Albemarle County Planning Commission
Draft Minutes
Work Session and Regular Meeting
December 9, 2025

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

Members attending were Fred Missel, Chair; Luis Carrazana, Vice-Chair; Julian Bivins; Corey Clayborne; Karen Firehock; Nathan Moore; Lonnie Murray (participating remotely).

Members absent: None.

Other officials present were Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning, Jodie Filardo, Director of Community Development; Bart Svoboda, Deputy Director of Community Development; JT Newberry, Senior Planner; Scott Clark, Conservation Program Manager; Jenny Tevendale, Deputy County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commissions.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Missel established a quorum.

Mr. Missel asked Mr. Murray to state his reason for requesting to participate remotely in today's meeting.

Mr. Murray said that he was currently at home in Albemarle County and requested to participate remotely due to poor road conditions.

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission allow Mr. Murray to participate remotely in the meeting. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0).

Work Session

2025 Land Use Buildout Analysis

JT Newberry, Senior Planner, said that he was joined by some of his colleagues to assist with this item. He said that they had a significant amount of information to cover in the next 90 minutes, and most of it had been provided in the materials ahead of today's meeting. He said that he hoped they could move efficiently through it and reserve as much time as possible for questions and feedback from the Commission.

Mr. Newberry said that today's agenda was divided into two parts. He said that they would begin by reviewing the 2025 Build-out Analysis, followed by introducing a new tool they were developing, the AC44 Analysis Tool. He said that they would take all the Commissioners' questions and feedback to inform staff's preparation for a Board meeting on January 21, 2026, with the Board of Supervisors on these topics.

Mr. Newberry said that the capacity analysis was crucial because it would help them take the next steps after the adoption of AC44 and implementing the Comprehensive Plan, particularly in administering the Growth Management Policy. He said that it also supported other areas of the County, such as the Board's Strategic Plan goals, specifically those related to quality of life, infrastructure, and placemaking. He said that monitoring this information would be critical to

advancing their efforts on goals related to housing and economic development, and a variety of other lines of effort. He said that the AC44 analysis tool would hopefully be especially helpful for evaluating future development proposals.

Mr. Newberry said that to give some recent history, the first part of the work session today was somewhat backward-looking, reviewing information provided during the development and adoption of AC44. He said that Attachment 1 of the materials today was provided during Phase 1 of AC44, the 2022 Land Use Build-out Analysis. He said that today, they would be discussing the 2025 Analysis, which was reviewed in Phase 4.

Mr. Newberry said that the Board of Supervisors had received essentially the same information on September 3, 2025, prior to adoption on October 15. He said that the 2025 analysis replicated the exact same methodology and approach as the 2022 Analysis, which was done purposefully to allow for an accurate comparison and to draw trends and have a longer-term look. He said that this effort had been done in various ways over the years, including a staff-led analysis in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan and a Growth Management Report in 2019.

Mr. Newberry said that in 2022, they had hired Kimley Horn to help with a more sophisticated approach, which they had replicated in 2025 with the help of another consultant, Line + Grade. He said that some of the information was displayed by neighborhood, particularly in the 2025 memo. He said that they recognized that neighborhoods were not often discussed, so they wanted to make sure that any members of the public unfamiliar with the concept were aware of their designations.

Mr. Newberry said that Neighborhoods 1 and 2 were included in the Places 29 Master Plan, the Pantops Master Plan was designated as Neighborhood 3, Neighborhoods 4 through 7 were located in the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan. He said that Crozet and the Village of Rivanna had their own standalone master plans. He said that however, some information was broken out by neighborhood.

Mr. Newberry said that two important definitions he would like to cover as they analyzed the data were: first, the definition of developable or redevelopable parcels. He said that this definition was based on the 2022 Analysis, which specifically examined parcels with a minimum of two acres and a land value greater than their improvement value, or those that were vacant He said that these parcels were considered developable for calculating capacity.

Mr. Newberry said that the second definition he thought was crucial to understand these results was the theoretical maximum buildout. He said that this referred to the maximum development capacity of an individual parcel that was identified as developable. He said that for example, if one acre of land with an urban density residential designation had a maximum capacity of 34 dwelling units per acre, this analysis would indicate that one acre could support 34 dwelling units.

Mr. Newberry said that the overall research approach combined several of these different figures. He said that the development pipeline referred to projects that were either approved and not yet built or those that were under review. He said that combining these two would give the total. He said that one example of a project seen in town was Old Ivy Residences, which was currently under construction but not yet occupied, so it was included in the development pipeline.

Mr. Newberry said that to further understand how the build-out estimate worked, the analysis identified developable parcels and made assumptions about environmental factors, such as floodplains or steep slopes, infrastructure, and open space. It then applied a set of build-out assumptions based on land use designations. This process yielded the findings.

Mr. Newberry said that for both residential and non-residential areas, they would examine 2022 and 2025. He said that in 2022, the total theoretical maximum buildout was just over 24,000 units. He said that in 2025, the total decreased to 21,644 units. He said that the overall decrease between 2022 and 2025 was just over 2,500 units. He said that interestingly, if they added up the number of units that were actually delivered over that time frame, it was just about 2,900 units.

Mr. Newberry said that a large portion of the overall decline could be explained by the units that were actually taken through the pipeline and constructed and produced. He said that there was an additional point to consider, which related to changes in value over time. He said that this involved identifying parcels in 2025 that were deemed developable at this point in time but may not have been in 2022, and vice versa.

Mr. Newberry said that moving on to non-residential findings, it was clear that there was a continued trend of a decrease in the overall square footage of available capacity within their development areas for different land use types. He said that he had included a segment of the 2022 analysis, which estimated demand for different land use types. He said that the 2025 figures exceeded the expected 20-year demand on the high end, at least in 2022.

Mr. Newberry said that there were some interesting overall findings that were worth discussing. He said that notably, the overall developable acreage had decreased from 6.9% to 6.1%. He said that when considering the remaining developable acreage, it was almost evenly split between those with improvements and those that were vacant. He said that this observation was reminiscent of a common assertion they heard in Community Development, which was that all the easiest-to-develop land had been developed. He said that this was an interesting observation that would be discussed further, informing the strategies and efforts needed to spur redevelopment of parcels with existing improvements.

Mr. Newberry said that a significant topic of interest from the Board of Supervisors was the approval rate of projects, particularly the density of approved projects relative to the maximum density recommended under the Comprehensive Plan. He said that in the 2022 Analysis, which spanned from 2016 to 2021, approximately 58% of the maximum recommended by the Comp Plan was ultimately approved by the Board of Supervisors. He said that under the 2025 analysis, this number was largely the same, at 56%.

Mr. Newberry said that however, when excluding the singular outlier of 1,400 units approved at North Fork, the number increased to 70%. He said that this suggested that there was an increase in the overall density of projects being approved. He said that the analysis for approved projects versus the Build-out Analysis worked similarly. He said that they started with the overall acreage for a project, removed assumptions for infrastructure, environment, and open space, and then multiplied that by the maximum recommended by the Comprehensive Plan, then compared this to the number of units ultimately approved.

Mr. Newberry said that for example, the North Fork project was rezoning a portion of the site from PD-IP (Planned Development – Industrial Park) to Neighborhood Model District (NMD). He said that the 172-acre site under this Analysis would have theoretically yielded over 4,000 units, which was a significant amount, and compared to the 1,400 units approved, this development was approved at approximately 34% of the overall maximum recommended by the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Newberry said that to put this into perspective, they could examine the total approved residential rezonings and the distribution of dwelling units across approved density versus theoretical maximum for the projects from that time period. He said that the vast majority of these projects fell within 50% to 79% maximum recommended density. He said that as they may be

considering, there were several constraining factors that limited development at maximum theoretical build-out.

Mr. Newberry said that to clarify, this was intended to be a high-level, broad-brush look at the information as they administered the Growth Management Policy and assessed whether their development areas had sufficient available capacity for future plans. He said that he had mentioned earlier that as they had undertaken this effort, they had begun to focus on identifying the questions that must be asked as they attempted to implement the Comp Plan. He said that these included redevelopment strategies in general as well as redevelopment opportunities associated with identified Activity Centers.

Mr. Newberry said that additionally, they were examining other parts of the Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Strategic Plan, and asking questions such as how to attract more private investment, and whether they could proactively align the Zoning Map with the Land Use Map. He said that before they moved on to the AC44 Analysis Tool, he wanted to mention that they had made a significant shift from the 2022 Analysis to the 2025 analysis, moving from a paper-based approach to a digital one. He said that Line + Grade effectively took the approach of the 2022 Analysis and put it into Excel.

Mr. Newberry said that this would enable them to perform more intricate analysis, real-time analysis, and provide better data to their partners. He said that they were moving from a report to a tool, which would not only help them administer the Growth Management Policy but also provide more accurate data to their partners. He said that he would pause to allow the Commission to ask any questions they had regarding the Land Use Build-Out Analysis before he discussed the AC44 Analysis Tool.

Ms. Firehock said that she had a few comments. She said that considering the County's excellent Geographic Information System (GIS), she thought the tool could be more nimble if they linked school district capacity and road capacity in their spatial analysis. She said that those were two major factors that impacted their ability to develop at maximum density. She said that a parcel may be able to contain a certain amount of density, but if it was on an overburdened road and lacked reliable public transportation, it may not be able to develop at maximum density.

