IMAGINE CROZET

Character Workshop #2 & Housing Focused Conversation Feedback Summary

In February, we focused on Crozet's neighborhoods and housing stock. Participants shared thoughts at the second Character Workshop on Thursday, February 6 and online, and housing developers and community members participated in a focused conversation on Friday, February 21. Here's a brief summary of everything we heard:







Density and Form

Density and form are two different, yet related, tools that planners can use to shape future land use. Both can be used to shape the scale and intensity of development across different areas of Crozet.

We ranked the following planning concepts:

1. Walkability in neighborhoods close to centers like Downtown, Old Trail and Clover Lawn allows community members to conveniently support local businesses and reduces vehicle trips.

2. Form recommendations can respond to existing neighborhood character and be developed based on historic architecture and design.

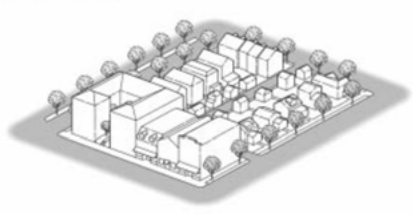
3. Allowing for a greater variety of housing types, such as bungalow courts, accessory dwelling units and fourplexes, that are consistent with existing single-family houses and can help meet the growing demand for walkable, affordable living.

4. Clustering development allows for land to be preserved for open space and community gathering places.

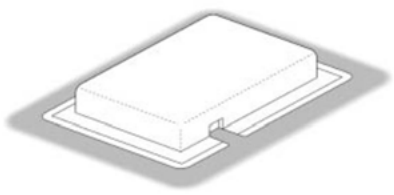
5. Smaller lot sizes remain more affordable as property values and taxes rise. They allow for infrastructure, such as transit and utilities, to be provided more cost effectively.

A majority of participants chose form over density as a planning priority in Crozet.

Form refers to the physical characteristics that make up built areas, including the size, shape, and configuration of buildings. Form standards typically incorporate building types, build-to lines, number of floors and other standards that shape how a building meets the street.



Density refers to the concentration of people, buildings, or streets in an area. Density is typically expressed in terms of dwelling units per acre and incorporates setbacks, parking requirements, and maximum building heights.



Many participants also acknowledged that density and form are interrelated concepts that impact the character and quality of life in Crozet. Form provides an important link to the appearance of historic development and architecture, while density is an important consideration in planning for critical investments such as schools and infrastructure.

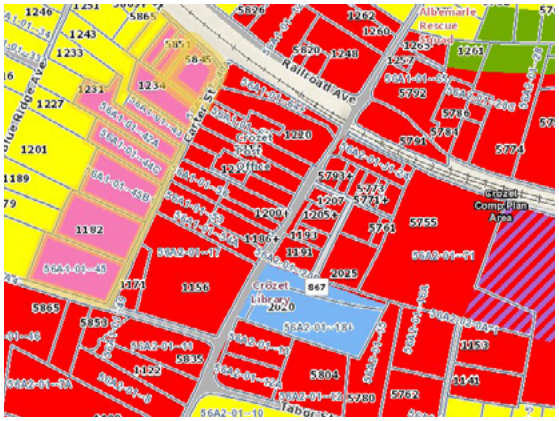
“Northern” Crozet



“Northern” Crozet includes Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods north of the railroad as well as the Hill Top Street/High Street area and Parkside Village.

Many homes in this area we’re referring to as “northern” Crozet were built before 1960 and are designated Neighborhood Density Residential (3-6 du/acre). As homes continue to age and Downtown redevelops, these neighborhoods and historic properties can anticipate increased development pressure.

We heard these goals were important as Downtown Crozet transitions to surrounding neighborhoods:



Anticipating how Downtown projects (such as the Barnes Lumber redevelopment) will impact existing neighborhoods and affordability. As these neighborhoods face redevelopment pressures, there are concerns about the loss of currently affordable housing. Some suggestions to mitigate these impacts included permitting infill that is consistent with existing neighborhood’s form and a greater number of housing types.

Promoting walkability between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Participants felt that the existing “Mixed Use” designation on the west side of Carter Street was still an appropriate transition to neighborhoods west of Downtown.

There is undeveloped land in this area that has development potential. However, the 2010 Master Plan has portions of properties or entire properties designated as “Green Space.” The property owners have requested that we evaluate the current designation.



Participants’ opinions varied between the in-person workshop and online feedback. Though workshop participants were generally supportive of a change to a Neighborhood Density-Low recommendation, 63% of online participants felt that no change was necessary, and 30% supported changing to a Neighborhood Density Residential designation.

