



COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

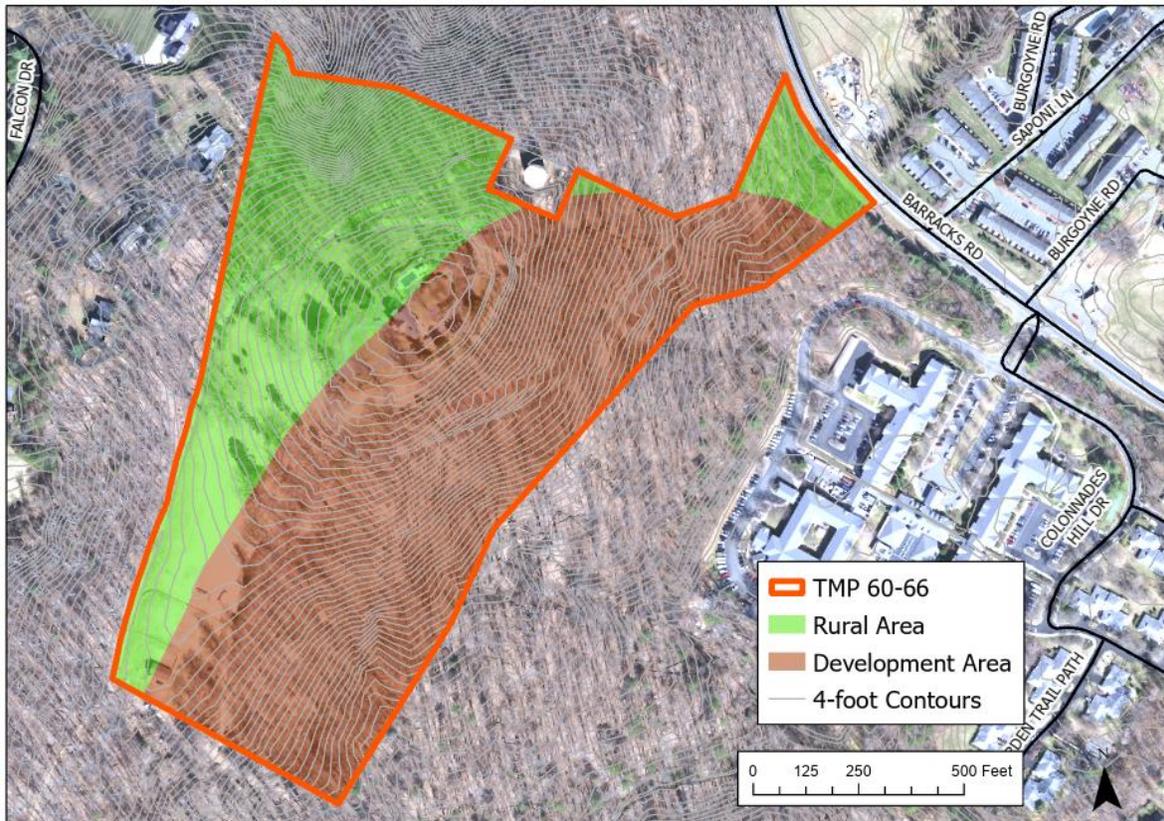
Proposal: CCP202500001 Stillhouse Mountain		Staff: Scott Clark, Conservation Program Manager
Planning Commission Public Hearing: December 9, 2025		Board of Supervisors Hearing: n/a – Planning Commission’s finding forwarded to Board for information only
Owner: McLean, Margaret K & Stephen T McLean, Trs; Walter Copley McLean Family Trust		Applicant: McLean, Margaret K & Stephen T McLean, Trs; Walter Copley McLean Family Trust
Acreage: 32.43 acres		Comprehensive Plan Consistency for: Proposal to place a conservation easement on TMP 60-66
TMPs: TMP 06000-00-00-06600 Location: 2700 Barracks Rd		Zoning/by-right use: R1 Residential – 1 unit/acre
Magisterial District: Jack Jouett		Entrance Corridor: No
School Districts: N/A		Proffers: None
Proposal: Place a conservation easement on the subject property.		Requested # of Dwelling Units: N/A
DA: X	RA: X	Comp. Plan Designation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Areas – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic, and scenic resources/ density (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots) • Institutional – schools, libraries, parks, utilities, hospitals, universities, colleges and other developed and undeveloped publicly owned property. • Parks and Green Systems – parks, playgrounds, play fields, greenways, trails, paths, recreational facilities and equipment, plazas, outdoor sitting areas, natural areas, preservation of stream buffers, floodplains and steep slopes adjacent to rivers and streams. • Neighborhood Density Residential – residential (3-6 units/acre); supporting uses such as places of worship, schools, public and institutional uses and small-scale neighborhood serving retail and commercial.
Character of Property: A prominent hill with wooded steep slopes.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Rural and rural residential to the west in the Rural Area. A retirement community and multifamily residences to the east in the Development Area.	
Factors Favorable: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of the property (77.4%) is designated as Rural Area or as Parks & Green Systems in the Comprehensive Plan. 2. Limiting development within the portion of Stillhouse Mountain that is within the Mountain Protection Plan area would prevent both water-quality impacts and scenic impacts. 		Factors Unfavorable: None.
RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission determine that the proposed conservation easement would be in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.		