Ms. Firehock said that to gain a more nuanced understanding, she believed it would be helpful to examine the parcels in the context of their location and immediate surroundings, as this could reveal areas where growth potential was limited by other constraining factors. She said that if they were able to distinctly identify those constraining factors, they could focus on finding solutions to improve infrastructure or access in these areas, which would be essential for meeting the County's growth goals and maintaining its capacity to develop within the urban ring. She said that she thought it was possible to develop a more comprehensive approach.

Mr. Missel said that he wanted to expand on that a bit, drawing from his real-life experience. He said that Mr. Newberry had mentioned the example of North Fork, which led him to think about the limitations that developers faced when it came to development. He said that it was not just environmental conditions, such as critical slopes, but also the limitations related to traffic and transportation. He said that as a developer, they could contribute through proffers, which they factored this into their capital and pro forma, determining how far they could go with the project.

Mr. Missel said that however, if the traffic and transportation opportunities were already available, it did not burden the developer. He said that he thought it was a great idea to tie this to transportation, schools, other infrastructure, water and sewer, and master plans for Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) and other organizations. He said that he was curious to know how these elements connected and informed each other.

Mr. Carrazana said that he was going to raise the same point. He said that currently, they received project information on a project-by-project basis. He said that the burden on roads or schools was acknowledged as an environmental condition that impacted each project, and this burden was passed down from one project to the next. He said that what they lacked was a comprehensive tool to identify prime areas for development, high-density development, and areas with suitable road infrastructure, and school capacity.

Mr. Carrazana said that having that awareness through such a tool would greatly aid in planning and community development. He said that it would enable them to better plan their community and engage with the development community by highlighting areas with existing capacity and potential for growth. He said that additionally, it would help identify areas that required improvements to reach higher-density development. He said that he believed that this tool would be invaluable in raising awareness throughout the County, as it may not be widely known. He said that some of their staff members may be well-versed in the specific areas of concern, but many other people did not, so it would be a great resource if they could compile it.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had that exact same question. He said that Mr. Newberry had mentioned they were building at about 58% maximum density on average, and considering the current infrastructure, including roads and schools, he was wondering if that could accommodate even just the 58%. He asked what would happen on an infrastructure level if they were to achieve 80%. He said that it seemed like they would just crumble, so more insight into that would be beneficial. He said that he appreciated that the other Commissioners were on the same page.

Mr. Moore said that he was looking at the numbers from 2022 and 2025. He said that he was glad that it was brought up on page five that the 58% and 56% were what they were actually building. He said that however, he found it odd that they were then focusing so much on the maximum buildable units. He said that he was not sure how useful this information would be in determining when the development area was full.

Mr. Moore said that if they looked at the number of buildable units and said there were 21,000, but the actual demand was only 12,000 or 13,000, it stood to reason that the 21,000 was not realistic and perhaps irrelevant. He said that Mr. Newberry had alluded to this in the presentation more than in the written report that it was acknowledged the theoretical maximum would not be reached. He said that one reason they could not achieve 100% build-out on every parcel was due to various constraints.

Mr. Moore said that furthermore, not all landowners may want to develop their parcels within the next 20 years, as 44% of these parcels already had improvements, which may indicate that someone was living there. He said that for example, one of the subsequent items on tonight's agenda was for a parcel that would qualify as developable, but the request was to put it in a conservation easement. He said that he thought that this spoke to how this maximum number would not be the actual number that would dictate future growth and density of development.

Mr. Moore said that also, it was essential to consider the population estimates, as they may be based on assumptions that were changing. He said that for example, they had recently had some very successful economic development initiatives, such as AstraZeneca's recent announcement, and population growth goals were likely to increase. He said that if they made room for this growth, it could lead to a higher population and a lower number of actual buildable units. He said that in fact, he believed they may find themselves full before the 20-year mark.

Mr. Moore said that as a Planning Commission, he thought they should start planning for their next steps, which was a long-term conversation that should be started now rather than 15 years from now.

Mr. Missel said that he believed that this was the primary reason for tying this to the Comprehensive Plan; this allowed them to plan for the long term.

Mr. Bivins said that he needed to clarify one thing. He said that it felt like they were still talking about net area to be developed, whereas he had assumed they had moved to gross. He said that he wanted to note that, and if they were going to do that, he hoped that the County be more deliberate in what kinds of things were built. He said that if the County committed to using net area, he thought it should also be willing to say that it preferred certain types of development, as it would inevitably impact the market one way or the other.

Mr. Bivins said that when the County said it had a certain amount of land available for development, it should also be willing to offer incentives for developments that aligned with its goals. He said that to his colleagues, he thought that going forward they and this process would be greatly informed by a couple of things. He said that he thought they needed to distinguish the County-owned land and school sites that could be developed.

Mr. Bivins said that there were many municipalities throughout the country that were partnering with private developers to create housing for workers, so that should be a consideration for their locality. He said that there were many people who came to work in the County but lived outside of it because there was a lack of housing options within Albemarle. He said that he thought it was essential that they consider who owned the land and had the ability to develop it in a way that met the community's needs.

Mr. Bivins said that he would like to suggest that they incorporate more data-driven analysis into their discussions. He said that for example, CoStar, a leading property analysis firm, had an office local to Albemarle. He said that he believed it would be beneficial to have access to their data and insights, as it could challenge their assumptions and provide a more accurate understanding of the market. He said that by incorporating data-driven analysis, he thought they could make more informed decisions and better serve the community.

Mr. Bivins said that he also believed it would be beneficial to have more frequent analysis by the Weldon Cooper, creating a model that was updated annually. He said that he had had the opportunity to review a presentation by Hamilton Lombard, a demographer, which provided insightful information about their community's demographics and projected changes over the next decade. He said that additionally, he had examined the census data from one, three, and 20 years ago.

Mr. Bivins said that notably, the majority of young people in their community were currently between the ages of 16 and 18. He said that the demographic shift was crucial when considering new school systems. He said that he thought it would be helpful to move away from individual vested interests in school locations, as many children may not attend the proposed schools for 15 to 20 years. He said that in order to make informed decisions, the Planning Commission required access to data that validated and supported them, rather than relying on their individual experiences or thoughts on certain issues.

Mr. Bivins said that furthermore, he was concerned about the proliferation of private schools in Albemarle and Charlottesville counties, which was unprecedented. He said that he had seen no comparable phenomenon in his professional life. He said that he believed they should make decisions based on data that was supported by robust models or observation. He said that specifically, he would like to know whether they were considering net or gross density. He said that if they were aiming for net, he thought the County should encourage developers to build affordable housing, similar to their approach with Home Depot and the developments along Route 29 North.

Mr. Bivins said that by doing so, they could ensure that their community was built in a way that was accessible to all, rather than relying solely on market-driven solutions that may lead to generally unaffordable housing. He said that he appreciated the Build-out Analysis because it was very descriptive, but now he wanted the County to decide what they wanted to be as a community. He said that he did not think the Analysis would meet the demands of the community, and it was worth noting that 60% of the County's revenue came from individual housing and personal real estate. He said that personal real estate was not capable of building roads or financing large-scale projects like a new northern high school, which lacked sufficient capacity.

Mr. Bivins said that their bond rating also indicated that they could not afford such debt. He said that to make informed decisions, they needed to adopt a different level of analysis. He said that they had the data and access to smart individuals who could help them think through these complex issues.

Mr. Murray said that for him, the definition of "developable" in the 2022 report was insufficient and excluded areas like Rio Hill. He said that as land supply became increasingly constrained, the land price and relative improvements would change, making more parcels developable. He said that they should also consider how incentives might alter the formula for what was redevelopable. He said that thus, by itself, this was not a good tool to determine when the development area was full, as that was a dynamic and constantly changing definition over time.

Mr. Murray said that looking at their neighbor, Charlottesville, provided a clear example of this. He said that there were areas in Charlottesville that had been redeveloped, but if those parcels were in Albemarle they would be considered undevelopable. He said that it appeared that the metrics were geared towards greenfield development, rather than redevelopment. He said that to encourage redevelopment as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, they needed metrics specific to redevelopment.

Mr. Murray said that this should start with a map of parcels that had more parking and impervious service than was actually required. He said that identifying areas with physical space for redevelopment could help them pinpoint the hurdles and incentives necessary. He said that they could even proactively apply incentives to these difficult-to-redevelop places.

Mr. Missel said that as he reviewed his questions, he assumed that they would be answered in the second part of the staff presentation. He said that he assumed staff would discuss how environmental conditions were measured, particularly when comparing theoretical versus pipeline scenarios, discounting developable area based on the environment or other infrastructure. He said that he was wondering if there was a specific methodology or approach that they used to make these calculations, or if it was more straightforward to consider known variables like total acreage, slopes, and water service capacity.

Mr. Newberry said that page 11 of the 2022 Analysis featured a large table that assigned different assumptions to various categories, primarily based on the predominant geography of an area. He said that for instance, sections with floodplains, steep slopes, or other environmental factors were assigned higher percentages. He said that the table also differentiated between different land use types, outlining how assumptions varied depending on both location and land use type.

