

AC44

ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED MM.DD 2025

PART 3: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

DEVELOPMENT AREAS LAND USE

GOAL: Albemarle County's Development Areas will be thriving, walkable, and mixed-use, with a variety of housing types that are connected by multimodal transportation options to goods, services, employment opportunities, and parks and natural areas. Neighborhoods will be green and resilient with tree coverage, protected natural features, and energy-efficient designs. Land use planning in the Development Areas will consider the housing and business needs of current and future community members and will encourage efficient use of land through redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse.

Objective 1: Increase the use of infill, higher-density development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment in the Development Areas.

Objective 2: Increase the number of living-wage jobs and housing units in designated Activity Centers and Employment Districts.

Objective 3: Equitably invest in existing neighborhoods in the Development Areas with increased multimodal connectivity and equitable access to Activity Centers, parks, open space, community facilities and services, and infrastructure improvements while prioritizing underserved communities.

Objective 4: Increase access to nature, green infrastructure, and tree coverage in the Development Areas.



The Woolen Mills project renovated an existing industrial property and converted it to mixed use.

CONTEXT

Since 1971, Albemarle County's Growth Management Policy has successfully protected the Rural Area's character and environmental resources while focusing growth, density, and urbanism in the Development Areas. This policy of concentrating growth in the Development Areas also allows the County to maximize the reach and efficiency of its investments by serving a denser population within a constrained area. Paired with an array of conservation efforts in the Rural Area, the Growth Management Policy balances the needs of an increasing population in the Development Areas with the community's support for agriculture, iconic rural scenery, and protection of drinking watershed and environmental resources in the Rural Area. Of Albemarle County's 726 square miles, 95% of the land area is designated as Rural Area. The Development Areas comprise the remaining 5% of the land area.

Per 2023 U.S. Census estimates, 115,676 people live in the county, with 64,682 people (57.5% of the county's population) living in the Development Areas and the Town of Scottsville – a total area of 37 square miles. By 2044, the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service projects that about 31,000 more people will live in Albemarle County. AC44's approach is to accommodate the majority of these new community members in the Development Areas through the policies and actions described in this Plan.

In the 1990s, a community-wide planning effort led by a steering committee resulted in the adoption of Neighborhood Model Principles intended to create a vibrant urban environment. The Principles served as the foundation for urban design in the Development Areas. AC44 introduces an updated Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and the new concepts of Community Design Guidelines and Activity Centers (discussed in detail in the Community Design Guidelines and Activity sections later in this chapter). These new tools will be critical to creating the dense urban environment envisioned for the Development Areas.

DEVELOPMENT AREAS PRIORITIES

- **Efficient use of limited Development Areas land, including through infill, higher density development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment.**
- **A variety of housing options (e.g., unit types, sizes, owner/rental) throughout the Development Areas.**
- **Redeveloping Activity Centers to create walkable mixed-use nodes.**
- **Providing spaces for current and future employers and businesses, especially in Activity Centers and Employment Districts.**
- **Supporting amenities, recreation, transportation, services, and access to nature.**
- **Balancing density with the protection and restoration of the natural environment.**



The Southwood neighborhood is an inclusive mixed-income community.

MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

Albemarle County is projected to have 31,000 more community members by 2044. This chapter discusses planning for and accommodating this growth and creating high-quality neighborhoods and dense, walkable Activity Centers.

Limited developable land is available:

- Based on the assumptions used in the 2025 Land Use Buildout Analysis, greenfield acres make up only about 6.9% of the land mass in the Development Areas.
- Sufficient land is available to accommodate 20 years of estimated growth within the existing Development Areas when considering future land uses. However, achieving 'full buildout' is dependent on development at the high end of recommended density/intensity of uses.
- Charlottesville's population (46,553 people) lives within 10.27 square miles – a density of 4,533 people per square mile. The population in the County's Development Areas (64,682 people) lives in an area of 37 square miles – a density of 1,748 people per square mile. This comparison suggests there may be infill and redevelopment opportunities in the Development Areas to increase density.
- Additionally, constraining factors such as the cost of land, physical site constraints, and infrastructure access will limit buildout.

Recent new developments have provided a wider variety of housing choices and a walkable/mixed use product, but there is room for improvement:

- Recent rezonings have been approved at about 58% of the maximum density recommended density by the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.
- Between 2012 and 2022, about 39% of the total housing units built in the Development Areas were multi-family units, followed by single-family detached (32%) and single-family attached/townhouses (28%), according to analysis by County staff.

Reusing existing parking lots and decreasing parking requirements increases land available for housing and other uses:

- Roughly 25% of the acreage in Activity Centers contains surface parking that could be repurposed.
- A 2023 study by the Rutgers Center for Real Estate ('How Much Is Enough? Parking Usage in New Jersey Rental Units') found that lowering mandated parking requirements resulted in lower initial construction costs and ongoing operating costs for residential developments, allowing reduced rents as compared to more typical 'over-parked' residential developments.

A denser form of development protects the natural environment while supporting climate action goals, community resilience, and the Growth Management Policy:

- As the community grows, encouraging greater density in the Development Areas will lead to a lighter environmental footprint per household and lower transportation emissions, as compared with less compact and more sprawling developments.
- Tree coverage varies significantly across neighborhoods and census tracts, ranging from around 12% to over 60%. More tree coverage is needed to reduce the urban heat island effect, provide shade (including along walking routes), and remove carbon dioxide emissions.

DID YOU KNOW?

The capacity of the Development Areas is not static. AC44, the County's Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP), and Housing Albemarle include strategies and actions to increase the capacity of the Development Areas by encouraging infill, higher-density development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment.

Examples include:

- Removing barriers from the Zoning Ordinance, including a reduction or elimination of vehicle parking standards. (AC44, Development Areas Land Use Chapter [DALU], Objectives 1.1 and 2.1)
- Establishing incentives and identifying opportunities for public-private partnerships to support redevelopment of underused areas, including affordable rental and for-sale housing. (AC44, DALU Objective 1.7; Housing Albemarle Strategies 2B and 3B)
- Identifying and funding multimodal transportation facilities, public parks and plazas, and other public infrastructure, especially in Activity Centers. (AC44, DALU, Objective 2.4)
- Updating the County's residential bonus density requirements to remove the minimum lot size and street frontage requirements. (AC44, DALU, Objective 2.3)
- Partnering with developers and utility providers to improve market readiness of available sites. (EDSP, Strategy 5.2)





Upper image: the Belvedere neighborhood; lower image: walkable streetscape at The Shops at Stonefield.

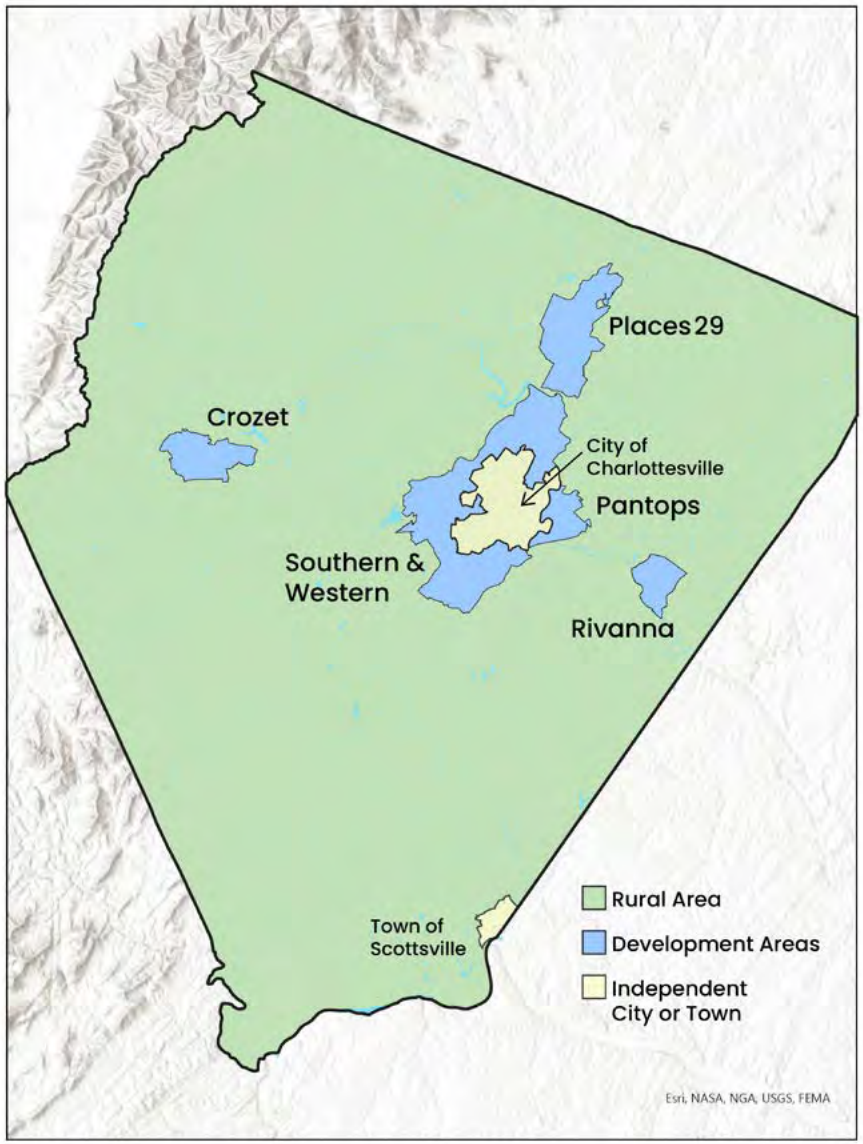
ESTABLISHING THE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

