Centers). They generally serve a smaller area than other center types.	Serve as a focal point for commercial and cultural activities and promote a mix of uses. The most intense activities tend to be concentrated within the core area (approximately a quarter-mile radius).	Create community focal points with high-density, compact, mixed-use development patterns. The most intense activities tend to be concentrated within the core area (approximately a quarter-mile radius).
Core Area	May not have a core area; walkshed typically 1/4 mile radius from center or about 10 minutes walking end to end	Core area typically in the 1/4 mile radius from center (about 10 minutes walking end to end). Walkshed for multimodal service area about 1/2 mile radius from center (about 20 minutes walking end to end)	Core area typically in the 1/4 mile radius from center (about 10 minutes walking end to end). Walkshed for multimodal service area about 1/2 mile radius from center (about 20 minutes walking end to end)
Building Type	Vertical mixed-uses are encouraged; buildings should be constructed to allow ground story commercial/retail along main street frontages	Vertical mixed-uses are encouraged; buildings should be constructed to allow ground story commercial/retail along main street frontages	Vertical mixed-uses are encouraged; buildings should be constructed to allow ground story commercial/retail along main street frontages
Use and Development	Mix of uses (non-residential and residential) expected; land uses should be generally consistent with underlying land use designations. Additional development intensity and infill encouraged with appropriate form and scale for Neighborhood Centers	Mix of uses (non-residential and residential) expected; active ground story uses encouraged especially in the core area; land uses should be generally consistent with underlying land use designations. Additional development intensity and infill encouraged with appropriate form and scale for Town Centers	Mix of uses (non-residential and residential) expected; active ground story uses throughout the Center are encouraged; land uses should be generally consistent with underlying land use designations Additional development intensity and infill encouraged with appropriate form and scale for Destination Centers
Form & Site Design Guidance	2-4 stories; street trees and landscaping; bike/pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods/Centers/Districts; transit stops encouraged; parking relegated to side/rear of buildings or on-street parking (encouraged)	2-4 stories, up to 6 stories within core; street trees and landscaping; wide sidewalks within core, bike/pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods/Centers/Districts; enhanced transit stops encouraged; structured parking encouraged, parking relegated to side/rear of buildings or on-street parking (expected)	3-6 stories, up to 8 stories within core; street trees and landscaping; wide sidewalks within core; bike/pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods/Centers/Districts; enhanced transit stops encouraged; structured parking strongly encouraged, parking relegated to side/rear of buildings or on-street parking (expected)
Public Civic & Open Space	Public civic and open spaces encouraged, such as small or medium-scale plazas and parks with active and passive recreational amenities	Public civic and open spaces encouraged, such as small or medium-scale plazas and parks with active and passive recreational amenities	Public civic and open spaces encouraged, such as medium or large-scale plazas and parks with active and passive recreational amenities
Examples of typical scale & building types	  	  	  

The following draft District place types were developed based on a review of recommendations in the County's Master Plans.