Mr. Missel said that he believed his point was that it was worth reviewing the list again and assessing their current standing with each of those elements as things evolved, particularly as their Comprehensive Plan progressed. He said that he was just double-checking to see if they were altering the value, limitations, or opportunities within each of those categories. He said that they may conclude that everything was fine, or they may consider the possibility that there was an issue. He said that furthermore, looking at the trend from 2022 and 2025, he would like to know whether they examined historical data beyond 2025, or whether there was information from earlier

years, such as 2010, that could provide a more comprehensive view of the trends in these categories.

Mr. Newberry said that that was not done for this analysis, but it was a very interesting suggestion. He said that the approach was comparing a variety of factors that were not completely alike. He said that if they were comfortable with that caveat, he thought it would be interesting to see how the distribution would fall out.

Mr. Missel said that he believed it was important to consider trends when evaluating their development area. He said that they also needed to consider the timeline for when they would run out of available space. He said that there was a curve involved, and while there may be some data available, they needed to refine their understanding of it. He said that Mr. Murray's comments also touched on the idea of incentives, and he believed it was worth exploring other opportunities for infill and redevelopment. He said that adding those opportunities was key.

Mr. Carrazana asked if redevelopment opportunities were considered as part of these studies.

Mr. Moore said that he thought that related to when the land was more valuable than the improvements on it, which was 44%.

Mr. Newberry said that in the residential context, a minimum of two acres of land was considered eligible for redevelopment if the land itself was worth more than the improvements made to it.

Mr. Missel asked if there were strategies for incentivizing or leveraging the benefit of redevelopment for those parcels.

Mr. Bivins said that he thought the Planning Commission was more comfortable discussing that aspect than the people above them.

Mr. Missel said that as they considered the potential for running out of space in the development area, there would always be opportunities for redevelopment. He said that therefore, it was wise to focus on that possibility first.

Mr. Bivins said that he recalled past discussions about dredging the Rivanna River to get more water for the community water supply, and they chose not to do that. He said that there was a discussion about how the County would deal with fill, which sent a clear message. He said that they chose not to increase the water supply in that manner and threw up an obstacle for developers of brown fields because they had to carry the fill away from the site. He said that to clarify, he was not advocating for anything that would be detrimental to the environment.

Mr. Bivins said that the concept of their network of policies and regulations was particularly relevant to developers who assessed the situation, which seemed like it was difficult to work with. He said that either they needed to bring significant financial resources, like Graystar, or if it was a smaller developer, they may need to reconsider developing in Albemarle due to the complexity of the process. He said that he would rather develop in Nelson County, where he knew they were eager to build houses.

Mr. Bivins said that it led him to wonder about the signals the community was sending, and he wondered about the downstream implications of their discussions about increasing housing stock.

Ms. Firehock said that she was thinking about this in terms of what they considered "redevelopable." She said that she understood the math of the land being more valuable than the improvements, but she would like to propose an alternative perspective. She said that if she were

a developer looking at six five-acre tracks with ranch houses on them, combining them and upgrading the development would be very valuable.

Ms. Firehock said that this type of infill development was happening all over the place, including in Charlottesville and along Avon Street Extended. She said that, for example, there was a significant amount of dense development tucked away, alongside ranch houses. She said that she was not suggesting developers would take their homes, but she was sure they received offers all the time. She said that she wondered whether those types of properties were considered developable in this Analysis. She said that there were many low-density tracts within the urban ring that a developer would find attractive.

Ms. Firehock said that this brought her back to the point Mr. Bivins had made about the difficulty of developing in this community. She said that this led her to believe the best course of action would be to rezone everything to what they wanted it to be. She said that the current development process often discouraged this, as developers were hesitant to push for higher densities due to concerns about community opposition and the potential for the Board of Supervisors to cave to public pressure. She said that this reputation could be a barrier to development, and she thought they needed to make it easier to develop, rather than relying solely on their current system.

Mr. Missel said that he thought that was right. He said that when developers considered a development opportunity, he thought the first thing they considered was what they could afford to do on the property, what the pro forma looked like. He said that the timeline of getting a project done was certainly a major factor, but the first consideration was cost.

Ms. Firehock said that the cost of going through that lengthy three-year development process was a significant consideration.

Jodie Filardo, Director of Community Development, said that she wanted to let the Commission know that their time for their work session would be ending shortly and staff still had about ten minutes of information they would like to provide the Commission.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to add a quick point to what they had already mentioned. He said that if they considered some areas currently deemed undevelopable, and instead proactively rezoned them for redevelopment at higher densities or offered incentives such as tax incremental financing (TIF), it would be beneficial to know how this affected redevelopability. He said that he believed this was something they should examine further.

Mr. Missel asked for staff to continue with their presentation.

Mr. Newberry said that he would like to thank the Commission for the feedback. He said that although their consultant was not with them tonight, he had stated at the Board meeting that one of the benefits of moving to this digital tool was that those assumptions could be run and tested. He said that as they found consensus and agreement around these different factors, there was an opportunity to make those changes. He said that he would highlight the value of his work, as he was not here to do that.

Mr. Newberry said that next, turning the page from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan to AC44, the last attachment, Attachment 5 to the Commission's materials for tonight was a draft tool. He said that this was a first attempt at tracking how current development proposals aligned or not to the maximum theoretical capacity as called for in the Comp Plan. He said that notably, under AC44, to some of the earlier discussion, AC44 was explicit that future development proposals would be evaluated under gross density. He said that this was a shift that they should keep in mind as they moved forward.

Mr. Newberry said that at random, he selected a particular rezoning as a straw man for discussion today. He said that it was a fairly small rezoning down Avon Street, covering approximately 3.5 acres. He said that both the 2015 Comp Plan and AC44 called for Neighborhood Density Residential, which was three to six units per acre. He said that if they examined Attachment 5 and the first table, it was attempting to look at the existing conditions on the property in the first row, where there were currently two housing units occupying a very small amount of that acreage.

Mr. Newberry said that if they compared it to the Future Land Use under the Comp Plan, it would be about 9%. He said that the second row looked at the theoretical maximum using gross density, which would call for 22 units. He said that in this case, the applicant proposed 21 units, which was about 96% of the Comp Plan's theoretical maximum. He said that next, he would discuss Table C, which included the big totals in the information from the 2025 Land Use Build-out Analysis. He asked the Commission to consider whether this information would be valuable to see on an ongoing basis in the context of current development proposals going forward.

Mr. Newberry said that they had the pipeline, the theoretical units, and the total, as well as some non-residential land uses for consideration. He said that then, Table B in Attachment 5 looked at housing and could be useful as they attempted to understand how much more or less affordable housing would be provided based on the intensity of the development before them. He said that if their current policy called for 20% of the constructed units to be provided as affordable, and the applicant was proposing a maximum of only 80% of what the Comp Plan was looking for, they could begin to see the delta between what they would hope to achieve through the Comp Plan versus what was actually constructed.

Mr. Newberry said that to clarify, this would not replace the affordable housing analysis currently shared by the Housing Office. This would simply demonstrate and show, according to the Comprehensive Plan, the applicant would be required to provide 3.3 affordable units based on this designation, which would round up to four; however, the applicant's proposal was still exceeding three units. He said that therefore, there was no difference, even though they were not reaching the maximum, they were still achieving the same number of affordable units.

Mr. Newberry said that the intent here was to include this information along with narrative in the staff report, which would aim to discuss the Growth Management Policy on a more regular basis going forward. He said that this information would also help with tracking development areas and include the potential for both market-rate and affordable housing. He said that to conclude both of these tools would assist in administering the Growth Management Policy and implementing the Comprehensive Plan over time.

Mr. Newberry said that additionally, it would be essential to identify the questions that they should be asking, such as whether this was a specialized redevelopment or an infrastructure-focused analysis. He said that they should consider what questions they needed to be answering to put the Planning Commission and Board in the best position to make the best decisions possible.

Mr. Missel asked if the information regarding affordable housing would be presented with the staff report for each proposal. He asked if they could compile this on an ongoing basis and tally so that they could review what they had seen over a certain time period. He said that for example, 4% net density across all projects that came before them would change over time, so it would be interesting to see the trend in another column.

Mr. Newberry said that he appreciated that feedback.

Mr. Carrazana said that Mr. Bivins had brought up a point regarding net and gross density, which he wanted to clarify. He said that upon reviewing the materials, he found it unclear, so he had a

conversation with Mr. McDermott yesterday to discuss it. He said that the theoretical maximum was based on the gross density.

Mr. Newberry said that under the analysis of the Land Use Build-out Analysis, it appeared to be a net calculation, as it removed areas for open space and infrastructure. He said that AC44 marked a significant shift in this approach, explicitly stating that they would use gross density moving forward. He said that there may be value in both approaches. He said that if they wanted to maintain a long-term perspective and compare apples to apples, perhaps continuing with the current Land Use Build-out Analysis from 2022 would make sense; nevertheless, for the purposes of AC44, it was clear that they would instead use gross density as displayed in this table.

Mr. Carrazana said that he believed it would be beneficial to have continuity of net; however, with the gross, it would suggest that they could have more development. He said that whatever was tied to the theoretical maximum was most important. He said that perhaps they needed to talk about height restrictions and other factors, but the theoretical maximum should be based on the gross. He said that he was not saying they should eliminate the net, as there was value there in terms of tracking the information from the previous Analysis.