To accommodate projected growth, the Development Areas are established as defined areas in Albemarle County to promote density and mixtures of uses supported by public water and sewer infrastructure, multimodal transportation networks, public parks, and public safety services. In AC44, the areas of Places 29, Pantops, the Southern and Western areas, Crozet, the Village of Rivanna, and the Town of Scottsville (shown on the map on this page) are designated as the County's Development Areas.

Per Virginia State Code (§ 15.2-2223.1), any locality may amend its Comprehensive Plan to incorporate one or more Urban Development Areas (UDAs). Like the County's Development Areas, UDAs are areas that the State recognizes as appropriate for higher-density development supported by public utilities and infrastructure. State programs, such as the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) SMART SCALE program, fund improvements in UDAs. For the purposes of the State Code, all Development Areas and the Town of Scottsville are designated as UDAs in Albemarle County.

Each Development Area has its own Area Plan with recommendations for land use, transportation, parks/recreation, and natural areas.

General development guidelines for all Development Areas are contained in the Community Design Guidelines (formerly the Neighborhood Model Principles).



County Development Areas, labeled by Area Plan title.

PUTTING THE LAND USE TOOLS TOGETHER

Four land use tools – Land Use Categories, the Future Land Use Map, Community Design Guidelines, and Activity Centers/ Employment Districts – work together to guide future development and transportation planning in the Development Areas. A brief overview of these tools is below. The following sections of AC44 provide an in-depth explanation of the tools and how they are applied.

Land Use Categories: This tool describes the type of new residential and non-residential uses the County expects as well as density and intensity of these uses. The second tool places these Land Use Categories onto a **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**. The map designates areas to prioritize the location of housing, businesses, and industry.

Community Design Guidelines: These guidelines establish urban design goals for subdivision and street layouts, building placements, parks and open spaces, and many other design elements. The Guidelines seek to create a high-quality, walkable urban environment to attract people to the Development Areas. The Guidelines are founded on the Neighborhood Model Principles and clarified to reflect best management practices and lessons learned since the adoption of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

Activity Centers and Employment Districts: Higher densities and intensities of uses are expected in these locations to create walkable, mixed-use nodes or major employment hubs.

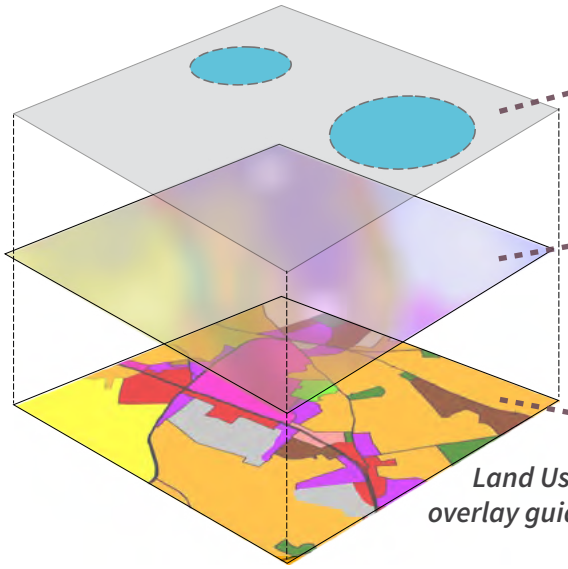
When the plans for future transportation systems are laid on top of the map of Activity Centers and Employment Districts, the intent is to connect these areas with a variety of transportation options so community members can easily move within and between them.



Multi-use paths create valuable connections between residential neighborhoods and nearby destinations.

Together, these tools work to build a community with more destinations, housing types, and amenities. The graphic on the next page illustrates how these land use tools work together to provide guidance for new development and redevelopment.

ACTIVITY CENTERS & LAND USE GUIDANCE

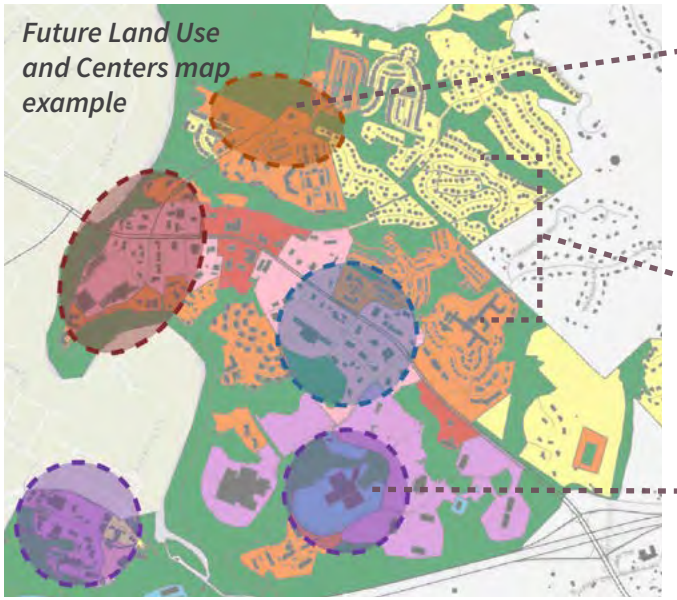


Land Use and overlay guidance

ACTIVITY CENTERS: Encourage projects to develop at the higher end of the densities and intensities ranges established by the underlying Land Use Categories.

COMMUNITY DESIGN GUIDELINES: Provide guidance for the general urban form for all new development and redevelopment in the Development Areas. Their intent is to create an urban area that maintains its economic value over time and provides an attractive, livable environment for community members and visitors.

LAND USE CATEGORIES: Establish recommended densities and intensities as well as the general form and scale of development for every parcel in the county.



Future Land Use and Centers map example

ACTIVITY CENTERS: Encourage high-density, mixed-use destinations that are distributed throughout the Development Areas. As highly walkable nodes, they will accommodate much of the county's future population growth and serve as a focal point for future transportation investments and other capital improvement projects.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM): Designates the location, mix of uses, and housing types in the Development Areas. Each designation has recommended future land uses and building form/scale.

EMPLOYMENT DISTRICTS: Identify land for office/research & development/flex/light industrial uses and encourage employment-generating uses consistent with the County's economic development initiatives.

Note: The colors shown are for illustrative purposes. They may not correspond with the FLUM.





Outdoor use areas and sidewalk connectivity create more inviting and accessible spaces for public use.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES & DESIGNATIONS

LAND USE CATEGORIES

This section of the Comprehensive Plan establishes a series of Land Use Categories to provide the direction for orderly growth. When Land Use Categories are paired with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which designates a land use category for every property in the county, the two tools establish a future vision for development patterns and land use densities and intensities and where these land uses will occur in the county.

Generally, Land Use Categories create a range of standards that vary and gradually increase as land uses in each category become more dense or more intense with an increasing mixture of uses. In AC44, each Land Use Category has a description and standards that establish the desired primary uses, secondary uses, density ranges, and pertinent built form details, such as building height and requirements for ground floor non-residential uses.

The purpose of these descriptions and standards is to provide clarity to the community about possible uses and modifications to properties, and to help guide the review of new development and redevelopment projects.

AC44 establishes 13 standard Land Use Categories. They are described briefly on the next page. Detailed descriptions and standards follow on subsequent pages. The Land Use Categories are recommendations, not regulations, and are intended to provide general guidance.