We heard that these types of housing are appropriate in this area:

Housing Type	*Rank*
Single-family detached units	**1**
Bungalow courts (cluster developments)	**2**
Duplexes or townhouses (single-family attached units)	**T-3**
Fourplexes (multi-unit buildings that are designed to look like a single-family home)	**T-3**
Accessory dwelling units	**T-3**

We heard these are important form elements that should inform how housing is designed in this area:

Participants suggested restricted heights and outdoor lighting, and brick and traditional siding.

"Western" Crozet

"Western" Crozet includes the Jarman's Gap Road corridor west of Downtown, including Old Trail, Blue Ridge Avenue, Orchard Acres, Crozet Crossing, Wayland's Grant, Bargamin Park, Grayrock, and Jarman's Gap Estates.

This area has opportunities for infill development and greater connectivity between neighborhoods.



County staff have identified areas where the 2010 Future Land Use designations are inconsistent with the current zoning and development that exists today, particularly in the area between Blue Ridge Avenue and the Orchard Acres and Crozet Crossing neighborhoods.

The development known as "The Vue" at the northwest corner of Jarman's Gap Road and Blue Ridge Avenue developed under its R-6 Residential zoning and will contain 126 multifamily dwellings on approximately 7.317 developable acres. The actual density that is being built is much higher than the Neighborhood Density Residential designation identified in the 2010 Master Plan.

When asked if there was support for changing this property's designation to be consistent with the approved site plan, responses varied. There was consensus from workshop attendees to support this change, however, 59% of online participants did not support a change.



The adjacent Pleasant Green development also has R-6 Residential zoning and a Neighborhood Density Residential future land use designation in the 2010 Master Plan. This project proposes 250 townhomes and attached dwelling types in multiple phases under its current zoning. The current concept plan includes a new road connection across Powell's Creek to Orchard Drive and sidewalks along Orchard Drive to Jarman's Gap Road, as well as a public greenway trail along Powell's Creek. However, the proposal includes a greater number of dwellings than the 2010 Master Plan recommends.

When asked if there was support for changing the land use designation to Urban Density Residential to permit a wider range of densities and housing types, participants did not indicate support for this change. Workshop attendees were divided and 75% of online participants supported retaining the current land use designation.



We heard that these types of housing are appropriate in this area:

Housing Type	*Rank*
Single-family detached units	**1**
Accessory dwelling units	**2**
Duplexes or townhouses (single-family attached units)	**3**
Bungalow courts (cluster developments)	**4**
Fourplexes (multi-unit buildings that are designed to look like a single-family home)	**5**

We heard these are important form elements that should inform how housing is designed in this area:

Participants suggested that an overabundance of any single housing type might not be ideal, but that any housing type done well could enhance character.

"Southern" Crozet



Southern Crozet refers to neighborhoods along the Crozet Avenue corridor south of Park Road including Park View, White Oaks, Chesterfield Landing, and the Meadows; Route 250 corridor including Brownsville Road, Sparrow Hill, Cory Farm, Liberty Hall, and Clover Lawn.

Due to environmental features (such as steep slopes and streams) as well as roadway safety concerns in this portion of Crozet, there is limited development potential and connectivity in this area.



Following up on an outstanding question from January, participants felt that the Clover Lawn should be a "***Village Center***", the focal point of activities for a village or place with small scale, neighborhood-serving commercial and service uses.

For this area, the 2010 Crozet Master Plan states: "Existing zoning along the corridor is not totally consistent with the Land Use Plan for this area. The Land Use Plan recommends that wide swaths of rural land continue to exist as Greenspace. However, some properties in the corridor are zoned R1 and R2 Residential which allows one and two dwellings per acre, respectively."



In this Plan, Green Space is defined as: "...all existing and proposed public parks, public open space, environmental features and active park areas. It includes public greenways and park-related institutional uses. It also contains important environmental features and privately owned park and recreational areas which may be active or passive."

These parcels have relatively few environmental constraints and are not intended to be formal park or recreation space. When asked if there was support for changing the Green Space designation to Neighborhood Density Residential (Low) to align with existing conditions and existing zoning in the area, a majority of participants did not support a change.

We heard that these types of housing are appropriate in this area:

Housing Type	*Rank*
Single-family detached units	**1**
Bungalow courts (cluster developments)	**2**
Duplexes or townhouses (single-family attached units)	**T-3**
Fourplexes (multi-unit buildings that are designed to look like a single-family home)	**T-4**
Accessory dwelling units	**T-4**

We heard these are important form elements that should inform how housing is designed in this area:

Participants suggested limiting outdoor lighting and ensuring development is not visible from the road.

Participants supported including a landscaped or wooded buffer in any development on the southern edge of the Development Area along Route 250.

“Eastern” Crozet

“Eastern” Crozet includes neighborhoods east of Crozet Park and Starr Hill, including Brookwood, Westhall, Westlake Hills, Foothill Crossing, Western Ridge, Emerson Commons, Wickham Pond, and Highlands.

This area has limited developable area remaining and we’ve heard that connectivity to Downtown is a key priority and challenge.



We heard connectivity between these neighborhoods and Downtown Crozet could be improved by:

Creating additional connections between Routes 240 and 250.

Constructing a shared-use path or sidewalk along Route 240 from Highlands to Starr Hill.

Creating connections between neighborhood streets and cul-de-sacs.



There is undeveloped land in this area that has development potential. However, the 2010 Master Plan has portions of properties or entire properties designated as “Green Space.” The property owners have requested that we evaluate the current designation with the Master Plan update.

There was support from participants to redesignate the developable portions of this property between Park Ridge Road and Wickham Pond to a residential land use designation.

Workshop participants supported an “Urban Density Residential” designation to allow for improved sidewalks and connectivity between Wickham Pond and Western Ridge, as well as trail access. 50% of online participants supported a “Neighborhood Density Residential” designation, 33% felt no change was necessary, and others felt that a “Neighborhood Mixed Use” or “Urban Density Residential” designation would be appropriate.



We heard that these types of housing are appropriate in this area:

Housing Type	*Rank*
Single-family detached units	**1**
Duplexes or townhouses (single-family attached units)	**2**
Accessory dwelling units	**T-3**
Bungalow courts (cluster developments)	**T-3**
Fourplexes (multi-unit buildings that are designed to look like a single-family home)	**4**

We heard these are important form elements that should inform how housing is designed in this area:

Participants suggested considering height, type, and number of units.

Participants suggested considering pedestrian and cyclist safety along Three Notch’d Road.

Participants suggested restricting outdoor lighting and building heights.

Housing Focused Conversations

Development community members (including area affordable housing non-profit organizations and developers and market-rate housing developers) and community members participated in two focused conversations on Friday, February 21.

The comments and thoughts below were shared by participants and summarized into themes by County staff.

Housing for Whom?

There is a limited supply of non-rental housing for senior residents. There is also a significant lack of housing for low-income seniors.

Housing policy should consider demographic trends. For example, 30-44 year old and 60-74 year old age groups are growing nationally. How does this impact the Crozet housing market and dynamics?

Encouraging home businesses in live/work units beyond the limits of the current home occupation regulations could provide economic benefits.

Neighborhood Change

There appears to be a strong desire among current residents to maintain their existing neighborhoods' character and limit change.

There is a need to acknowledge that the redevelopment of Downtown and Barnes Lumber could put pressure for change on aging neighborhoods.

There is a concern that existing affordable homes will be lost or replaced with more expensive housing. Some infill could allow for smaller units or gradual densification.

Planning and Zoning

Current zoning restricts the variety of housing types available and ability for neighborhoods to adapt.

Discrepancies between the Crozet Master Plan's land use recommendations and current zoning districts cause uncertainty for developers by requiring rezonings, which increases land holding costs due to length of time needed to gain approval. These discrepancies also prevent usage of density bonuses for providing affordable housing or open space dedication.

Dimensions of Affordability

A housing policy could consider three "dimensions" of affordability and include stated goals for each.

"Quantity" refers to the number of affordable homes available in a community.

"Depth" refers to the level of affordability, often measured in Area Median Income (AMI). Housing that is affordable to residents below 60% AMI almost always requires subsidies.

"Length" refers to the amount of time that a home is required to be affordable.

Local Tax and Fiscal Policy

Rising real property taxes place financial pressure on residents, especially those with fixed incomes. Typically, land values rise and structures depreciate over time, and in aging neighborhoods a property's land can cost more than the home.

There is limited ability for the County to provide tax relief to groups besides senior and disabled residents per state code. Relief is not available to income-qualified homeowners.

The County could consider using financing tools such as a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to capture future tax growth and dedicate this revenue to a dedicated affordable housing fund.

Proffers and Affordable Housing Commitments

Very little actual affordable housing is being built under the current proffer system. Development finance means that developers often opt to pay cash to an affordable housing fund in lieu of constructing homes.

When for-sale affordable homes are built and marketed for 90 days, but no income-qualified buyers are willing to pay the requisite price, these homes end up being sold at market rate.

Deed restrictions could be a solution to ensure longer-term affordability.

The County should use its enabling authority to enact an affordable dwelling unit ordinance.

Want to learn more?

The next Community Workshop will be on Thursday, February 6 from 6:30-8:00 PM at the Western Albemarle High School cafeteria.

Please stay in touch for more information how you can join the conversation, including upcoming events.

Website
tinyurl.com/yxl8wchb

View the full public input results here:
publicinput.com/imaginecrozet

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