Ms. Firehock asked if they had to amend their Code of Development to allow them to use gross density.

Mr. McDermott said that the AC44 now stated that they would be using gross density.

Ms. Firehock said that the Comprehensive Plan was a goal-oriented document. She asked if they had to change the code to allow it.

Mr. McDermott said that there was no code that aligned to that. He said that the code actually referenced what was stated in the Comprehensive Plan. He said that following his discussion with Mr. Carrazana, they also touched on this topic, and it aligned with Mr. Moore's point that they could consider both gross and net values. He said that recognizing both was beneficial, as it allowed them to track land availability over time and account for situations where the recommended density was not always achieved.

Mr. Carrazana said that he did not disagree.

Mr. Bivins said that he had a question regarding the area median income (AMI). He asked what the process would be to recommend a change of that. He said that their current AMI in their community was $100,000, even with excluding a bunch of people from these kinds of houses. He said that he was trying to figure out how to make a dent in that, and whether the only way to make a dent was to get the County involved more in being prescriptive as opposed to being hopeful about housing, or if there was a way they could look at what the AMI could be to give additional opportunities to people so they could live in the new inventory.

Mr. McDermott said that he appreciated the question, but what they were currently examining was the tools they were using to evaluate these issues. He said that many of the points Mr. Bivins had raised were around work they planned to do in the future regarding how they implemented AC44 and Housing Albemarle. He said that these were larger questions they had been discussing for the past three years as they updated AC44. He said that going forward, they planned to continue exploring these topics, but for now, their goal was to demonstrate their analysis and the tool they were using to move forward.

Bart Svoboda, Deputy Director of Community Development, said that when they saw the Zoning Modernization come forward and the alignments with AC44 and similar factors, that was when they would assess how to implement the information they gained from this tool. He said that this

inventory was distinct from what they would do with it. He said that this was the process of taking stock. He said that they would not use the material sheet to design; instead, they would analyze the existing information.

Mr. Svoboda said that then they would determine, based on their areas, whether to break down the developable area differently or consider other factors. He said that as they started using this tool and things aligned moving forward, they would examine it in the context of Mr. McDermott's point: how they would approach ordinance changes and align those factors, such as different housing types, height, and other considerations.

Mr. Bivins said that one of the challenges they had faced, particularly west of town, was that public parkland and other parkland had the same color on their maps. He said that he recalled numerous conversations they had with people stating that they could not do anything on that land, but it was because it was private, not because it was a park. He said that based on what had been mentioned, he assumed that they would see a distinction in the type of greens used for public parkland versus a more general landscape of trees.

Mr. Svoboda said that he cautioned that there was a variety of colors they used. He said that considering the 274 different shades in the color wheel they utilized, he wanted to ensure that their message was conveyed clearly and at an understandable level. He said that with 52 colors on the map, they wanted to make sure that the audience they were trying to reach could easily comprehend their message.

Mr. Svoboda said that personally, he supported a more focused and subtle approach. He said that when communicating on a particular project or map, it was essential that they consider how their message was received and interpreted. He said that the tone and language they used were just as important as the content itself. He said that he believed Mr. McDermott could provide more insights on the maps and anticipated changes, and he expected them to be more moderate and subtle.

Mr. McDermott said that in the latest AC44, their land use map provided more detailed color separation. He said that he believed as they moved forward with small area plans, they would strive to achieve even better separation. He said that in the latest AC44, they had separated environmental features from parkland.

Mr. Murray said that when examining the numbers, they needed to have some data on redevelopment. He said that specifically, it would be beneficial to know the percentage of development that was greenfield versus redevelopment when a project came before them. He said that it would be helpful to roll up these numbers at the County level to understand the overall amount of redevelopment versus greenfield development.

Mr. Murray said that in terms of redevelopment, he thought they should focus on the types of projects, particularly targeting areas with excessive parking lots, which they had all identified as a priority. He said that they should also prioritize areas that were brownfields, such as those in Crozet that they hoped to redevelop. He said that he believed it would be useful to establish a County metric to measure progress when they did redevelop these areas. He said that solid numbers for redevelopment were important to have on a project level and at the County level.

Mr. Missel said that if they zoomed out and considered the purpose of this exercise, they needed to ask themselves why they were doing it and what they were trying to achieve. He said that initially, they cared about maximizing density in Development Areas to make efficient use of infrastructure and minimize the impact on Rural Areas. He said that if they took that to the next level, they had a tool that provided insights into how well they were using density, and it may also point to inefficient use or underutilization of Development Areas.

Mr. Missel said that a developer may look at this tool and see that while they theoretically could build 5,000 residential units on a parcel, they could only afford to build 1,500 because of the costs of development, including proffers, time, and other aspects of the project. He said that as a County, they were ultimately faced with inefficient use of their Development Areas. He said that therefore, there needed to be something they gave back to the developers that helped them build that density. He said that they needed to find ways to incentivize developers to build more efficiently.

Mr. Missel said that therefore, he would like to ask staff if they had looked into incentives that would maximize development, and if there was anything the County could use to assist developers in maximizing their ability to densify the development areas. He said that, for example, in Economic Development, they would find ways to move things more quickly through the process. He said that they had already discussed this in the context of affordable housing, where they had found ways to move projects through the pipeline more quickly.

Mr. Missel said that another aspect to consider was the concept of value. He said that by assigning values to different types of developments, he wondered how that impacted things across the County. He said that for example, if a developer was bringing 30% affordable housing to a project, perhaps they could provide a specialized process for that, or perhaps if the situation became such that they had too much housing they needed a way to refocus and incentivize in other areas of use. He said that he was unsure of how this fit into this Analysis, but he felt like it should, as all those different uses were a part of the discussion.

Mr. Carrazana said that the important part was ensuring they were proactive. He said that it was great that as they approved applications in real time, this tool would allow them to see the impacts in the Development Area and how well they were meeting their density goals. He said that if they implemented this for six months and then they received data showing a 10% increase or decrease, they must determine what they would do next. He said that the goal was to figure out a path for more development.

Mr. Carrazan said that with this tool, they were measuring it, but as Mr. Missel said, they needed to find how to incentivize and what levers they needed to pull to move the needle. He said that as they were having conversations with developers, they needed to ask what it would take to get them to move from 50% to 80%. He said that it was not just about measuring.

Mr. Clayborne said that he thoroughly enjoyed the conversation about incentives. He said that this discussion had him thinking about how to measure the vitality of any community. He said that there were three key factors: education, health, and the economy. He said that they had touched on all three tonight in some capacity, whether it was demographics and the data shared by Mr. Bivins, or how those factors intersected with health and economic development or schools.

Mr. Clayborne said that perhaps there was a way to evaluate proposals that took into account their contribution to the overall vitality of the community. He said that historically, they had focused on a single aspect, such as affordable housing. He said that he believed there may be more to it, and that a more comprehensive approach could provide a richer understanding. He said that they certainly needed more affordable housing, but they also needed more of the full spectrum of housing, also. He said that they should consider how this interplayed with this conversation.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had been discussing this with their chief economist at the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and he had shared some interesting insights from a recent survey. He said that with interest rates currently at 6.25% and potentially falling to 5%, the number of people looking to buy housing could increase significantly, from 25% to 65% with just a single basis point move. He said that he was wondering if there could be incentives for affordable housing with other types of market-rate housing.

Ms. Firehock said that she wanted to note the importance of not just increasing density but also prioritizing quality development. She said that she was thinking about the form-based code they had implemented in the Rio area, which was complex but ultimately led to some performance standards that they could use to guide development. She said that she believed they could create performance standards that would require developers to incorporate features like wider sidewalks, street trees, and community amenities, in exchange for additional density above what was required.

Ms. Firehock said that this approach would help ensure that their development did not just focus on packing in people, but also on creating a high-quality community that benefited everyone. She said that she could think of a few places that were so dense that they felt claustrophobic. She said that she grew up in Washington, D.C., so she was used to cityscapes, and although D.C. was not the densest city, it was denser than here. She said that she would like them to discuss those kinds of performance standards or form-based code at some point.

Ms. Firehock said that she was reminded of the in-fill density bonus they had created in Charlottesville, which allowed developers to include low-impact development features like bioswales, green roofs, and stormwater management in exchange for extra units. She said that they were trying to get more stormwater management on already-developed sites, and developers were willing to invest in these features if it meant a bit more profit. She said that she thought they could find similar opportunities for collaboration. She said that as they moved forward with increasing density, she believed the County would need to take a more active role in providing amenities and infrastructure that supported a healthy community.

Ms. Firehock said that they could not rely solely on developers to provide necessary amenities, such as parks, connector roads, and community centers. She said that the County needed to spend money on parks, sidewalks, and community centers, as these were the things that would make a community truly desirable to developers. She said that their current proffer system relied too heavily on the development community to proffer these amenities, and it was not working. She said that the County needed to rethink their approach and find a way to balance the needs of developers with the needs of their community. She said that the current system was not healthy for developers nor for the County.

Mr. Moore said that his comments were similar to Ms. Firehock's and Mr. Bivins' remarks. He said that he would be interested in discussing performance standards as they related to incentivizing density, particularly in terms of the seventh Big Move related to social and cultural connectivity, and what they were doing to address those needs. He said that as a tool, he thought the AC44 Analysis Tool was a valuable addition, especially when paired with narrative and analysis of the entrance corridor implications and other factors.