FUTURE LAND USE KEY

Residential Uses

Neighborhood Residential
Primarily residential
3-6 units/acre
Small-scale neighborhood retail/institutional

Middle Residential
Primarily residential
6-12 units/acre (up to 18 units/acre with affordable and missing middle housing types)
Small-scale neighborhood retail/institutional

Urban Residential
Primarily residential
12-34 units/acre
Neighborhood retail/institutional

Mixed Uses

Neighborhood Mixed Use
Mixed-use
Up to 18 units/acre
Neighborhood retail/institutional/office

Community Mixed Use
Mixed-use
12-34 units/acre
Commercial/retail, office, hotel, institutional

Corridor Mixed Use
Mixed-use, transit-oriented development
18-60 units/acre
Commercial/retail, office, hotel, institutional

Commercial & Employment Uses

General Commercial
Primarily auto-oriented retail
6-34 units/acre (secondary)
Commercial/retail, auto, office, hotel, wholesale, institutional

Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial
Primarily employment generating uses
6-34 units/acre (secondary)
Office, R&D, flex, LI, secondary retail/commercial

Industrial
Primarily manufacturing/processing/distribution
No residential
Manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, processing

Other

Institutional
Primarily government/public uses
Residential may be considered (primarily affordable)
Institutional/public uses with secondary offices

Public Land
Publicly accessible parks/greenways systems
Parks, trails, natural areas, community centers

Green Systems
Privately owned open space
Natural areas, environmental features, private recreation

Rural Area
Rural land use – outside Development Areas
Refer to the Rural Area Chapter.

Neighborhood Residential

Description	Primarily residential with some neighborhood-scale commercial, retail, and institutional uses.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 3-6 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: townhomes, single-family attached, single-family detached, accessory units.
Secondary Land Uses	Neighborhood-scale non-residential uses such as schools and childcare, commercial, retail, religious assembly, and institutional uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 3 stories. Building footprints for non-residential uses are typically less than 20,000 square feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to be located within smaller-scale buildings or as part of mixed-use buildings with small shop-fronts along streets.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use. (Most images shown are from Albemarle County.)

Middle Residential

Description	Primarily residential with some neighborhood-scale commercial, retail, and institutional uses. Intended to encourage a variety of housing types to promote housing choice and affordability.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 6-12 units/acre (up to 18 units/acre for additional missing middle and/or affordable housing - see the following page). Encouraged housing types: small and medium multiplexes, live-work units, bungalow courts, two over twos, single family cottages, tiny houses, townhomes, single-family attached, co-housing, accessory units.
Secondary Land Uses	Single-family detached housing units. Neighborhood-scale non-residential uses such as schools and childcare, commercial, retail, religious assembly, and institutional uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 3 stories. Building square footprints for non-residential uses are typically less than 20,000 square feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to be located within smaller-scale buildings or as part of mixed-use buildings with small shop-fronts along streets. Smaller housing units on smaller lots are encouraged to increase affordability and housing choice and offer live-work units.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

‘MISSING’ MIDDLE HOUSING

Like many communities across the country, Albemarle County has an increasing need for greater housing variety and affordability. The market currently delivers a housing supply that consists largely of detached single-family units and multi-family apartment units. ‘Missing Middle Housing’ refers to the lack of housing options in the middle of the spectrum (in terms of form, scale, and affordability) in-between single-family detached units and multi-family apartment units. ‘Middle’ housing includes options such as townhomes, duplexes, cottages, tiny homes, and courtyard housing. Increasing the supply of ‘middle’ housing types offers the potential to create more walkable communities and improve housing affordability.



‘Missing Middle’ housing illustration. Source: Opticos Design, Inc.

Middle Residential – Additional Guidance

HOUSING CHOICE

The goal of this guidance is to encourage more housing choice and affordability for the Middle Residential land use designations.

If 'missing middle' housing types are provided, then projects may be approved up to a density bonus of 18 units per acre if all units in a project meet the County's housing policy (Housing Albemarle). The County's minimum lot size may need to be adjusted to accommodate tiny houses. The following examples identify 'missing middle' dwelling types that could qualify for this density bonus. This list is not exhaustive. Other innovative housing products may be considered.

- Medium Multiplexes: A multi-family structure containing about 7 to 12 units, which may be arranged side by side and/or stacked. Units typically share an entrance along the street. Typical unit size is 800 square feet to 1,500 square feet.
- Small Multiplexes: A multi-family structure containing about 2 to 6 dwelling units, which may be arranged side by side and/or stacked, such as a duplex, triplex, or quadruplex. Typical unit size is 800 square feet to 1,200 square feet.
- Single-Family Cottages: A smaller single-family detached unit (may also be arranged in a bungalow or cottage court layout around a shared amenity space). Typical unit size is 800 square feet to 1,500 square feet per unit.
- Live-Work Units: A dwelling unit that is 'paired' with a small-scale non-residential use, typically a dwelling unit that is above or behind a fire-separated ground floor space. The residential and non-residential uses typically have separate street entrances. Typical unit size is 1,000 square feet to 3,000 square feet.
- Accessory units (AU): A secondary dwelling that shares the building lot of a larger/primary house. AUs can be internal/attached or external/detached and typically cover 800 square feet to 1,200 square feet.
- Tiny House: A dwelling unit that is typically less than 400 square feet (state building code).
- Co-Housing: A group of single-family detached units that share resources, usually 15-35 units. Typical unit size is 600 to 1,400 square feet.

Example scenario for Middle Residential that would meet the above acreage guidelines is below.

- Project acreage: 5 acres
- Density provided with rezoning: 18 units/acre
- Total dwelling units: 90 units
- Housing types: 60 units that are townhouses/single-family detached units and 30 units that meet the missing middle housing types (including small multiplexes, a cottage court, and AUs).
- Affordable units: 18 out of the 90 total (20% of the total).

Urban Residential

Description	Primarily residential supported by commercial, retail, office, and institutional uses.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 12-34 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multifamily, multiplexes, live-work units, bungalow courts, two over twos, single-family cottages, tiny homes, townhomes, single-family attached, accessory units. Non-residential uses such as schools and childcare, institutional, and religious assembly.
Secondary Land Uses	Single-family detached housing units. Non-residential uses such as commercial, retail, and office.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 2 to 5 stories. Building square footprints for non-residential uses are typically less than 25,000 square feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to be located within smaller-scale buildings or as part of mixed-use buildings with small shop-fronts along streets.
Ground Floor Use	Allowed but not required.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Neighborhood Mixed Use

Description	Mixed-use development with neighborhood-oriented retail and smaller employers, providing a transition between primarily residential areas and higher intensity mixed-use areas.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of up to 18 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multifamily, multiplexes, live-work units, bungalow courts, two over twos, townhomes, single-family attached, tiny homes, accessory units. Non-residential uses such as commercial/retail, offices, schools and childcare, institutional, and religious assembly.
Secondary Land Uses	Non-residential uses such as auto-commercial sales and services and office/research & development/flex/light industrial uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 3 stories. Building square footprints for non-residential uses are typically less than 25,000 square feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to have shopfronts along streets. Flex and light industrial activities that could impact nearby and adjacent residential uses should be located inside buildings.
Ground Floor Use	Allowed but not required.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Community Mixed Use

Description	Mid-rise, mixed-use development provides convenient access to goods and services that attract residents and visitors beyond the immediate neighborhood.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 12-34 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multi-family, multiplexes, live-work units, two over twos. Non-residential uses such as commercial, retail, offices, hotels, conference facilities, schools and childcare, institutional, and religious assembly.
Secondary Land Uses	Single-family attached, townhomes, accessory units. Non-residential uses such as auto-commercial sales and services and office/research & development/flex/light industrial uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 2 to 5 stories. Block-scale development is encouraged for walkability/pedestrian-orientation and a mix of uses, with block lengths typically 300 to 500 feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to be located within multi-story mixed-use buildings with shop-fronts along streets. Flex and light industrial activities that could impact nearby and adjacent residential uses should be located inside buildings. Stepbacks and facade breaks can be used to support pedestrian-oriented development and are encouraged if any areas have been identified for viewshed protection.
Ground Floor Use	Active ground-story uses are encouraged. Buildings that start out as single use are encouraged to be constructed to allow for future conversion to active ground-story uses.





Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Corridor Mixed Use

Description	Mixed-use development along major corridors, envisioned for pedestrian and transit-oriented development with goods, services, and jobs that are conveniently accessible for nearby community members.
Primary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 18-60 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multifamily, larger-scale multiplexes, live-work units, two over twos. Higher density is encouraged for infill sites paired with quality public open/green space. Non-residential uses such as commercial, retail, offices, hotels, conference facilities, schools and childcare, institutional, and religious assembly.
Secondary Land Uses	Townhomes and accessory units. Non-residential uses such as auto-commercial sales and services and office/research & development/flex/light industrial uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 2 to 7 stories. Urban form, block-scale development is encouraged for walkability/pedestrian-orientation and a mix of uses, with block lengths typically 200 to 400 feet. Non-residential uses are encouraged to be located within multi-story mixed-use buildings with shop-fronts along streets. Flex and light industrial activities that could impact nearby and adjacent residential uses should be located inside buildings. Stepbacks and facade breaks can be used to support pedestrian-oriented development and are encouraged if any areas have been identified for viewshed protection.
Ground Floor Use	Active ground-story uses are encouraged. Buildings that start out as single use are encouraged to be constructed to allow for future conversion to active ground-story uses.





Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

General Commercial

Description	Development that is primarily car-oriented destinations for retail and services. Infill and mixed-use development are encouraged where feasible. While uses and sites are generally car-oriented, streets are designed to accommodate safe and comfortable travel by all modes of travel. Transit connections are encouraged where possible.
Primary Land Uses	Non-residential uses such as commercial, retail, auto-commercial sales and services, wholesale businesses, offices (and office conversions), hotels, conference facilities, schools and childcare, and religious assembly.
Secondary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 6-34 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multi-family, live-work units. The design of multi-family housing should be integrated with surrounding form. Office to housing conversions are encouraged. Non-residential uses such as office/research & development/flex/light industrial and institutional uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 4 stories. Multi-story buildings are encouraged for residential use. Block-scale development is encouraged for walkability/pedestrian-orientation, with block lengths typically 300 to 600 feet. Flex and light industrial activities that could impact nearby and adjacent residential uses should be located inside buildings.
Ground Floor Use	Buildings that start out as single use are encouraged to be constructed to allow for future conversion to active ground-story uses.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Office/Research & Development/Flex/Light Industrial

Description	Vibrant employment centers and mixed-use areas with employment-generating uses and basic industries that are supported by secondary commercial/retail and residential uses.
Primary Land Uses	Non-residential uses such as offices, research & development facilities, flex spaces/uses, and light industrial uses. * Note: Heavy industrial and heavy manufacturing uses are not permitted under this land use designation.
Secondary Land Uses	Residential, typically at a density of 6-34 units/acre. Encouraged housing types: multi-family, live-work units. Non-residential uses such as commercial, retail, and institutional uses. Light manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution activities are acceptable uses provided they are combined with office, research and development, or flex space.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 5 stories. Block-scale development is encouraged for walkability/pedestrian-orientation, with block lengths typically 300 to 500 feet. Light industrial uses must demonstrate that noise, light, and other impacts to surrounding properties will be minimized. Flex and light industrial activities that could impact nearby and adjacent residential uses should be located inside buildings. Stepbacks and facade breaks can be used to support pedestrian-oriented development and are encouraged if any areas have been identified for viewshed protection.
Ground Floor Use	Active ground-story uses are encouraged. Buildings that start out as single use are encouraged to be constructed to allow for future conversion to active ground-story uses.





Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Industrial

Description	Employment areas that typically include uses such as manufacturing, processing, fabrication, assembly, packaging, storage, and distribution, that may not be compatible with mixed-use or residential development.
Primary Land Uses	Industrial/employment uses such as manufacturing, storage, distribution, warehousing, processing, assembly, fabrication, and recycling. Non-residential uses related to industrial/employment uses such as related commercial activities, offices, and research and development.
Secondary Land Uses	Non-residential uses such as larger auto-commercial service uses, wholesale, flex uses/spaces, light industrial, and institutional uses.
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 4 stories. Long, continuous buildings may be found within the Industrial designation. While blocks are typically longer, a safe internal pedestrian network is expected to navigate parking areas and internal streets. Industrial uses should be buffered from any nearby residential uses and the public realm (e.g., nearby public streets, open/recreational space). All modes of transportation should be supported, with a priority for larger/delivery vehicles. The layout of buildings, parking areas, and open spaces should recognize the unique needs of industrial users. Open space areas are typically designed to be used by employees. Relegated parking provided as feasible.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.





Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Institutional

Description	Development consisting primarily of government buildings, schools, public safety facilities, public utilities, and major healthcare facilities, or unprogrammed government property.
Primary Land Uses	Institutional uses such as schools, colleges, universities and ancillary facilities, fire stations, hospitals, libraries, public facilities, and major utilities, with associated non-residential uses such as research and development facilities.
Secondary Land Uses	Offices supporting primary uses and nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and convalescent homes. Residential uses may be considered when compatible with surrounding areas and providing affordable housing consistent with the County's housing policy (Housing Albemarle).
Building Form	Buildings are generally 1 to 5 stories. Building form/type is dependent on use, with mixed-use buildings/areas encouraged where appropriate. Stepbacks and facade breaks can be used to support pedestrian-oriented development and are encouraged if any areas have been identified for viewshed protection.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Public Land

Description	Publicly owned or publicly accessible parks, greenway systems, recreational areas, and natural areas for active, passive, or social recreational use and restoration and protection of the natural environment.
Primary Land Uses	Parks, greenways, recreational areas, and natural areas that are publicly owned or publicly accessible.
Secondary Land Uses	Not applicable.
Building Form	Buildings/structures should be associated with public recreational uses, such as community centers, picnic shelters, and public restrooms. Building design and placement guidance should be vetted through a Park Master Plan, Small Area Plan, or similar process. Multi-use trails offering pedestrian connections are encouraged wherever possible. Natural areas and environmental features, including but not limited to preserved steep slopes, stream buffers, floodplain, and important sites/ forest blocks in the Biodiversity Action Plan should be protected and restored.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

Green Systems

Description	Areas providing ecosystem and cultural services (including recreation), critical environmental areas, and areas held in common ownership in existing developments.
Primary Land Uses	Sensitive environmental features include stream buffers, floodplains, and steep slopes. Privately owned open space with passive and/or active recreation amenities, parks, playgrounds, outdoor sitting areas, and plazas. Natural areas that are not publicly owned/accessible.
Secondary Land Uses	Not applicable.
Building Form	Few buildings/structures expected. Buildings/structures should be associated with recreational uses. Multi-use trails offering pedestrian connections are encouraged wherever possible. Natural areas and environmental features, including but not limited to preserved steep slopes, stream buffers, floodplain, and important sites/ forest blocks in the Biodiversity Action Plan should be protected and restored.
Ground Floor Use	Not applicable.







Images show built form and environment associated with land use.

LAND USE CATEGORY CONSOLIDATION

As part of previous area planning efforts, 24 Land Use Categories evolved through multiple independent planning processes over many years. The differences between these categories are often minor and several categories provide similar recommendations. Having 24 Land Use Categories can lead to confusion and makes the administration of the Comprehensive Plan more difficult. As part of AC44, the overlap across the 24 categories was reduced and consolidated into 13 Land Use Categories plus three legacy categories.

With AC44, this consolidated set of Land Use Categories has been applied to individual parcels on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). Any parcel previously designated with a Land Use Category that is carried forward in AC44 (e.g., Urban Residential) will continue to be designated with that category. Other parcels with Land Use Categories that are not carried forward have been matched to the closest corresponding category (e.g., Regional Mixed Use became Community Mixed Use) on the FLUM.

There are three special cases in the Crozet and Village of Rivanna Development Areas, where previous Area Plan efforts created unique, highly specific land use designations within their relevant Area Plan. The first case is the (LOW) Neighborhood Density Land Use Category in the Crozet Area Plan and Village of Rivanna Area Plan. The second and third designations are specialized categories of 'Downtown Crozet' and 'Village Center' found in the Crozet Area Plan and Village of Rivanna Area Plan, respectively. These unique and specialized land use districts will remain on the affected parcels within the FLUM. However, these designations will not be more broadly applied with future Area Plan updates.

Due to the consolidation of Land Use Categories, the FLUM published in AC44 shall be the governing document for land use. Where parcels designated in the FLUM conflict with parcels designated in the adopted Master Plans, the FLUM designations shall govern. The County's online GIS Viewer provides access to the FLUM.

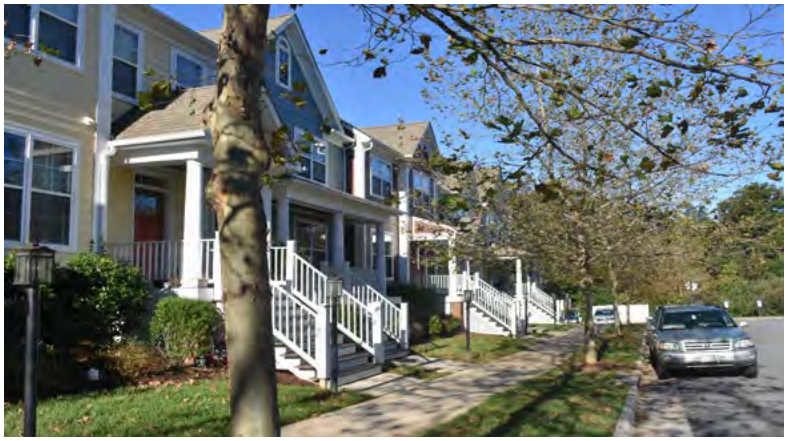
FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM)

The Land Use Categories and the FLUM work together to reflect the community's vision, needs, and priorities while anticipating projected growth and demand for housing and businesses.