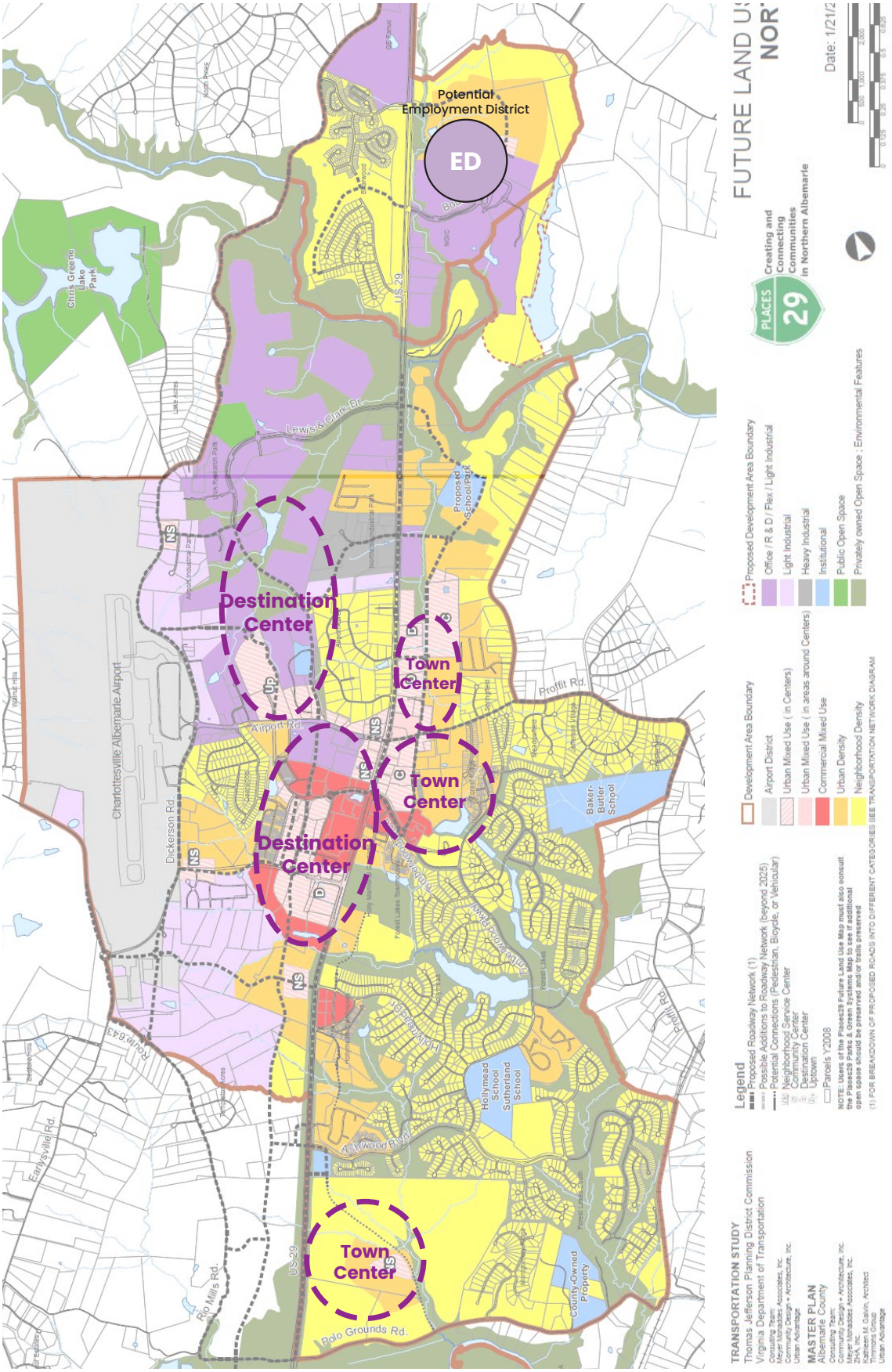
	Recreational District	Employment District	Institutional District
Intent	Designated amenity spaces of regional importance; intended to provide opportunities for active, passive, and social recreation for the community.	An area with employment-generating uses supporting basic industries and economic development goals; secondary residential, commercial, and retail uses that support employees and community members.	A designated school or college campus of regional importance or a cluster of community facilities/public uses. Institutional Districts serve as key community gathering spaces.
Walkshed – Multimodal Service Area	Park boundaries and any adjacent or related greenways, public amenity spaces, or public uses any connected or related employment uses	Concentrated areas with Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial land use designations and any connected or related employment uses.	School property boundaries or the area including a cluster of community facilities and any adjacent/related public facilities
Building Type	Few buildings expected. Community centers, indoor recreational centers, and other community-serving buildings may be appropriate.	All Light Industrial activities should be located inside of buildings. Vertical mixed-use buildings encouraged for infill and redevelopment. Horizontal mixed-use buildings permitted if no residential units are proposed.	Building types should be consistent with underlying land use. Single use buildings are expected, but districts often serve as community gathering spaces, including schools outside of school hours; such uses should be allowed and encouraged through building and site design.
Use	Use should be consistent with underlying land use and supportive of goals and recommendations from the following Comp Plan Chapters: Natural, Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources; Parks and Recreation; Community Facilities	Use should be consistent with underlying land use. Uses supportive of the County's Economic Development goals are strongly encouraged.	Use should be consistent with underlying land use and supportive of goals and recommendations from the following Comp Plan Chapters: Land Use and Transportation; Community Facilities
Form & Site Design Guidance	Where development does occur, respecting existing terrain and careful grading/re-grading of terrain is expected. Buildings and amenity areas should avoid critical environmental resources.	2-4 stories (up to 6 by additional consideration). Massing, height, and stepbacks should be consistent with any localized recommendations (such as viewshed protection or screening from adjacent areas, etc.). Relegated and structured parking encouraged.	Bicycle and pedestrian connections between adjacent areas such as existing neighborhoods, adjacent centers or districts should be provided. Massing, height, and stepbacks should be consistent with any localized recommendations (such as viewshed protection or screening from adjacent areas, etc.).