Mr. Moore said that having both gross and net numbers was beneficial, and it was reasonable to have those numbers at their disposal. He said that when they saw projects that fell short of the maximum capacity, they could at least point it out and have a conversation as to why that happened. He said that as far as incentives for achieving higher levels of density and achieving the maximum theoretical build-out, he would like to emphasize that the simplest incentive for developers was more profit resulting from building more homes. He said that however, he was not a large-scale developer so he may be missing some of the nuances.

Mr. Moore said that he had mentioned before that one of the key factor’s developers considered was the lengthy and uncertain process of obtaining permissions for rezoning or planned neighborhood development. He said that it could be a costly and time-consuming process, and there was always a risk that the Board may deny the request. He said that he thought it was worth exploring simpler, quicker solutions that could be baked into policy, rather than relying on a complex three-year process. He said that there was some earlier discussion about

redevelopment, and he thought there may be parcels that could be redeveloped that were not currently listed in the analysis.

Mr. Moore said that he was thinking about this within the context of his own neighborhood, where they had single-family homes on small parcels of land. He said that they could potentially build more homes, but it would require rezoning and significant investment. He said that he was wondering how expensive home values would have to get in order for them to consider that type of redevelopment, and whether they would ever want them to get that high. He said that he would rather move more quickly.

Mr. Moore said that Charlottesville did a big up-zoning in the City by looking ahead and accepting that they should just allow it. He said that although the County was beginning their Zoning Modernization discussions, they had not broached that subject much yet. He said that regarding the colors on the maps, he missed burnt sienna crayons but agreed that they did not have to include every color on every map. He said that however, he did want them to consider this as a tool they had been discussing for market solutions to this issue.

Mr. Moore said that there were various options they could explore to encourage denser developments in their neighborhoods. He said that they were trying to build density in everyone's backyard within the development area. He said that in that regard, he did not think market solutions alone would be sufficient, but certainly they must be part of their approach. He said that furthermore, he had emphasized that they needed every tool available to address this issue, but they only ever really talked about one and occasionally some others.

Mr. Moore said that he would like to see the County-owned land that could have potential for redevelopment. He said that he would also like to see what land the County could own with investment, potentially for social housing or public spaces and green spaces. He said that these conversations would allow them to play an active role in this situation and think about what a mixed economy approach to housing would look like, alongside a market rate market. He said that he believed that moving towards this kind of mixed economy approach could help them better serve the broad demographics and people who worked for wages.

Mr. Bivins said that he was very familiar with the census, and they were not out of sync with the rest of the state and the country. He said that currently, they had a 66% owner-occupied rate for housing. He said that as an economist, he was not sure how to break down that curve. He said that he did not think things were broken; rather, what was happening was that things had changed to some extent, and their community was resistant to change.

Mr. Bivins said that what he thought was more accurate was that they were struggling to accept the changing landscape. He said that the typical house price in their area was around $600,000, and they did not have the kinds of locally available jobs that would allow most people to afford that kind of house. He said that regarding the interest rate mentioned by Mr. Clayborne, he thought it was a red herring. He said that when people of his own generation bought their houses, the interest rates were 13%.

Mr. Clayborne said that houses cost $50,000 at that time.

Mr. Bivins said that it did not matter. He said that what still mattered was the percentage of income that went towards housing costs, regardless of the specific figure. He said that whether it was $59,000 or not, it was still the amount coming out of their pocket to afford a house. He said that he did not make a significant income in the 1980s, but he still managed to buy a house. He said that he believed they had an artificial economy in Charlottesville and Albemarle built on a complex web of wealth matrices that set them apart from the rest of the world.

Mr. Bivins said that he thought it was essential to consider their demographics, salaries, and typical household incomes. He said that they were significantly above Virginia and the national average in many areas. He said that he thought what they were really fighting with was whether Albemarle County could be more proactive in addressing the housing shortage.

Mr. Bivins said that he believed they needed to work towards creating more affordable housing options. He said that one of the things that set them apart was their tendency to follow national trends, but not when it came to income and investment. He said the fact was, many people in this area relied on investments for their livelihood, and that was not something they could change. He said that ultimately, the market would respond to what people expected in terms of returns.

Mr. Missel said that to clarify what he believed Mr. Bivins was saying, they were discussing the Development Area as a diminishing resource, and Mr. Bivins was suggesting that market conditions would ultimately determine how well they could achieve infill.

Mr. Bivins said that yes, and the County's ability to become an active agent in this matter was also dependent on that. He said that otherwise, the market would continue without that intervention. He said that currently, salaries in their organization and the area were significantly lower than the average rent of apartments in their area.

Mr. Bivins said that his point was that even if they increased the number of housing units, he did not believe they would be able to provide affordable housing options for the average person with a typical job that was not white-collar or professional. He said that it appeared that they were locked into a cycle that required them to find alternative solutions, and it would not be solely through adding more houses.

Mr. Missel asked staff what their hopes were in terms of next steps after receiving feedback from the Commission.

Mr. Newberry said that he believed the immediate next steps were preparing for the Board discussion on January 21. He said that Mr. Bivins would be pleased to know that the information would be analyzed through a market-based lens using CoStar data. He said that the other next step was to determine what the next staff report should look like for future development proposals.

Mr. Newberry said that they needed to integrate this feedback and their conversation into meaningful information that could be used for future decision-making. He said that he assumed that his colleagues on staff had ideas on even larger and more meaningful steps, but he believed that was where they should start.

Mr. Murray said that he wanted to reiterate some points that Ms. Firehock had previously mentioned. He said that he understood that right now they were focusing on gathering a few key metrics to advance the conversation. He said that this was a good step in the right direction. He said that as he had mentioned earlier, he believed they needed to incorporate metrics that effectively captured redevelopment.

Mr. Murray said that in the context of livability, it would be beneficial to have metrics such as the distance to a public park, the percentage of green space within tree cover within an area, and environmental factors like impervious surface. He said that these metrics would provide valuable insights, and he hoped they could continue to work towards incorporating them into their analysis. He said that although staff limitations may have hindered their progress at this time, he hoped they did not lose sight of this goal.

Mr. Missel said that in closing, he would like to summarize a few key points they had discussed. He said that he agreed that a heat map concept would be particularly helpful in identifying prime

areas for development and understanding how it was influenced by other resources. He said that incentives were also a major topic of discussion, so he believed it was essential to consider them as a next step. He said that exploring opportunities for County involvement, market influences, and analyzing trends that may extend beyond 2022 were all important considerations. He said that while this was not an exhaustive list, it covered the high-level topics they had touched upon in discussing the Land Use Build-out Analysis.

Recess/Reconvene 6:00 p.m.

The Commission recessed and reconvened at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Missel called the meeting back to order.

Mr. Missel established a quorum.

Public Comment on matters pending before the Commission but not listed for a Public Hearing on this agenda

Mr. Missel read the rules for public comment.

Diantha McKeel, Jack Jouett District, said that because they were nearing the end of their meetings in 2025, and because she was retiring from public office, she was before the Planning Commission tonight to express her gratitude to Mr. Bivins for his exceptional service on the Albemarle County Planning Commission. She said that during his eight years of dedicated service to the residents of the Jack Jouett District and the entire Albemarle County community, Mr. Bivins had consistently modeled professionalism and integrity while speaking truth to power.

Ms. McKeel said that she thanked Mr. Bivins for the site visits he made in anticipation of development proposals and rezonings. She said that she knew he had visited every one of those sites and often walked the entire property. She said that she thanked him for all the time they spent together meeting with community members regarding proposals that were destined to come before both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. She said that she always learned from his insightful questions.

Ms. McKeel said that his comments and suggested changes to the Comp Plan were thoughtful and well-reasons and often quoted by the Board of Supervisors members. She said that they shared a vision to create a more education-centric space for students on the Lambs Lane campus, and she appreciated the effort he invested during the master plan process. She said that he had been a friend, mentor, and advisor, and the Jack Jouett District and the County had benefited from his leadership. She said that she thanked him for his distinguished service and lasting contributions.

[1:30:15 Speaker first name?] Williamson said that her comments were regarding the Stillhouse Mountain property. She said that she was an adjacent neighbor and represented the Colthurst homeowners, who were located just west of this property. She said that her house was situated at the lowest elevation, which meant she received all the runoff from the neighborhood. She said that she also had a stormwater detention pond in her backyard from the early days.

Ms. Williamson said that this home had only ever been owned by two families. She said that she was previously an architect and felt protective of the old, beautiful structures in their community, and this house was nearly 100 years old. She said that two families had cared for it and preserved the land, and she believed it was an architectural gem with incredible value. She said that if this property were to be developed, it would be a challenging and costly endeavor. She said that the

terrain was rocky, and most of the property was steep slopes, with the exception of the home and a small area in the valley.

Ms. Williamson said that additionally, they were surrounded by schools, including St. Anne's on one side and the future Field School on the other. She said that what concerned her most was the potential impact of the water runoff. She said that if the entire property were to be denuded and prepared for development, it would result in a significant water event for Colthurst and their neighborhood, and they would be deeply unhappy about it.

Robby Noll said that the McLeans had introduced him to the project a few months ago to assess the feasibility of development in this area. He said that to clarify his role, he was the principal owner of the Building Management Company, and they had experience with development in both the City and the County, as well as enrichment projects in the valley. He said that he was well-versed in the entitlement process here in the County.