Implementation of these future uses may take years to realize and depends on partnerships and collaboration among Albemarle County, the development community members, and partner agencies.

The FLUM is the tool used by the public and private sectors to achieve the Goals and Objectives in AC44. Other tools include the Zoning Ordinance, public facility improvements such as water or sewer infrastructure expansions, and economic development programs.

When a property owner submits a request to change the zoning of their property or proposes a use only allowed by special use permit, the request is reviewed for alignment with the overall Comprehensive Plan, including the FLUM. AC44 provides guidance for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and County staff when making decisions on applications for changes to land use.



Land use guidance for residential areas includes housing type and density.

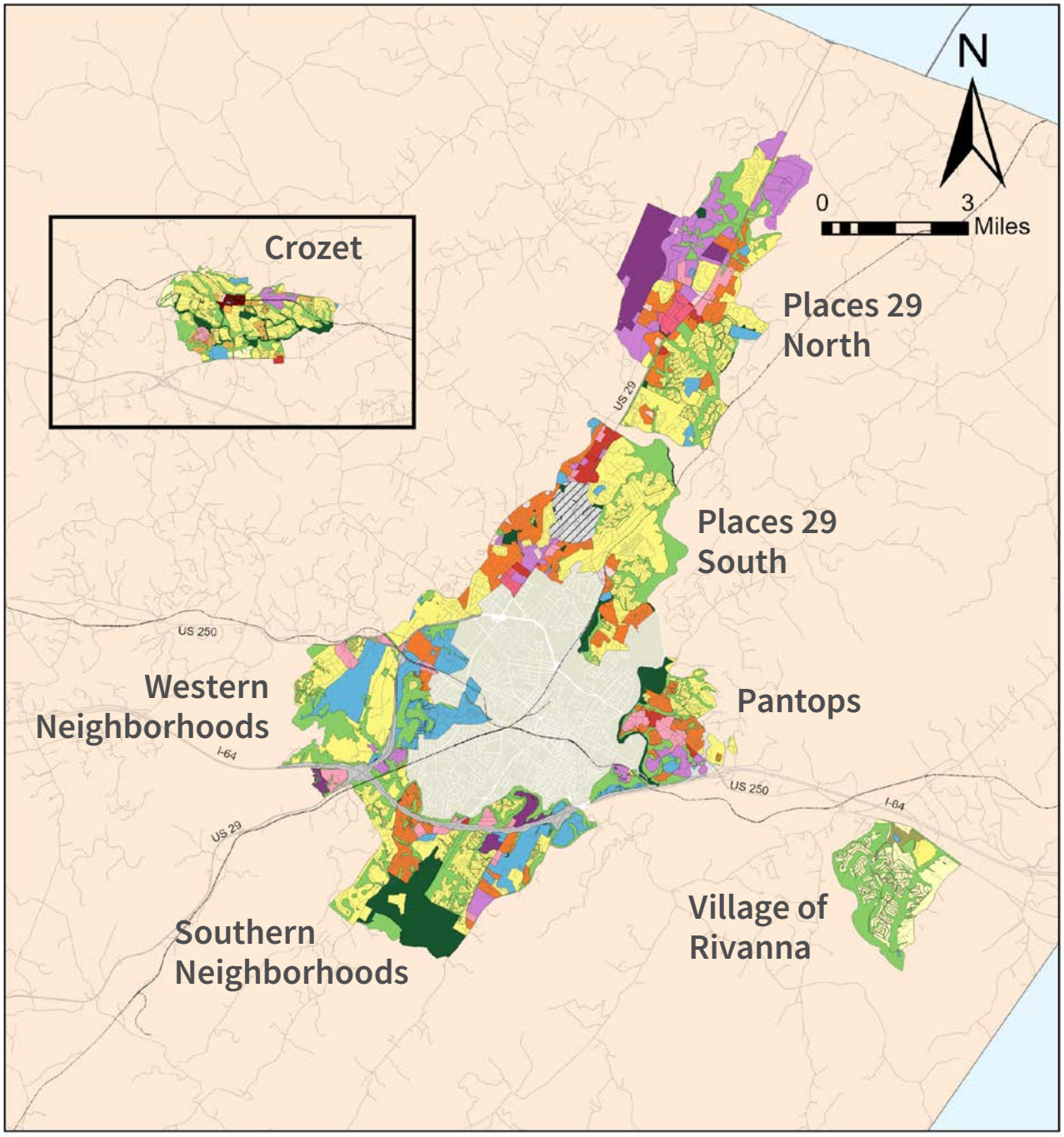
FUTURE LAND USE MAP

AC44 Future Land Use Categories

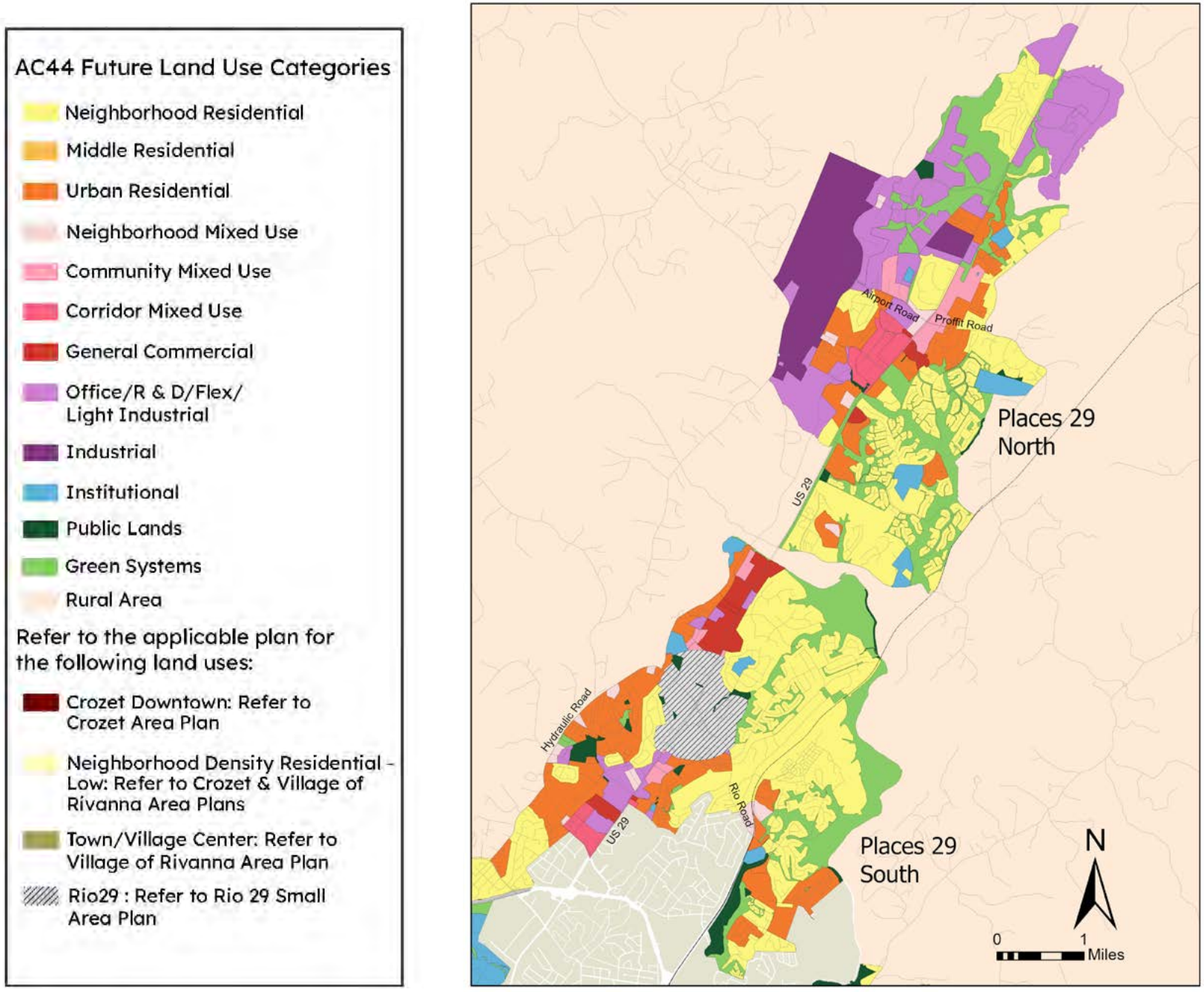
- Neighborhood Residential
- Middle Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Community Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Office/R & D/Flex/ Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Lands
- Green Systems
- Rural Area