STAFF CONTACT:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Scott Clark, Conservation Program Manager
December 9, 2025
N/A

BACKGROUND

The owners of TMP 60-66 (32.43 acres by deed, located at the top of Stillhouse Mountain, just west of The Colonnades; see map below) have expressed an interest in placing a conservation easement on this property. As the property lies partially in the Development Area and partially in the Rural Area, landowners have requested a Compliance with the Comprehensive Plan review by the Commission. This review would result in a determination by the Commission stating whether or not the proposed conservation easement would be in compliance with the Plan.



PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

By state code, all conservation easements must be in accord with the locality's comprehensive plan. (Section 10.1-1701 of the Open Space Land Act says, "The use of the real property for open-space land shall conform to the official comprehensive plan for the area in which the property is located.") When analyzing a potential easement, conservation easement holders typically ask localities to state whether or not an easement on that site would be consistent with their comprehensive plan. When those properties are entirely in rural areas, or entirely in green-space or floodplain portions of development areas, determining plan compliance is straightforward. However, when a parcel straddles multiple comprehensive-plan designations, further analysis is needed.

CHARACTER OF SURROUNDING AREA

The property is on the boundary between the Development Areas and the Rural Area. This boundary follows the edge of the watershed of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, with the western side of this property and the rural land to the west draining to that public water supply.

Nearby land uses to the west include residential subdivisions and larger farm properties. To the east and northeast, the surroundings include The Colonnades (a retirement community) and multifamily residential developments.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

The property is zoned R1 Residential. Staff has found no notable planning or zoning history.

SPECIFICS OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to place a conservation easement on this property, limiting further development of the site.

COMMUNITY MEETING

In consultation with the Board of Supervisors member for this magisterial district, the requirement for a community meeting was waived in this case, as no new traffic or development impacts would be created by conservation of this property.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

As the proposal is to prevent further development of the property through a conservation easement, no new traffic impacts would be created.