Mr. Noll said that he had spent some time researching the infrastructure requirements and potential building sites, and he believed Scott Clark's report was thorough and accurate. He said that in fact, he thought 25 units or lots might be generous in terms of what the parcel could contain, considering the practicality of the site. He said that however, upon breaking down the costs, they found that the grading, infrastructure, road construction, stormwater management, and utilities would be extremely expensive.

Mr. Noll said that furthermore, the unknown presence of rock in the area would be a significant concern, as they would need to conduct geotechnical reports to assess its impact. He said that their estimates suggested an overall burden per lot of approximately $500,000, which would make it prohibitively expensive for them to consider development. He said that he would like to touch on the viewshed as well.

Mr. Noll said that having lived in Charlottesville for 35 years, he understood there were certain homes visible from various ridgelines. He said that he lived in the Bellair neighborhood, and in the winter, he could see that house, along with some other homes, and he must admit that he thought it would be a shame to dilute the beauty of that home from his personal perspective.

Chris McLean said that he believed the rest of the speakers were family members who owned this property. He said that it was difficult to talk about this property because his parents had owned this house for 40 years. He said that they had been opposed to the bypass proposal, which may not resonate positively, but they knew that building a road through this property and constructing a retaining wall to deflect noise would be devastating to the County. He said that all of his family were born and raised there, and he had lived here for 56 years and attended the University of Virginia.

Mr. McLean said that many of his friends who had returned to this community had said how much they loved this place and how much they would love to live in such a beautiful place. He said that the County had done a great job maintaining the important viewsheds in the County. He said that he would like to mention the letter from Sabina Martin, who represented Real Estate 3, highlighting the negative impact that the view sheds would have on property values. He said that he had been coming in today from a friend's house who was taking over childcare for him. He said that passing through Garth Road, he noticed the prominent side of the mountain and the neighborhoods that would be affected.

Mr. McLean said that if one visited Cherry Hill, Pantops, Albemarle High School, or Earlysville Road, they would see the full potential impact of developing this property. He said that his mother's dying wish was to have the property placed under easement. He said that unfortunately, they could not do that without the County's approval, which must align with the Comprehensive

Plan. He said that they were here tonight to request approval, and he believed Mr. Clark had done a great job of summarizing this item in his report.

Mr. McLean said that there was an extensive list of locations from where this property could be seen, and he did not believe they would have an argument other than an emotional one if this were a flat piece of property. He said that however, the prominent viewshed and the water supply going into Ivy Creek and the reservoir were major issues related to this parcel, so he appreciated the Commission's time and support for this item.

Lee McLean said that the last time he was in this auditorium, he was walking across the stage during his high school graduation in 1967. He said that he was born and raised in Charlottesville. He said that he had commercial and residential properties in the area that he paid taxes on and was currently a co-trustee of the McLean Family Trust, which owned the 2700 Barracks Road property. He said that he was here to support Mr. Clark's recommendation for 2700 Barracks Road to be eligible for a conservation easement.

Mr. McLean said that their father, Copley McLean, was accustomed to buying and selling real estate to support his family of seven children and his wife, Peggy. He said that after purchasing 2700 Barracks Road in 1984, he and his wife enjoyed the property of their dreams, using it for family gatherings, including weddings, receptions, class reunions, and family reunions. He said that they spent the rest of their lives on the property, with their dad passing away in 2011. He said that their mother passed away just eight days shy of her 102nd birthday, on December 3 of last year. He said that their mother expressed her wish for the property not to be developed on multiple occasions.

Mr. McLean said that their family was fortunate that their brother Chris and his wife Ashley were purchasing the property and had the goal and commitment to pursue a conservation easement to fulfill their mom's wish as well as their convictions. He said that in addition to the recommendations from Mr. Clark and the support of their neighbors, there was a 15-acre piece of undeveloped property located near the north side of the driveway of 2700 Barracks that bordered the water tower property on the upper side, and he understood that the owners had been working on a plan for a residential development.

Mr. McLean said that given this, the importance of protecting the approximately 32.5 acres under consideration became even more meaningful. He said that he hoped the Board would support the recommendations of Mr. Clark, which would benefit the current and future generations of Albemarle County by preserving a unique green space for current and future generations.

Peter McLean said that as a member of the Lane High School class of 1974, he was the last graduating class, and it was good to be back in this space. He said that he also wanted to thank the Commission for allowing him to share his thoughts regarding Stillhouse Mountain. He said that he had sent his thoughts to them the previous day, as well.

Mr. McLean said that as an ecologist with a deep love for black bears and osprey, before and after having studied these species as an environmental science major and in graduate school at the College of William & Mary and the University of Tennessee, he knew that black bears and osprey and all their kin, would be celebrating the preservation of more land and life-giving water and associated resources in their natural state, one closer to that which sustained wildlife and Native Americans 400 years ago and before.

Mr. McLean said that whether it be roads, shops, and homes, and all that comes with rampant development, their diminishing landscape deserved otherwise; nothing less than protection and preservation. He said that their ultimate challenge of climate change, which had defined the 21st century more than any other, meant they must do everything they could to save land and water

resources, especially trees and other photosynthesizers, as well as all that contributed to the natural cycles that sustained all life.

Mr. McLean said that they were thankful for the Commission's considering the well-being of Stillhouse Mountain's residents, human and otherwise. He said that he hoped the conservation and preservation of this land epitomized the responsible treatment of natural resources in their beautiful Albemarle County and beyond. He said that their neighbors in Colthurst, Belfield, and the Colonnades agreed that Stillhouse Mountain should be preserved, protecting its waters, mature trees, and vast viewshed. He said that Thomas Jefferson, a mountaintop dweller himself, would appreciate their consideration of the welfare of others, now and for generations to come.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Clayborne seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (7-0).

Requesting Deferral

ZMA202400005 Belvedere Amendment

Mr. Moore motioned that the Planning Commission defer ZMA202400005 Belvedere Amendment to the date specific January 13, 2026. Mr. Carrazana seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (7-0).

ZTA202300006; STA202300003; WPTA00003 AND OTA202400002 Riparian Buffer Protection Standards

Mr. Clayborne motioned that the Planning Commission defer ZTA202300006; STA202300003; WPTA00003 AND OTA202400002 Riparian Buffer Protection Standards to the date specific January 27, 2026. Ms. Firehock seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (7-0).

Presentation

CCP-2025-00001 Stillhouse Mountain

Scott Clark, Conservation Program Manager, said that this item was a request for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan review for a potential conservation easement, located at Tax Map 60 Parcel 66 just west of the Colonnades. He said that as the Commission had heard earlier, the landowners were seeking to place a conservation easement on the property. He said that a more detailed aerial view was provided, which showed how the land lay on the ridge between Colthurst and the Colonnades. He said that the access was at the northeast corner, where it met Barracks Road.

Mr. Clark said that by Virginia law, conservation easements must be in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan for the locality in which they were located. He said that localities often received requests from conservation easement holders or landowners seeking confirmation that their potential easement aligned with the locality's Comprehensive Plan. He said that in most cases, the answer was yes, as the properties were located within areas designated as rural areas or parks and green space within a development area. He said that in nearly ever7 case, staff could easily determine whether or not the request aligned with the Comp Plan.

Mr. Clark said that, however, this was the first instance he had encountered where it was not immediately clear from the map. He said that the reason for this was that approximately one-third of the property was in the Rural Area, where the Comp Plan designated easements as part of the

land use approach for conservation in rural areas. He said that however, about two-thirds of this parcel was in the Development Area. He said that the boundary between these areas followed the top of the ridge, the western portion extended to the South Fork Reservoir, which was part of the public water supply.

Mr. Clark said that the eastern side did not flow into the reservoir and was designated as part of the Development Area. He said that looking within the Development Area portion, it was further divided into different land use designations. He said that the green area was part of the Parks and Green Systems designation from the Western Neighborhoods' Master Plan land use map. He said that the blue areas were Institutional, an old designation from the US-29 Western Bypass plans, which was no longer part of the County's transportation plan. He said that the yellow area was designated as Neighborhood Density Residential, allowing two to six units per acre.

Mr. Clark said that the remaining portions of the property were in the Rural Area, with white hatches indicating critical slopes and a purple shape encircling most of the property, which was part of the Mountain Protection Area from the Comprehensive Plan. He said that this area was designated for protection of water supply, erosion control, habitat, and scenic reasons. He said that a large portion of the property was in fact in the Mountain Protection Area.

Mr. Clark said that in breaking down the designations of the property, approximately 77% was located in Rural Areas or Parks and Green Systems, while the remainder was in Neighborhood Density and Institutional designations. He said that about 20 acres, or roughly half of the property, fell within the Mountain Protection Area. He said that instead of the usual single designation for a Rural Area with perhaps one or two additional specific environmental designations, they had five different designations requesting information on compliance.

Mr. Clark said that this raised the question about the remaining 22% of the property, which was not designated as Rural Area or Parks and Green Systems. He said that if the property, currently zoned entirely R-1, were to be developed, it had a theoretical potential of approximately 36 lots. He said that however, due to the restrictions of slopes and limited access, the actual number of achievable lots could be between 20 and 25, ultimately constrained by the slopes.