Refer to the applicable plan for the following land uses:

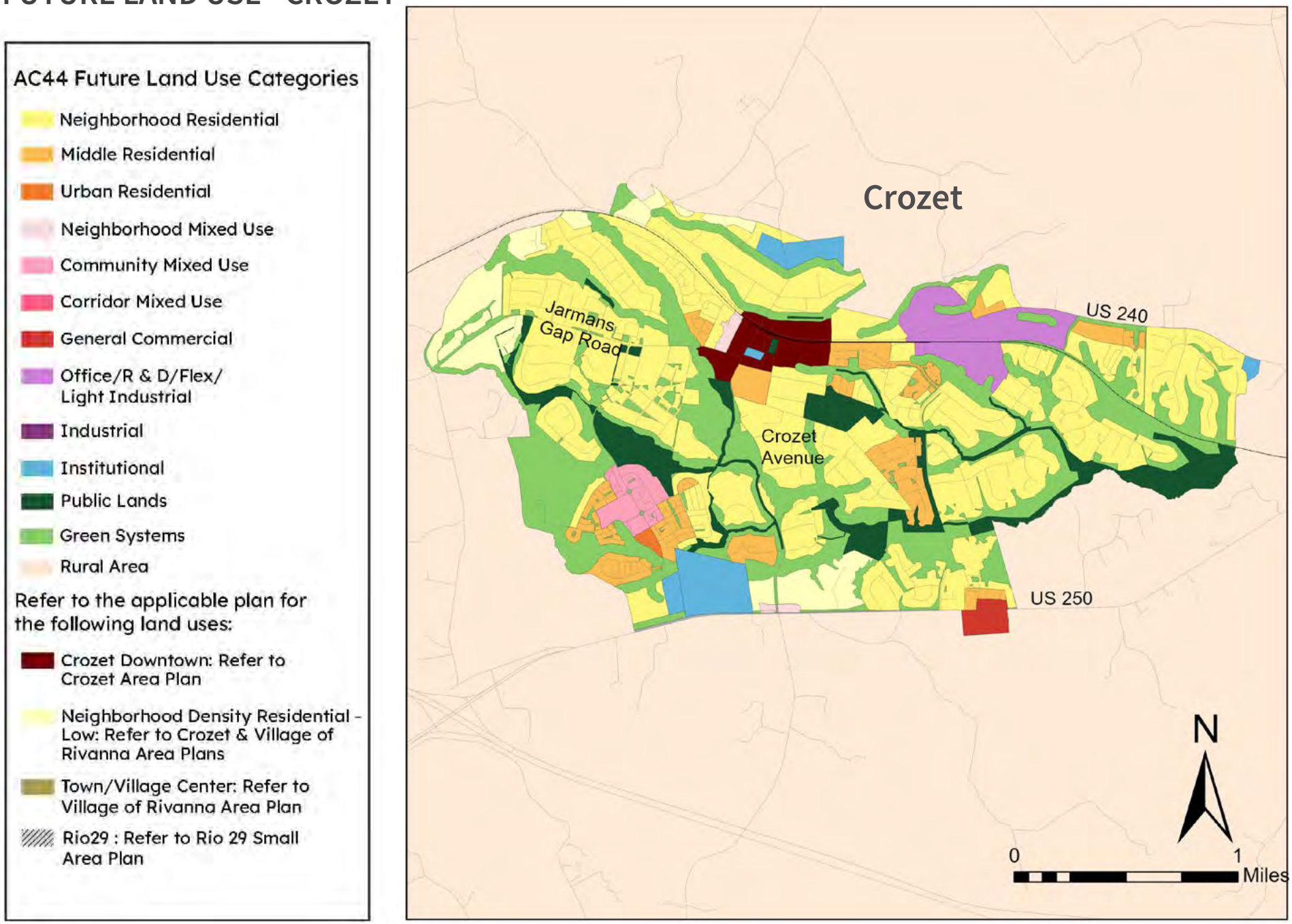
- Crozet Downtown: Refer to Crozet Area Plan
- Neighborhood Density Residential - Low: Refer to Crozet & Village of Rivanna Area Plans
- Town/Village Center: Refer to Village of Rivanna Area Plan
- Rio29 : Refer to Rio 29 Small Area Plan



FUTURE LAND USE - PLACES 29



FUTURE LAND USE - CROZET



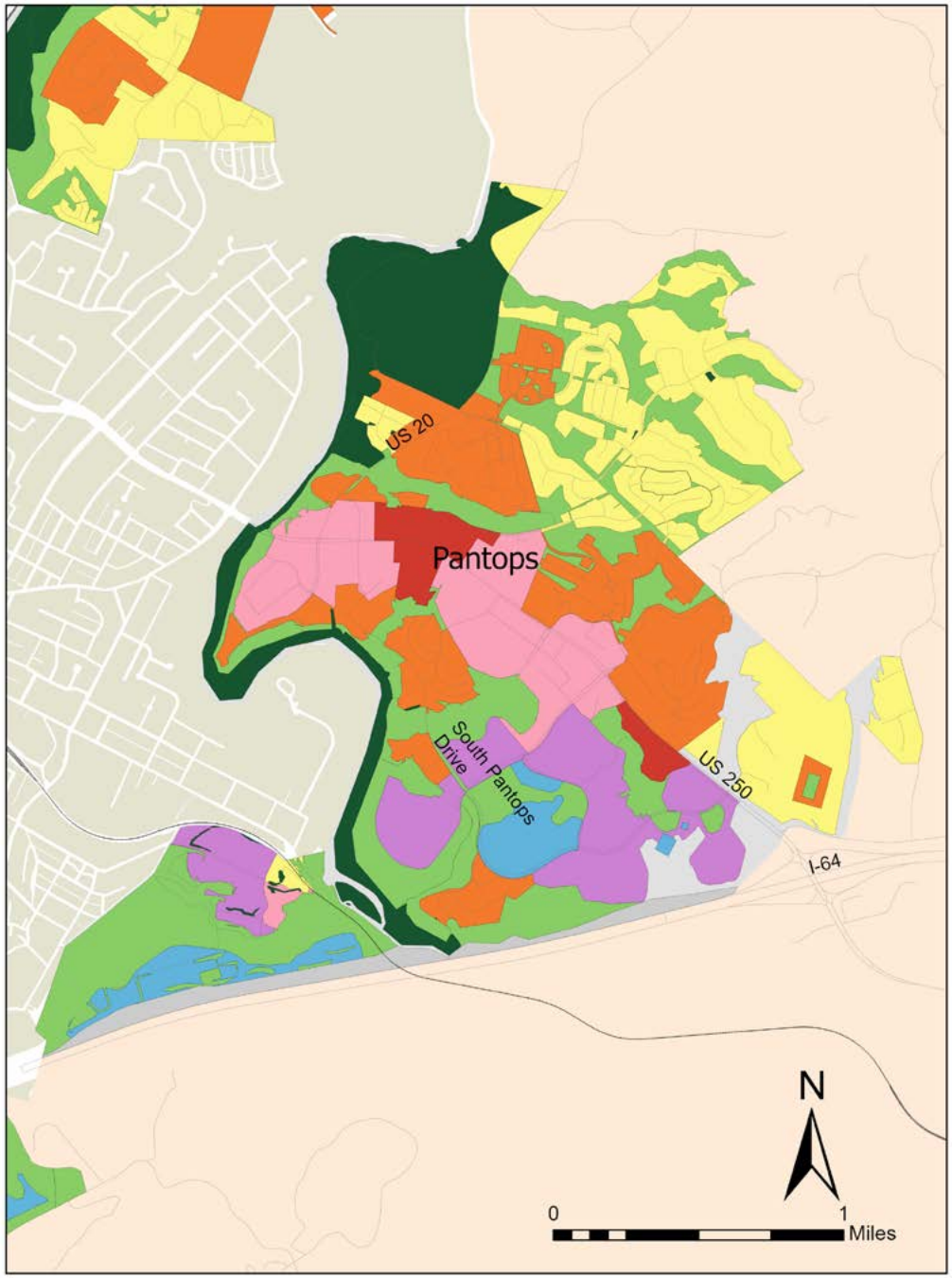
FUTURE LAND USE - PANTOPS

AC44 Future Land Use Categories

- Neighborhood Residential
- Middle Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Community Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Office/R & D/Flex/ Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Lands
- Green Systems
- Rural Area