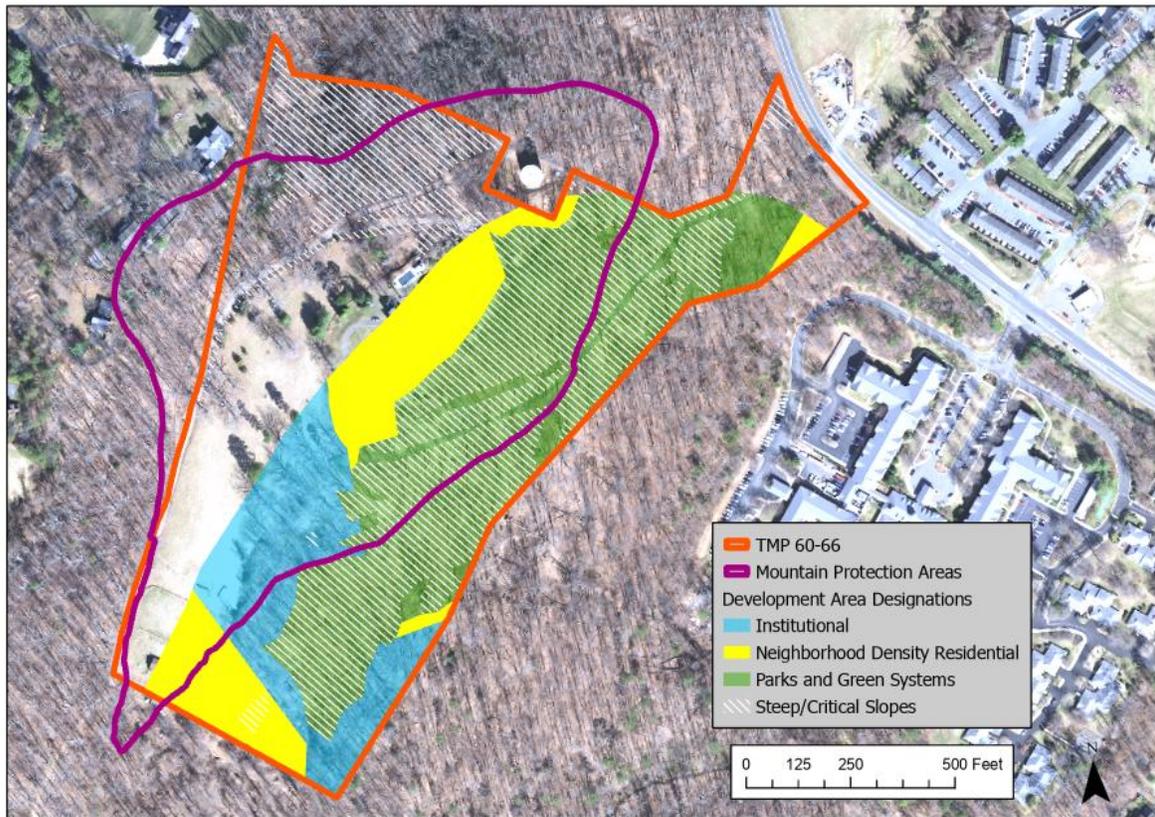
CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Staff provides the following information for the Planning Commission to consider regarding the compliance of this proposal in relation to the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

This parcel’s acreage is divided among the Comprehensive Plan land use categories as shown in the following table. (Note that the total acreage shown here, measured by GIS, is larger than the 32.43 acres shown in the property records. This is likely due to the property records being based on old survey information.)

Comprehensive Plan Area	Land Use Category	Acres	Percent
Rural Area 1	Rural Area	12.53	32.95
Neighborhood 7	Parks & Green Systems	16.90	44.43
	Neighborhood Density Residential	4.41	11.60
	Institutional	4.19	11.02
Total		38.03	

A significant majority of the property’s area (77.4%) is designated as Rural Area or as Parks & Green Systems, which are categories where conservation easements are appropriate. The Parks & Green Systems area is largely made up of wooded critical slopes, as is the northwestern Rural Area portion of the parcel.



To address the compliance of a potential easement on the remaining 22.6% of the property, it is useful to review the development potential of those areas.

Development Potential – Current Zoning

Under current R-1 zoning (which covers both the RA and DA portions of the property), 38.03 acres could theoretically be developed with up to 36 single-family lots. However, the limited access, extensive preserved/critical slopes, the need for building sites for septic fields in the areas that lack sewer service, and the preserved-slope disturbances that would be required to provide public road access would significantly limit the real development potential of the parcel. Staff estimates that at most 20 to 25 single-family detached residences could be built. Some of those dwellings would be located in the Rural Area, where they would be an unsupported land use under the Comprehensive Plan. Also, many of the R-1 lots would include portions of the property designated as “Parks and Green Systems,” meaning that the “green systems” would be broken up into multiple residential lots. This division of the Parks and Green Systems area among individual development lots would be inconsistent with the protection of green space supported by the Comprehensive Plan.

Development Potential – Comp Plan Recommended Density

The portion of the property designated in the Comprehensive Plan for residential development (4.4 acres, or 11.6%) is divided into four non-contiguous areas with the following acreages (indicated in yellow on the map above).

Acres	Potential Dwelling Units (Comp Plan Maximum Density)
2.46	14
1.7	10
0.15	1
0.09	n/a

If the property were rezoned to allow the maximum density recommended by the Southern & Western Neighborhood Plan (6 units per acre), the Neighborhood portions of the site could theoretically be developed with up to about 25 dwelling units. However, the real development potential of these areas may be limited by the separation and irregular shapes of the developable areas, and by the preserved-slope disturbances that would be required to replace the existing driveway with a public road.

The largest (2.46-acre) area designated for residential development is entirely within the Mountain Protection Plan area established by the Comprehensive Plan, where development on this hilltop would be most visible. The Mountain Protection Plan designates important areas that have scenic value due to their high visibility, and that are important to water-quality protection due to their steep slopes. While the Southern & Western Neighborhoods Plan calls for residential development in this area, the Mountain Protection Plan would discourage development of this site.

Staff research indicates that the portion of the property designated as Institutional (11.02% -- blue on the map above) was designated to accommodate improvements related to the once-planned US 29 western bypass, which is no longer included in the County's transportation plans. If that area were to be re-zoned for residential development, it could increase the area available for new units. However, the most buildable portion of the "Institutional" area also falls within the Mountain Protection Area, where development is not recommended.

Thus, while residential development in the Neighborhood Residential portions of the site would be consistent with the density guidance in the land use plan, it would conflict with the resource-protection goals of the Mountain Protection Plan. Also, the small size and scattered arrangement of the Neighborhood Density areas would limit their value in creating contiguous neighborhoods with the adjacent Development Area properties.

Protecting the property with a conservation easement would be consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan policies:

- Natural Resources
 - Objective 1: Ensure clean and abundant water resources for public health, business, healthy ecosystems, and personal enjoyment by preventing shortages and contamination.
 - Objective 5: Retain mountain resources.
 - Strategy 5a: Continue to protect mountain resources identified for protection in the Mountain Contour List. [Note: The "Mountain Contour List" identifies the base elevations of the areas included in the Mountain Protection Plan.]
 - Strategy 5b: Continue to protect critical slopes in the Rural Area.
 - Strategy 5c: Protect slopes of 25% or greater in the Development Areas that are shown for preservation on Development Area Master Plan maps.
 - Strategy 5d: Encourage voluntary measures, such as conservation easements, agricultural and forestal districts, and use value taxation to protect mountain resources.
- Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources
 - Objective 6: Continue to protect and enhance scenic resources for residents and tourists.
 - Strategy 6a: Continue to promote voluntary measures to protect scenic resources.
 - Objective 10: Preserve important views as they relate to tourism and recreational assets.

- Rural Area
 - Objective 2: Protect and preserve natural resources, which include mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, streams, groundwater, and retain continuous and unfragmented land for agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, and natural resource protection.
- Development Area
 - Objective 8: Preserve natural systems which are shown for preservation on Master Plan Land Use Plans.

SUMMARY

Staff find the following factors favorable to this request:

1. The majority of the property (77.4%) is designated as Rural Area or as Parks & Green Systems in the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Limiting development within the portion of Stillhouse Mountain that is within the Mountain Protection Plan area would prevent both water-quality impacts and scenic impacts.

Staff found no unfavorable factors.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the large percentage of the property designated as either Rural Area or Parks & Green Systems, the location of the most buildable areas within the Mountain Protection Area, and the potential scenic impacts of increased density on the top of Stillhouse Mountain, staff recommends that the Planning Commission determine that the proposed conservation easement would be in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Note that, if the Commission finds this location to be appropriate for a conservation easement, that action does not in itself restrict the property. The next step for the landowners would be to contact an easement-holding organization that would consider accepting an easement.