Mr. Clark said that furthermore, some portions of the property lacked sewer service, and therefore would require septic fields, further limiting the number of buildable lots. He said that nevertheless, some degree of R-1 development was possible across the entirety of the property. He said that in terms of the Comprehensive Plan, the issue was that for a third of the property, residential development was not suitable in the Rural Area, and on the east side of the property in the Development Area, the large block of Parks and Green Systems would be broken up into individual residential lots, which was not ideal for conservation of green systems.

Mr. Clark said that on the other hand, if the property were rezoned more in line with the Comp Plan designations, rather than using the R-1 zoning, they had four areas designated for Neighborhood Density Residential, two of which were impractically small to use as part of a development on this property. He said that the two larger areas, one at the top of the ridge and one at the southern end, could theoretically have 25 or so units.

Mr. Clark said that the most buildable areas were within the Mountain Protection Area, and one of the more buildable areas at the south end was located as far as it could be from the only practical access. He said that this resulted in mixed compliance with the Comp Plan goals, as some development was possible in line with residential development goals, but it would also impact the Mountain Protection Area.

Mr. Clark said that finally, he would like to note the several areas in the Comp Plan where this proposal for a conservation easement was in compliance with policies related to protecting

mountain resources, critical slopes, scenic resources, natural resources, and preservation of natural resources, specifically those shown for preservation on master plan land use plans.

Mr. Clark said that staff found two favorable factors with this request. He said that the first was that the majority of the property was designated as Rural Area or Parks and Green Systems, and the second was that limiting development within the remainder of the property helped to protect water quality impacts and scenic impacts in line with the Mountain Protection Plan. He said that therefore, staff recommended that the Commission find the proposed conservation easement to be in compliance with the Comp Plan.

Mr. Clark said that he had covered a lot of ground, and he was happy to take any questions the Commissioners may have. He said that after that, he had a couple of motions for their consideration. He said that this was not a public hearing, but rather an opportunity for the Commission to make a finding.

Mr. Moore said that he appreciated that this item presented an opportunity to learn some local history, and he appreciated the stories shared about the McLeans. He said that he thought it was fascinating that Mr. McLean was an important medical professional in their community as well as a stand-up citizen, and that Mrs. McLean helped administer a school for African American children during Massive Resistance. He said that it was truly heartening to see the impact of engaged citizens like them. He said that he was also glad to hear that the family was committed to preserving the property and maintaining their mountain home.

Mr. Moore said that he did have questions and some comments that he would like to address. He said that as a reminder, they were not currently reviewing a proposal for development but rather using this as a hypothetical scenario to prevent it from happening. He said that he had some questions regarding the theoretical maximum build-out, specifically whether they were using gross or net density for the acreage, and how that might impact their discussion. He said that another key question was whether a property owner was prohibited from building in areas that were designated Parks and Green Systems.

Mr. Clark said that the majority of that area was in preserved slopes, so it would require a significant rezoning process to change that.

Mr. Moore asked if the Green Systems designation itself prevented development in that area.

Mr. McDermott said that in general, as long as development did not negatively impact the environmental resources they protected, development in those areas would be allowed.

Mr. Moore said that he was doing a quick calculation, and it appeared that approximately 25 acres, including the neighborhood seven portion, neighborhood residential density area, and the institutional area. He said that if they considered the FLUM map of six units per acre, this would translate to 150 homes. He said that he acknowledged that this was a drastic hypothetical scenario. He said that he fully recognized it would not be in line with the family's current plans nor was he suggesting that they should do that. He said that however, he wanted to note that this number seemed hypothetically correct for development to accommodate future generations as their planning should.

Mr. Moore said that he would also like to discuss conservation easements more broadly. He said that he would like to ask about the purpose and function of conservation easements today.

Mr. Clark said that under Virginia law, there were two types of easements: conservation easements and open space easements. He said that they were essentially the same thing, differing only in the type of organization that held them. He said that governmental organizations

held conservation easements, while non-governmental organizations held open space easements. He said that both were tools used to implement the Comprehensive Plan and protect resources identified as important in the Plan. He said that as a result, both state codes required compliance with these easements, and they could not be placed anywhere without proper authorization.

Mr. Moore said that water was a particularly important consideration, obviously.

Ms. Firehock said that there was a valuable resource being protected, such as beautiful vistas or a high-value wildlife habitat. She said that this would be included in the easement.

Mr. Moore asked if, in general, conservation easements in the County would allow outdoorsmen to utilize the property.

Mr. Clark said that conservation easements did not require public access, but they did not necessarily prevent it either. He said that it was a separate question from overall Comprehensive Plan compliance, but it was possible to have public parks that were already under easement. He said that they already had one, the Patricia Byrom Forest Park, which was located adjacent to a national park. He said that this park was currently under a County-held easement and had been later donated to the County as a park. He said that this example illustrated that easements could accommodate public access, but they did not necessarily supply it.

Mr. Moore said that he recently read an article from the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), which highlighted their achievement of having a quarter of the County's land under conservation easements. This was a notable statistic, but almost entirely all of those were private land.

Mr. Clark said that yes, they were almost entirely privately owned.

Mr. Moore asked if conservation easements prevented water pollution from agricultural sources, such as fertilizer and cow manure, which were among the primary pollutants affecting their water system.

Mr. Clark said that it depended on the specific easement. He said that they were not uniform, and every easement-holding organization had its own unique goals, which could range from preventing subdivision and allowing agriculture to continue, to protecting riparian buffers, forest areas, or historic sites. He said that the specifics of an easement often went beyond simply limiting the number of lots or houses, as they also established wooded areas, riparian buffers, and other protective measures tailored to the individual goals of the locality, the easement holder, and the landowner.

Mr. Moore said that he did not realize the variability in those conservation easements. He said that he appreciated the clarifying information. He said that he was also curious about their County's policy regarding tax breaks that landowners received when they had a conservation easement.

Mr. Clark said that he was not an expert on the tax end of the matter, but he would clarify that easement properties in Albemarle were not included in the Land Use Tax Program. He said that instead, they were taxed at the full rate based on their reduced value. He said that typically, landowners who went through the easement process would have an appraisal. He said that this information was unrelated to the current discussion, but they would have an appraisal that showed the before and after easement value in a similar process. He said that when the County conducted its assessments, it would calculate the value of the property based on its remaining development potential. He said that consequently, the reduced value was the basis for the taxation.

Mr. Moore said that he recalled the tax breaks for conservation easements were around 50%, but he could be wrong.

Mr. Clark said that he was not sure that it was a single number. He said that he believed it depended on the remaining development potential of the property.

Mr. Moore said that he understood; he was considering the budgetary implications of having 25% of the County land in conservation easements and the reduced tax revenue that resulted from that. He said that when they had so much infrastructure to build, it was something he thought about. He said that he greatly appreciated Mr. Clark's answers to his questions.

Mr. Bivins said that notwithstanding the wonderful family that owned this property, the primary issue for him had always been that this was an owner-initiated process. He said that the owner had the freedom to decide whether or not to develop the land and could choose to leave it undeveloped for as long as they wished. He said that he understood that the mother had requested this process, and he appreciated the effort.

Mr. Bivins said that this property was unique in that it had difficult terrain that would be challenging to develop into housing. He said that it was not comparable to converting a flat farm into a subdivision; this was a mountain that had limited future development potential. He said that usually, these conservation easements were located in the Rural Area, so redevelopment was never really a question. He said that the main issue was whether this was an opportunity for the County to benefit from this individually initiated tax reduction, which was a reasonable request under the code.

Mr. Bivins said that this was a particularly unique situation since the property was split between Rural and Development Areas, but the question remained whether the County should be involved in such situations, as they could have an impact on their taxable land. He said that unlike Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFD), which had a review process, there was no review process for conservation easements. He said that once a property was established in an easement, it remained that way forever, and any changes would require a full review and potentially result in avoided taxes.

Mr. Bivins said that his main concern was that this was another situation where the County would have an impact on its tax base without a thorough discussion. He said that to clarify, he was in favor of this proposal. He said that however, he also wanted to express his reservations regarding the County's process for these easements. He said that he had concerns about the applicants that he had when he reviewed their application. He said that specifically, he was troubled to learn that the brother and mother were deceased, so he was wondering who owned this piece of property, as the trustee of the father's trust.

Mr. Bivins said that he understood that this would change when the transition was made, and the property would be transferred into the applicant's and their spouse's names. He said that this aspect of the application did raise concerns for him. He said that he was focusing on the issue of conservation easements being used as a means for individuals to transfer funds out of the County's coffers without direct County involvement. He said that that did not feel right to him.

Ms. Firehock said that it was not just that the conservation easement provided a benefit to the landowner. She said that the reason they had a conservation easement program was to motivate people to do things that ultimately benefited the public. She said that Mr. Bivins was framing this issue in that the conservation easement would reduce the tax base of the County. She said that the public good side of the equation was the protection of steep slopes, water quality, watersheds, wildlife, and other values clearly stated in the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Firehock said that to answer Mr. Moore's question further, she was on the board of an organization that specifically held riparian easements to provide public access to rivers. She said that they built ramps, provided public camping, and often bought land under threat of development to hold until the locality could scrape up the money 20 years later or never. She said that they had held easements for multiple decades to maintain that public access. She said that there were various types of easement-holding organizations, including the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, which helped landowners get a break.