Refer to the applicable plan for the following land uses:

- Crozet Downtown: Refer to Crozet Area Plan
- Neighborhood Density Residential - Low: Refer to Crozet & Village of Rivanna Area Plans
- Town/Village Center: Refer to Village of Rivanna Area Plan
- Rio29 : Refer to Rio 29 Small Area Plan



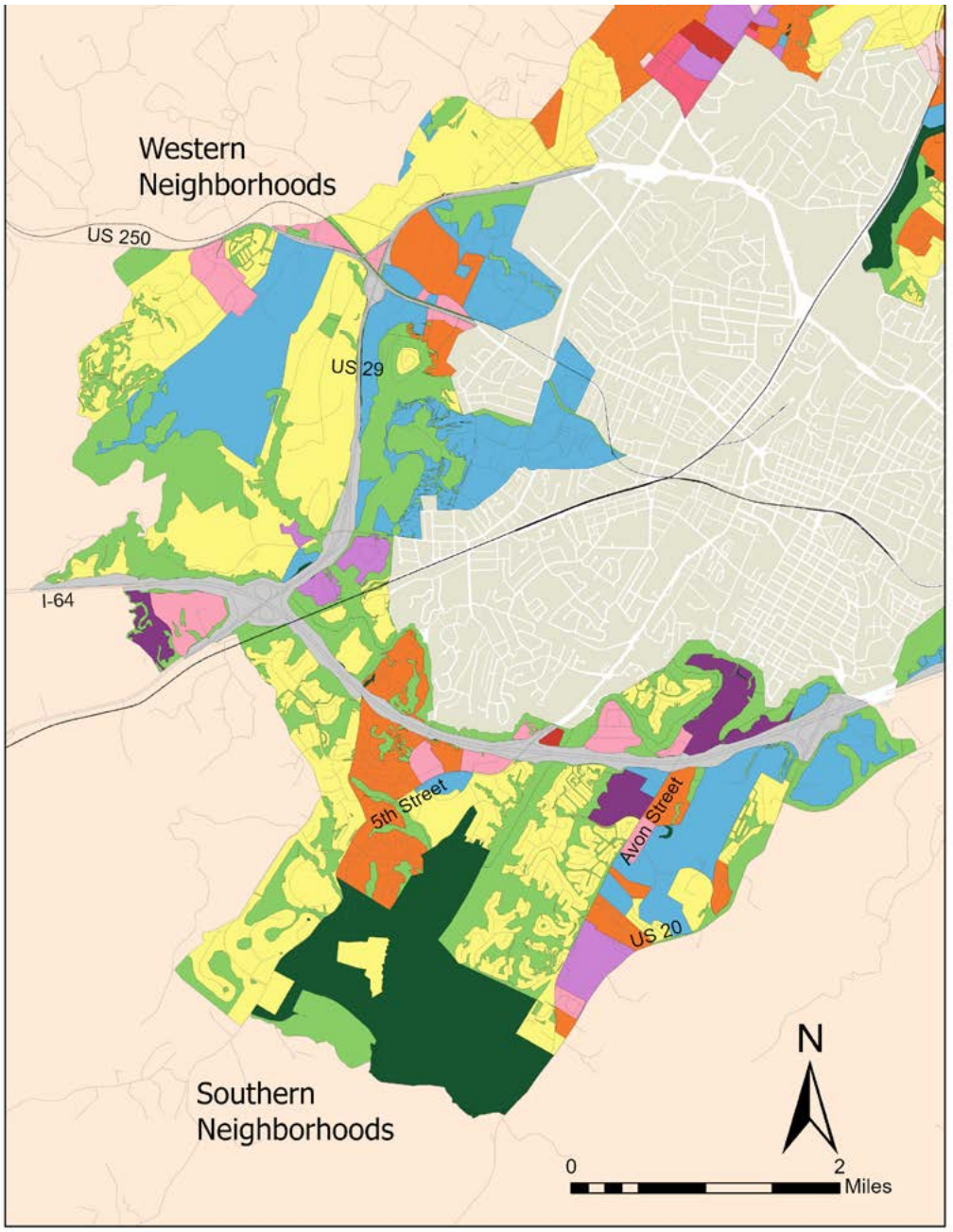
FUTURE LAND USE - SOUTHERN AND WESTERN NEIGHBORHOODS

AC44 Future Land Use Categories

- Neighborhood Residential
- Middle Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Community Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Office/R & D/Flex/ Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Lands
- Green Systems
- Rural Area

Refer to the applicable plan for the following land uses:

- Crozet Downtown: Refer to Crozet Area Plan
- Neighborhood Density Residential - Low: Refer to Crozet & Village of Rivanna Area Plans
- Town/Village Center: Refer to Village of Rivanna Area Plan
- Rio29 : Refer to Rio 29 Small Area Plan



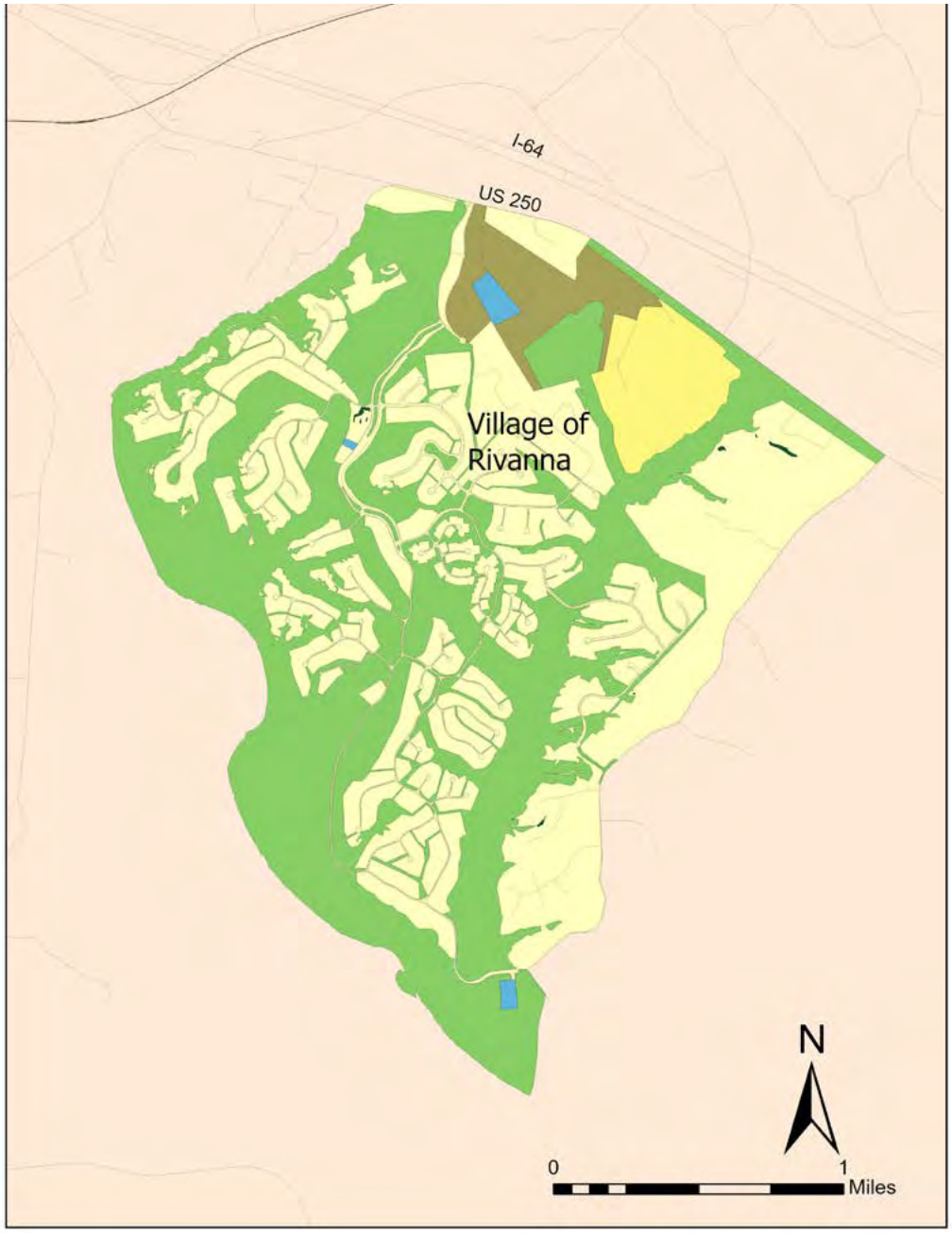
FUTURE LAND USE - VILLAGE OF RIVANNA

AC44 Future Land Use Categories

- Neighborhood Residential
- Middle Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Community Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Office/R & D/Flex/ Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Lands
- Green Systems
- Rural Area