The following maps show the draft activity centers and draft districts in the Development Areas overlaying the current Master Plans. Draft centers are shown as dotted purple circles. Each draft activity center is labeled with its draft activity center type as either a Neighborhood, Town, or Destination Center. Draft districts are labeled as either potential 'RD' (recreational district), 'ED' (employment district), or 'ID' (institutional district). The districts for Crozet and Pantops are existing as they were adopted with the most recent Master Plan updates.

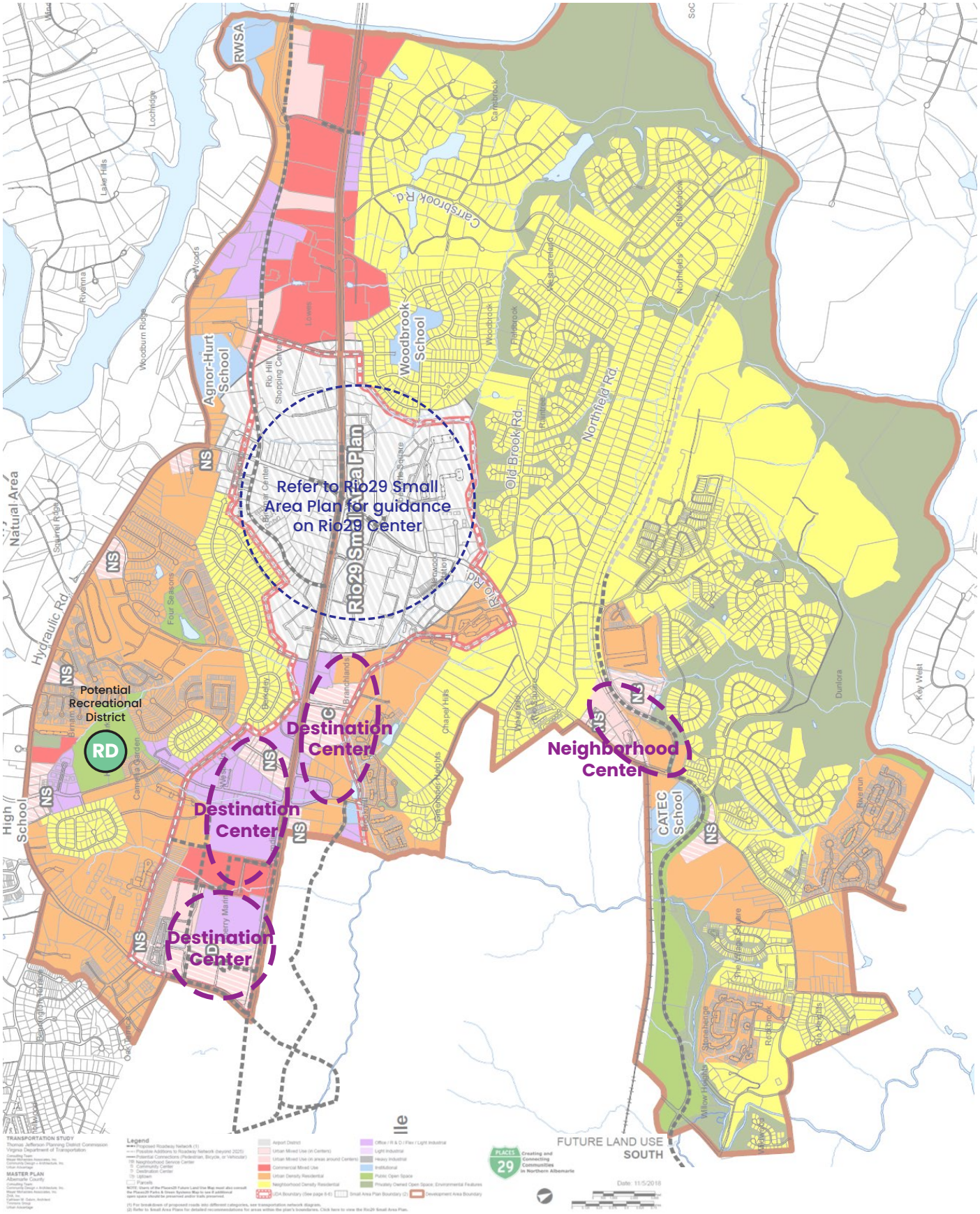
Village of Rivanna: Draft Activity Center



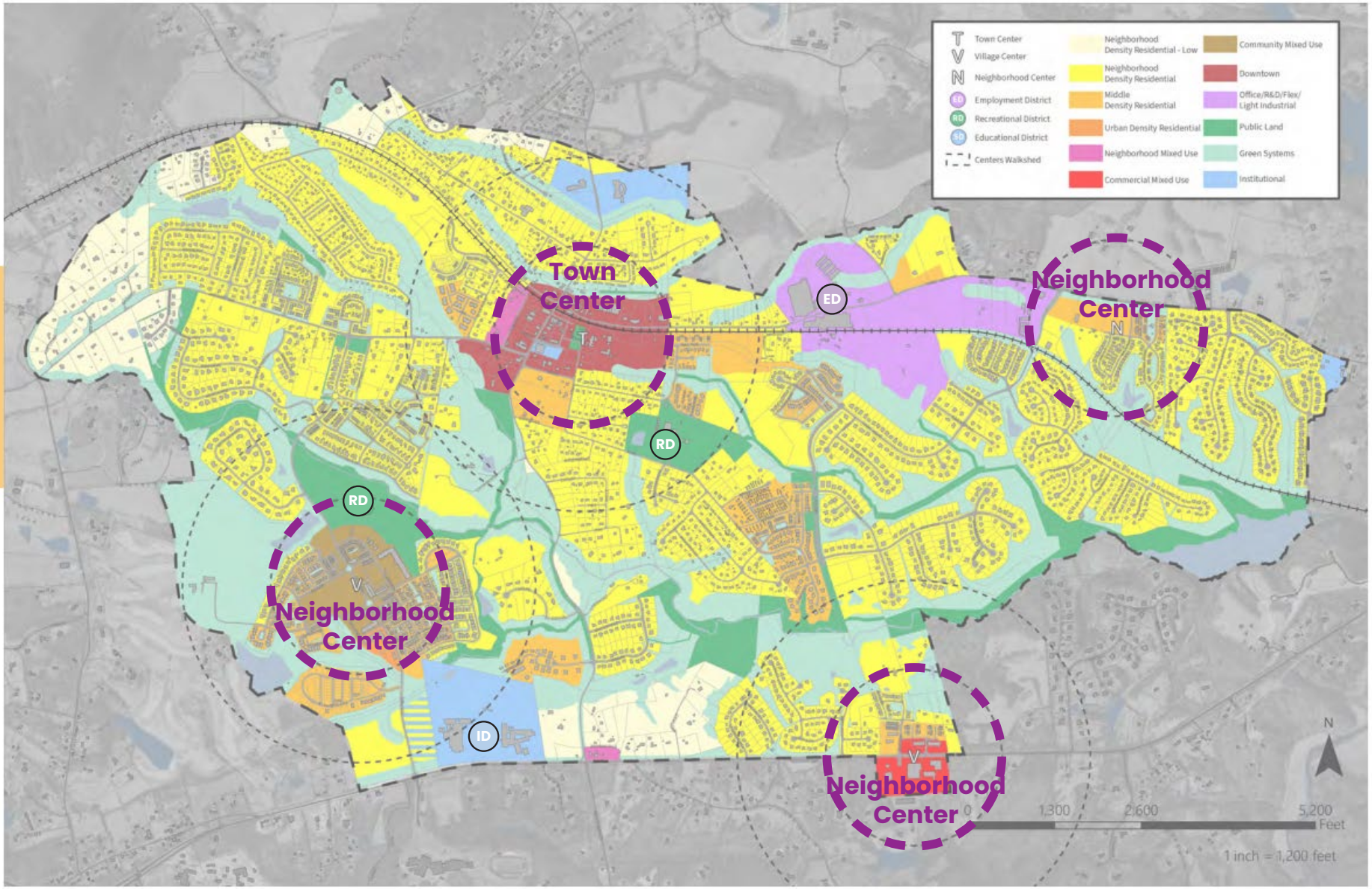
Places29 North: Draft Activity Centers and Draft Districts