Ms. Firehock said that in situations where rural landowners could not afford to pay taxes on their land, they had a way for them to avoid taxes and remain in farming. She said that some landowners were impoverished and could sell tax credits to others who needed them. She said that it was a system that allowed rural agricultural landowners to afford to remain in farming when land values escalated, not because they wanted to get out of farming. She said that she wanted to balance the scales in this conversation, and she thought the points were well taken in terms of considering the development potential of this property in terms of gross density.

Ms. Firehock said that she had asked Mr. Clark before this meeting why they were hearing this item, as she had never seen something like this come before the Commission, and it was indeed because of all the various zoning designations on it. She said that in general, she did not think there should be conservation easements in the middle of Development Areas. She said that for example, there was one in Staunton that was inside the City limits, with a bunch of cows and a lady's house, and it did not have any particular environmental value; she would have voted against that one.

Ms. Firehock said that however, in this case, the steep slopes made it a poor development site. She said that she thought all of Mr. Moore's points were worthy in questioning whether they always just supported conservation easements. She said that just because something was in a conservation easement did not necessarily mean it was the right location, so they must evaluate them on those merits.

Ms. Firehock said that however, when considering the environmental constraints associated with this particular easement, she did not think it would be suitable for development, particularly on that slope. She said that she understood Mr. Moore's argument but wanted to note the reasons why easements were put on land.

Mr. Moore said that to clarify, he acknowledged he was building a strong straw man argument, but it was not at all related to this current proposal. He said that he thought this site was well-suited to a conservation easement. He said that he had Countywide concerns that they had a substantial number of conservation easements, and he questioned the notion that they should continue to encourage more voluntary measures and conservation easements. He said that on the whole, he did not know if he could agree with that.

Ms. Firehock said that she was not saying all land should be in conservation, either. She said that she recalled one farmer told her directly that "perpetuity was a damn long time," so she completely understood that conservation easements were not the right tool for everyone.

Mr. Bivins said that if they had a commitment to supporting small, family-based agriculture, and not commercial or large corporate agriculture, he believed the County should be actively involved in promoting that type of agriculture. He said that over the years, he had noticed that small farmers and family farmers who had put their land in conservation easements had sold the easements, but unfortunately, there was little to no support to help them succeed as farmers.

Mr. Bivins said that the first step out was the conservation easement, and the second step that would have been helpful was to provide them with better farming practices and resources. He

said that he thought as a community, when they were talking about being intentional, they needed to be more actively involved and not just take a passive approach. He said that they should be taking proactive steps to support and empower these small farmers, rather than simply allowing things to happen.

Ms. Firehock said that they had the Soil and Water Conservation District and numerous active local farmer programs. She said that she thought they were speaking at extremes this evening. She said that there were indeed many great programs for young farmers. She said that the County's Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) program specifically looked at development rights, as well as the need for farmers to afford keeping the land and whether the ACE program would tip the balance for them to continue in agriculture.

Ms. Firehock said that the average farmer was approaching 60 years old and sometimes lacked heirs to inherit the land. She said that another significant reason was affordability. She said that Albemarle's land was particularly expensive, which was a stark contrast to other agricultural areas, such as Buckingham or Louisa.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to clarify that conservation easements did not reduce the County's tax revenue. He said that furthermore, in most cases like this, properties were already under land use valuation. He asked Mr. Clark if this property was already under land use valuation.

Mr. Clark said that he believed it was not because it was located in R-1 zoning and was largely in the Development Area. He said that additionally, he did not believe it would qualify under value taxation.

Mr. Murray said that his understanding was that being in the Development Area did not automatically disqualify a parcel from being put in land use so long as they met the qualifying conditions of forestry.

Mr. Missel said that the applicant had indicated that it currently was in land use.

Mr. Murray said that was his understanding. He said that most of these properties, due to their size, were already in land use valuation. He said that when one put an easement on a property that was in land use, the actual assessment went to the land use value. He said that currently, the difference between the land use value and the assessment value resulted in the County paying money to the City of Charlottesville in revenue sharing on that delta.

Mr. Murray said that therefore, they actually lost money, as they were paying revenue sharing to the City for revenue that they did not collect. He said that this was a crucial point, and it could be a substantial amount of money. He said that across the County, it was millions of dollars. He said that when the easement was placed, the actual value dropped to the land use value, which reduced the amount of money they paid to the City of Charlottesville and revenue sharing for that year and from that point onward. He said that additionally, this affected the formula by which they received money from the state for schools.

Mr. Murray said that the formula did not take into account their revenue sharing, but it did take into account the County's taxable real estate. He said that if their taxable real estate decreased, it would increase the amount of money they received for schools. He said that in terms of that question, he believed it was essential to know that these conservation easements were saving County taxpayers money across the County in a very substantial way.

Mr. Moore said that he would need to see actual figures to understand that. He said that the idea that they were saving more by paying the City less than they would from actual property tax was a bit far-fetched without seeing the actual numbers.

Mr. Murray said that he would have liked to access the County GIS to provide them with the actual amount of money they would be saving on this individual property. He said that however, due to the recent changes to the GIS system, he was unable to retrieve the numbers as he used to. He said that if the County could provide him with those numbers, he believed he could estimate the exact amount of money that would be saved on this property.

Mr. Missel said that he thought this was a great conversation, but they had gone beyond the task at hand. He said that one person he had learned a lot about conservation easements from was Rob McGinnis, and he would like him to present more detailed information to the Planning Commission at a future work session on that topic. He said that he knew that Ms. Firehock and Mr. Murray were likewise well-versed in this field. He said that he would like to just say that he wholeheartedly agreed with Ms. Firehock's comments on this matter, and he thanked her for that.

Mr. Bivins motioned that the Planning Commission recommend that the proposed Conservation Easement CCP202500001 Stillhouse Mountain, was in compliance and substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan, for the reasons identified as favorable in the staff report and discussed by the Planning Commission. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried (6-1). (Bivins, Carrazana, Clayborne, Firehock, Missel, and Murray voted aye; Mr. Moore voted nay)

Committee Reports

Mr. Murray said that he recently attended the Three Notch'd Trail meeting at Western Albemarle, where they presented three different route options and discussed the conditions they were weighing. He said that some routes would take the trail through urban areas, while others would pass through less developed areas. He said that they discussed weighing factors such as the ease of building the trail and its accessibility. He said that it was interesting to see the various considerations being made and the development of the trail.

Mr. Murray said that he also attended the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tech Committee meeting. He said that they recommended moving forward with five Smart Scale projects: US Route 29/Route 250 off-ramp improvements at Barracks Road, US Route 29/Route 250 on-ramp and off-ramp improvements, US Interstate 64/5th Street connections and sidewalk connections, and US Route 29 interchange access and park-and-ride improvements. He said that there was a significant discussion about how to tweak these projects to improve multimodal transportation, particularly in regard to preserving bike connections and improving traffic flow simultaneously.

Mr. Bivins said that they were due to have a report at the Hydraulic 29 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) last evening to hear about the anticipated changes at Charlotte Humphreys Park, which was part of the County's urban park initiative. He said that unfortunately, none of them were able to attend. He said that they were also scheduled to hear about the park at Hillsdale, but they did not have the meeting, unfortunately.

Mr. Missel said that on November 20, the 5th and Avon Street CAC met and primarily reviewed two projects. He said that one of the projects was a prospective storage building planned for the area adjacent to Monticello High School, across the street from the market. He said that there was a vacant piece of land next to the bank, directly across from the Food Lion. He said that the staff report indicated that the community expressed concerns about fencing, lighting, traffic, truck traffic, noise, and visibility.

Mr. Missel said that to be fair, the developer presented a compelling case, taking visibility into consideration. He said that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) would need to review this proposal, as it fell within the entrance corridor. He said that the proposed use did not burden schools, the traffic was limited, and they planned to limit their operating hours to reasonable times.

Mr. Missel said that the other community meeting was regarding the Woolen Mills Industrial Park, scheduled for the Commission to hear next Tuesday. He said that the focus of that proposal was on filling the floodplain. He said that the developer had made some minor modifications to the impacted size of the floodplain and had also invested significant time in new engineering. He said that the Planning Commission would hear about this next week. He said that the developer shared a lot of that information at the community meeting, and the community had expressed similar concerns to those who heard about the proposal previously. He said that he believed the community felt that there was no material change in the application.

Review of Board of Supervisors Meeting: December 3, 2025

Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning, said that the Board's December 3 meeting was relatively light in terms of taking up land use items. He said that the Board had a joint meeting between the School Board, and he encouraged everyone to listen to the recording if they had the opportunity. He said that the meeting provided some interesting insights into the future of schools and the possibility of building new schools. He said that the only land use item on the agenda was the Agricultural Forestal Districts. He said that the Commission had previously reviewed those three District proposals that the Board subsequently approved. He said that these included the Batesville District, the Nortonsville Local District, and the Green Mountain District. He said that the Board had previously agreed with the Planning Commission's findings on the AFDs.

New Business

There was none.

Old Business

There was none.

Items for follow-up

There were none.

Adjournment

At 7:00 p.m., the Commission adjourned to December 16, 2025, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.

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Michael Barnes, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date:
Initials: