



County of Albemarle

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

AGENDA DATE: 12/10/2024

TITLE: CPA202100020 AC44 Comp Plan - AC44 Rural Area Land Use Actions

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:

Request for Planning Commission feedback on draft Actions within the draft Rural Area chapter (Pages 7-10) and associated policies. Specifically, staff is asking for feedback on:

1. To reduce parcel fragmentation, does the Commission support:
 - a. Action 2.1 (Implement a maximum lot size for development-right lots in the Rural Area zoning district to significantly reduce the acreage used for residential lots compared to the current 31-acre maximum for five lots (6.2-acre average lot size))
 - b. Other tools utilizing conservation easements
2. For the area planning process for rural communities (Refer to Actions 5.1, 5.2, 7.2, and 7.4), what additional considerations or criteria (if any) should be added, such as:
 - a. Specific recommended land uses along with those already listed such as small offices, resilience hubs, and country stores; or,
 - b. Impacts that need to be considered, which could refer to the new uses criteria on Page 3 (e.g. groundwater, transportation); or,
 - c. Listing specific locations (e.g. identifying which rural communities should be studied first); and
3. If anything is missing from the Actions.

It should be noted that Rural Area policies from the 2015 Comp Plan, including land conservation, protecting the natural environment, and reducing land fragmentation, continue to remain priorities in AC44. The topics for this work session and previous work sessions are intended to build on these priorities and address policies where there is less consensus and therefore more input is needed from the community, Commission, and the Board.

ITEM TYPE: Work Session

STAFF CONTACTS: Richardson, Wall, Filardo, Barnes, McDermott, Swartzendruber, Kanellopoulos, Holt

PRESENTERS: Tori Kanellopoulos, Principal Planner

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: Albemarle County is updating the Comprehensive Plan through the Albemarle County 2044 (AC44) project. The project is in Phase 3: drafting language for the four-part Comprehensive Plan document and developing Plan actions.

The draft language for the Part III – Rural Area Land Use (RA LU) chapter in Attachment B is built upon community input and reflects the Planning Commission’s and Board’s feedback.

The work session topics focus primarily on preserving Rural Area land for preferred Rural Area land uses (agriculture, forestry, and conservation) and on clarifying the recommendations for rural communities (previously called ‘crossroads communities’). Across the United States, significant amounts of farmland are being converted to low density residential subdivisions, especially where subdivision requirements are less stringent. Updating the County’s subdivision requirements and utilizing conservation easements are two ways the County can protect Rural Area land and discourage subdivision and residential development.

Action 2.1 is intended to keep residential lots smaller, as larger residential lots are not usable for agriculture and forestry. Keeping residential lots smaller allows for more land to be reserved for agriculture, forestry, and land conservation, especially where subdivisions are already allowed per development rights. Action 3.1 recommends reactivating ACE to make land conservation possible for lower-income landowners whose rural land is most at risk of sale for development. Small-scale farmers often work ‘day jobs’ to supplement the income from their farms, and face pressure to sell their land for residential development. The ACE program would allow lower-income landowners to have an alternative to selling their land and promote conservation best practices.

At the November 19, 2024, Planning Commission work session, the Commission indicated that additional guidance may be needed in the Comprehensive Plan regarding future area plans for rural communities. Staff is asking for additional feedback from the Commission on what changes may be needed to the Rural Area chapter.

For reference, a summary of previous Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors feedback on Rural Area land use is provided as Attachment D.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Quality of life – Encourage a vibrant community with economic and recreational opportunities that serve all community members.

DISCUSSION:

An updated AC44 outline is provided as Attachment A. As a reminder, the topics within the red box will be the focus of today’s work session. This work session focuses on proposed comprehensive plan language within Attachment B, specifically:

- If the Commission supports Action 2.1 (Implement a maximum lot size for development-right lots in the Rural Area zoning district to significantly reduce the

acreage used for residential lots compared to the current 31-acre maximum for five lots (6.2-acre average lot size);

- If the Commission supports other tools to reduce parcel fragmentation such as utilizing conservation easements.
- For the area planning process for rural communities: What additional considerations or criteria (if any) should be added, such as: specific recommended land uses along with those already listed such as small offices, resilience hubs, and country stores; impacts that need to be considered, which could refer to the new uses criteria on Page 3 (e.g. groundwater, transportation); and/or listing specific locations (e.g. identifying which rural communities should be studied first). (Refer to Actions 5.1, 5.2, 7.2, and 7.4); and
- If anything is missing from the Actions.

The Board of Supervisors will hold a work session on January 8, 2025, to discuss the full Rural Area Land Use chapter.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no budget impact associated with this agenda item.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff requests the Commission review and provide feedback on draft Rural Area Land Use Actions.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - AC44 Out line](#)

Attachment B – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Draft Rural Area Land Use Chapter](#)

Attachment C – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Rural Area Summary](#)

Attachment D – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Summary of Planning Commission and Board Feedback](#)