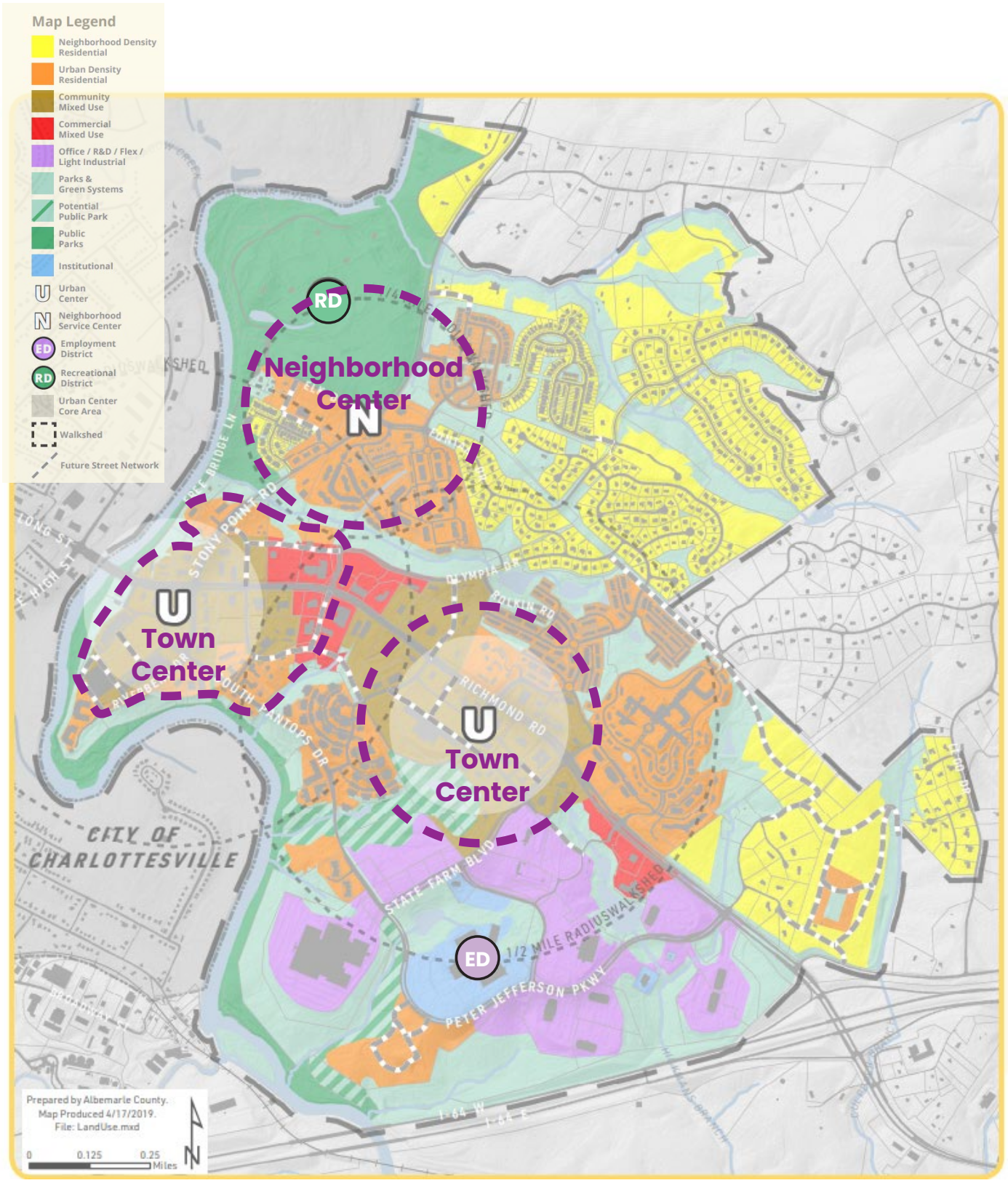
Places29 South: Draft Activity Centers and Draft Districts



Crozet: Draft Activity Centers and Existing Districts



Pantops: Draft Activity Centers and Existing Districts



Southern Neighborhoods: Draft Activity Centers and Draft Districts

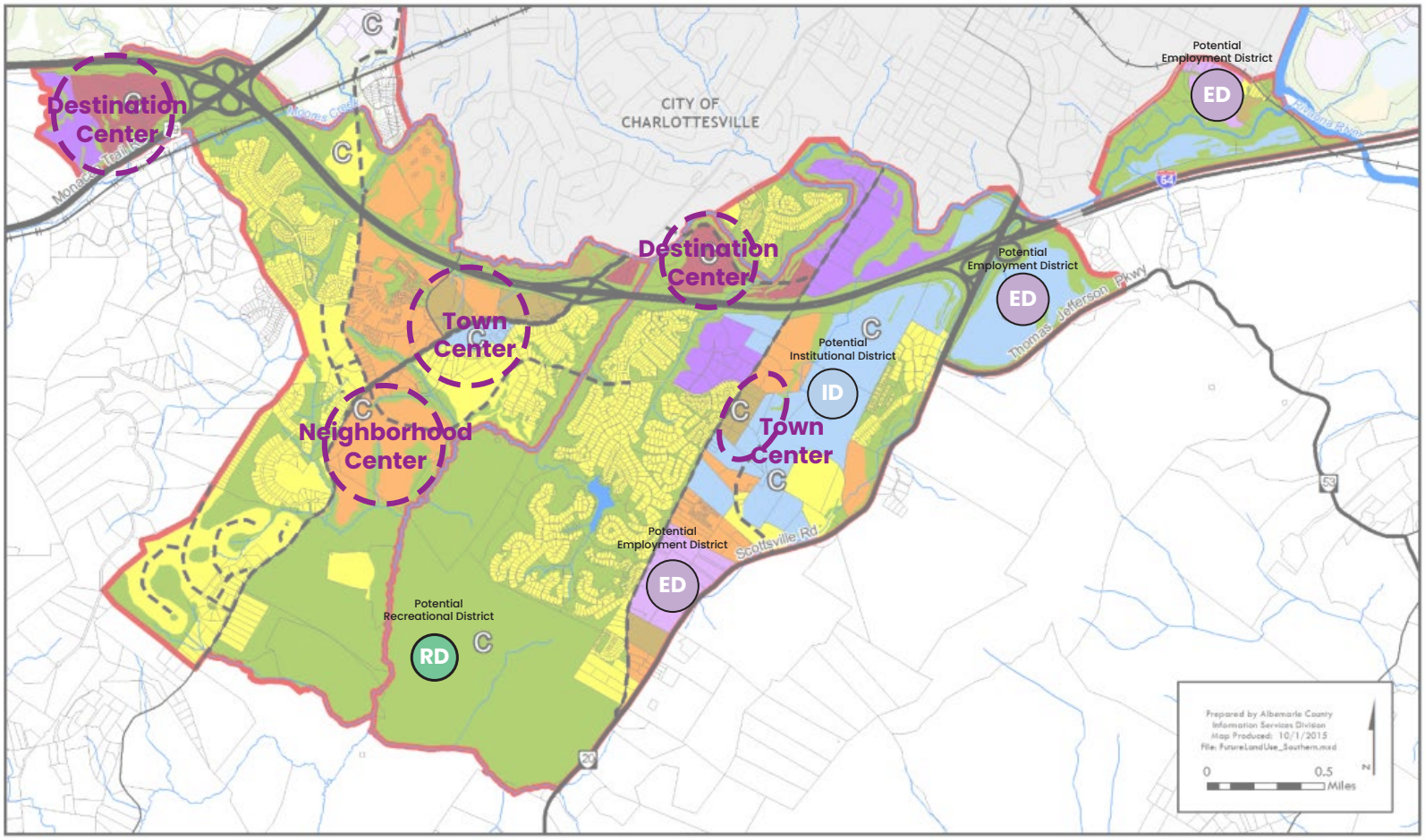


Figure 8: Southern Urban Neighborhood Future Land Use Plan

Note: The boundaries of the Town Center along Avon St Ext have been adjusted based on community input and are now focused on the Mill Creek Shopping Center.

Western Neighborhoods: Draft Activity Centers and Draft Districts

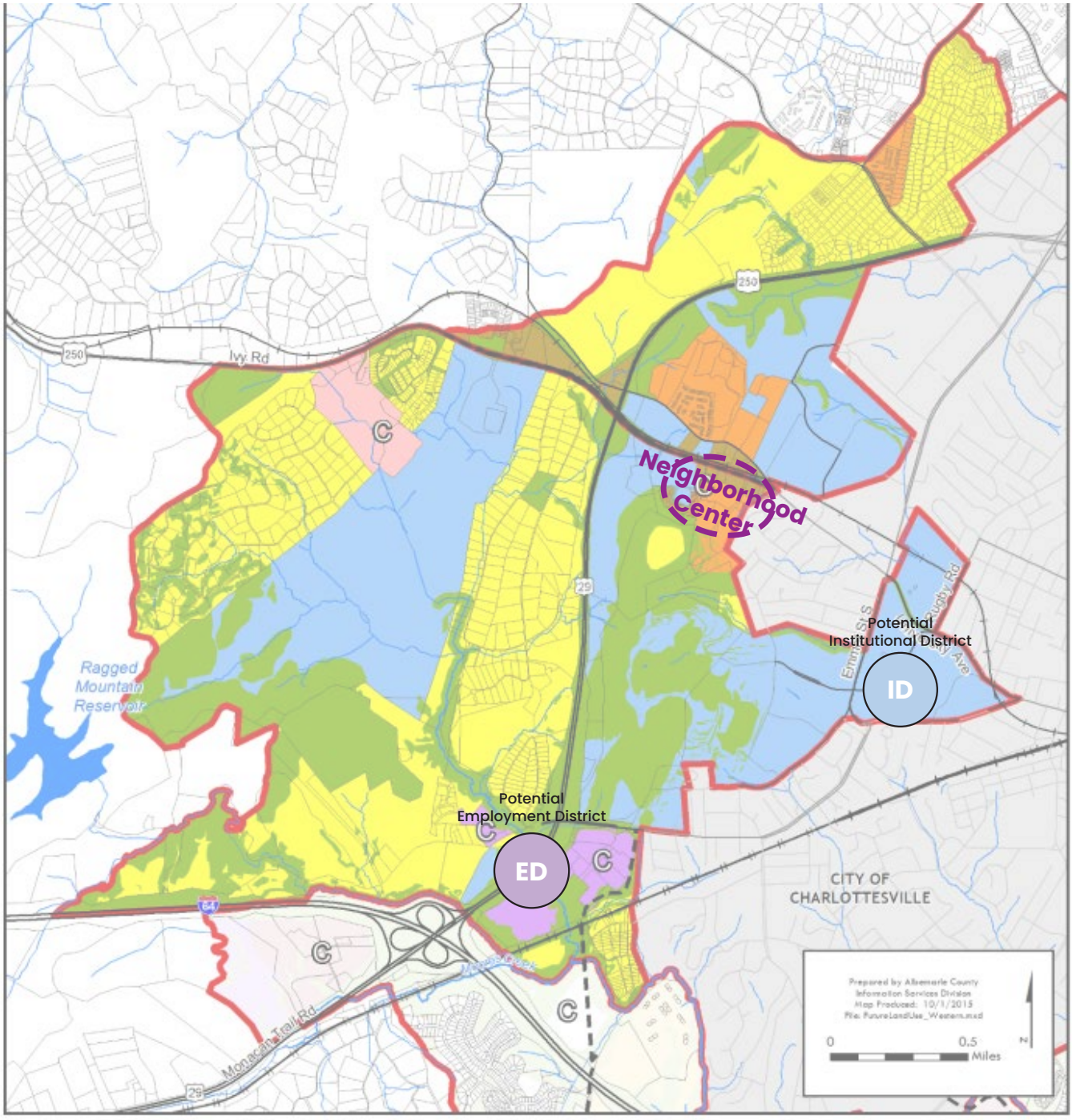


Figure 9: Western Urban Neighborhood Future Land Use Plan

Connections to the AC44 Framework



Centers support the AC44 Framework by focusing higher intensities of development in mixed-use areas that are or should be accessible by multimodal transportation options, encouraging mixed-use employment centers with a variety of housing types, and encouraging redevelopment and infill with green and resilient design.

Green and Resilient:

- New neighborhoods and redevelopment should incorporate green and resilient design including compact, mixed-use developments with parks/trails
- New development/redevelopment should avoid sensitive environmental features and areas identified for protection

Welcoming and Equitable:

- Activity centers could provide opportunities for a mix of uses, parks, trails, and variety of housing types
- Activity centers could support a more equitable distribution of access to services, amenities, resources
- Support opportunities for redevelopment for vibrant mixed-use centers

Connected and Accessible:

- New development/redevelopment should have multimodal transportation options and connect to surrounding transportation network
- Activity centers could support feasibility for enhanced public transit

Thriving and Prosperous:

- Activity centers could provide space for new businesses or expanding existing businesses and employment centers and job opportunities