Refer to the applicable plan for the following land uses:

- Crozet Downtown: Refer to Crozet Area Plan
- Neighborhood Density Residential - Low: Refer to Crozet & Village of Rivanna Area Plans
- Town/Village Center: Refer to Village of Rivanna Area Plan
- Rio29 : Refer to Rio 29 Small Area Plan



FUTURE LAND USE INTERPRETATION POLICY

When evaluating a new development proposal, the County considers the following guidance for interpreting Land Use Categories and the FLUM:

1. The maximum density should be based on the total acreage of the property (i.e., gross density). Environmental features and other site constraints, such as critical slopes, must be protected as required, but the area encumbered by these features and constraints does not reduce the overall density calculations.
2. If portions of a property are partly designated with a Recreation and Open Space or a Green Systems Land Use Category, the principal land use designation (e.g., residential or mixed-use) should be applied to the full acreage of the property for the purpose of calculating a suitable density.
3. If the density proposed by the new development is above the density range recommended by the relevant Land Use Category, the following factors might make proposed densities above the recommended density range suitable:

    a. The new development proposal provides more affordable units than the minimum number of units suggested by the County's housing policy (Housing Albemarle).

    b. The new development proposal is infill and redevelopment in an Activity Center or an Employment District.

    c. The new development proposal is clustering development to protect or restore sensitive environmental features.

    d. The new development provides substantial environmental or recreational amenities such as public trails, restored wetlands or stream habitats, or restores lands such as brownfields.





Multi-family developments help achieve recommended densities in the Development Areas. Top: parking lot awning with solar panels in the Riverbend neighborhood. Bottom: Old Trail apartments.

COMMUNITY DESIGN GUIDELINES

EVOLVING TO COMMUNITY DESIGN GUIDELINES

The County's previous Comprehensive Plans used the 12 Neighborhood Model Principles to analyze and determine the appropriateness of new rezonings and special use permit development proposals during the legislative review process. To provide clear and more concise guidance, AC44 includes Community Design Guidelines that replace the Neighborhood Model Principles. The Guidelines are intended to implement the Growth Management Policy by encouraging development as mixed-use, walkable, and dense with multimodal transportation options and access to quality parks and open space, making the Development Areas more attractive for people to live, work, and play. The Guidelines are intended to provide flexibility based on the characteristics of each proposed development and the surrounding context.



Community Design Guidelines provide details regarding the built environment for public realm areas.

The 12 Neighborhood Model Principles from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan were consolidated into four Community Design Guideline categories: Land Use, Transportation, Site Design, and Parks, Recreational Amenities, and Open Space. The consolidation streamlines and organizes the content, making the Guidelines easier to read, evaluate, and apply. Together, the Guidelines provide direction for new development and infill to achieve Comprehensive Plan goals, use land in the Development Areas efficiently, and use best practices for the built environment in the Development Areas.

Implementation of the Community Design Guidelines will balance community benefits and the cost or feasibility of new development, including housing construction and design costs, which developers pass on to homeowners or renters. Community benefits may be achieved through the form and layout of quality development, such as recreational and open space, safe spaces to walk, and street trees for shade. Site design may also add to the cost and feasibility of new development, including aspects such as parking or building setbacks (the space between buildings and distance from the street).

Many site design requirements are important for safety and well-being. Additionally, there are opportunities through AC44 to support and recommend updates consistent with best practices and which can be integrated into the County's zoning modernization efforts. The 2023 study by the Rutgers Center for Real Estate ('How Much Is Enough? Parking Usage in New Jersey Rental Units') provides an example of best practices. It found that lowering mandated parking requirements resulted in lower initial construction costs and ongoing operating costs for residential developments, allowing reduced rents as compared to more typical 'over-parked' residential developments.

ACTIVITY CENTERS

Since the adoption of the Neighborhood Model Principles, the concept of "centers" played a fundamental role in guiding future land use in the County's Comprehensive Plans. The purpose of a center is to concentrate the provision of goods and services within an area proximate to nearby residents. This contemplates a community where people can walk, bike, or take transit between a wide array of housing choices and the daily destinations where they shop, work, or recreate. To implement this approach, infrastructure, amenities, and services components are required to support higher-intensity centers to make them attractive places to live and, importantly, for the private sector to invest. Since the public sector plays a large role in guiding and providing the capital for these infrastructure, amenity, and service components, identification of the location of and requirements for centers is a valuable tool to prioritize where the County should apply its resources, including implementing a multimodal transportation system.

HIERARCHY OF CENTERS

A key tenet in the Neighborhood Model was to situate centers within a five-minute walk of most residents in the Development Areas. Since the average person can walk a quarter mile within five minutes, this principle planned for over 50 centers to be spread across the Development Areas. This strategy has been difficult to achieve, for two reasons. First, commercial market requirements to support over 50 economically viable centers with an adequate amount commercial square footage are difficult to achieve when the existing density within the Development Areas is relatively low. A second important component to successfully creating centers is the necessary public investment in transportation, parks, and other urban services. With over 50 centers, the County's capacity to provide investments required to support these critical centers is diluted.

To address these issues, AC44 proposes 22 Activity Centers and creates a hierarchal three-tier system for centers to guide the relative residential density and commercial intensity in these centers. Centers toward the top of this hierarchy are expected to accommodate a significant proportion of the County's future residential and economic development. Correspondingly, since the Activity Centers at the top of this hierarchy contain more density and intensity, public investments and service provisions should be prioritized with these centers.

AC44 incorporates three types of mixed-use centers – Local, Community, and Regional Activity Centers – plus Employment Districts. Subsequent pages provide detailed attributes for these four center types.

LOCAL CENTERS

Local Centers have the least intense commercial uses and are relatively small. Local Centers are geared toward providing limited commercial offerings to lower-density neighborhoods within a quarter-mile radius.



The Downtown Crozet land use category is unique to the Crozet Master Plan.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Community Centers are mixed-use centers. Their target density and commercial intensity ranges fall in between Local Centers and Regional Centers. Their intent is to provide services primarily to residential neighborhoods, but at a higher level of service and to a larger area than local centers can support because the community center typically draws people from a wider area. The Food Lion Shopping Center on Avon Street Extended is an example of a Community Center that serves an entire quadrant of the Development Areas.

REGIONAL CENTERS

Regional Centers have the most intense commercial uses and extensive residential densities with a large, mixed-use core and surrounding urban neighborhoods with fairly dense, multi-family buildings. Due to their increased density, intensity, and size, the relatively few Regional Centers will be focal points for public investments seeking to improve transportation mobility, affordable housing, access to quality open spaces and parks, and public safety services.

EMPLOYMENT DISTRICTS

Employment Districts are clusters of office, research & development, flex, and light industrial uses. These Districts play a critical role in the County's economic development initiatives. Their central goal is to expand employment opportunities for area residents with high-paying jobs. Employment Districts may contain residential uses or a built form not completely aligned with Community Design Guidelines. Specific policy guidance for the use of Employment Districts is in AC44's Thriving Economy Topic Chapter.

The map on the next page shows the location and identifies a name for each Activity Center and Employment District. Each Activity Center was identified and classified based on the 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis, observed projects in the development pipeline, current and future job count estimates, areas identified in Small Area Plans, and professional judgment. Additionally, AC44 uses oval areas to represent the general locations of each center or district. The boundaries of these ovals should be considered as general representations of an individual center's extent. For future Small Area Plans, the intent is to further define the boundaries of the centers or districts to guide the implementation of this chapter more specifically.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CENTERS AND TRANSPORTATION

The identification of Activity Centers and Employment Districts is a critical component for the planning and implementation of an effective multimodal transportation plan because land use and transportation are interdependent. AC44's Transportation Chapter explains this interdependency further. Developing dense, mixed use, urban, and walkable Activity Centers as well as concentrations of jobs in Employment Districts are key to building a multimodal transportation system that is efficient and provides increased mobility.

Multimodal Systems Plan & Urban Street Standards

AC44's Development Areas Land Use Chapter and Transportation Chapter recommend developing and adopting a Multimodal Systems Plan. Detailed in the Transportation Chapter, a Multimodal Systems Plan will allow the County to prioritize investment and coordinate with VDOT to use urban street standards in Activity Centers. Using more urban street standards is critical to improving walking, biking, transit, and placemaking in the Activity Centers.

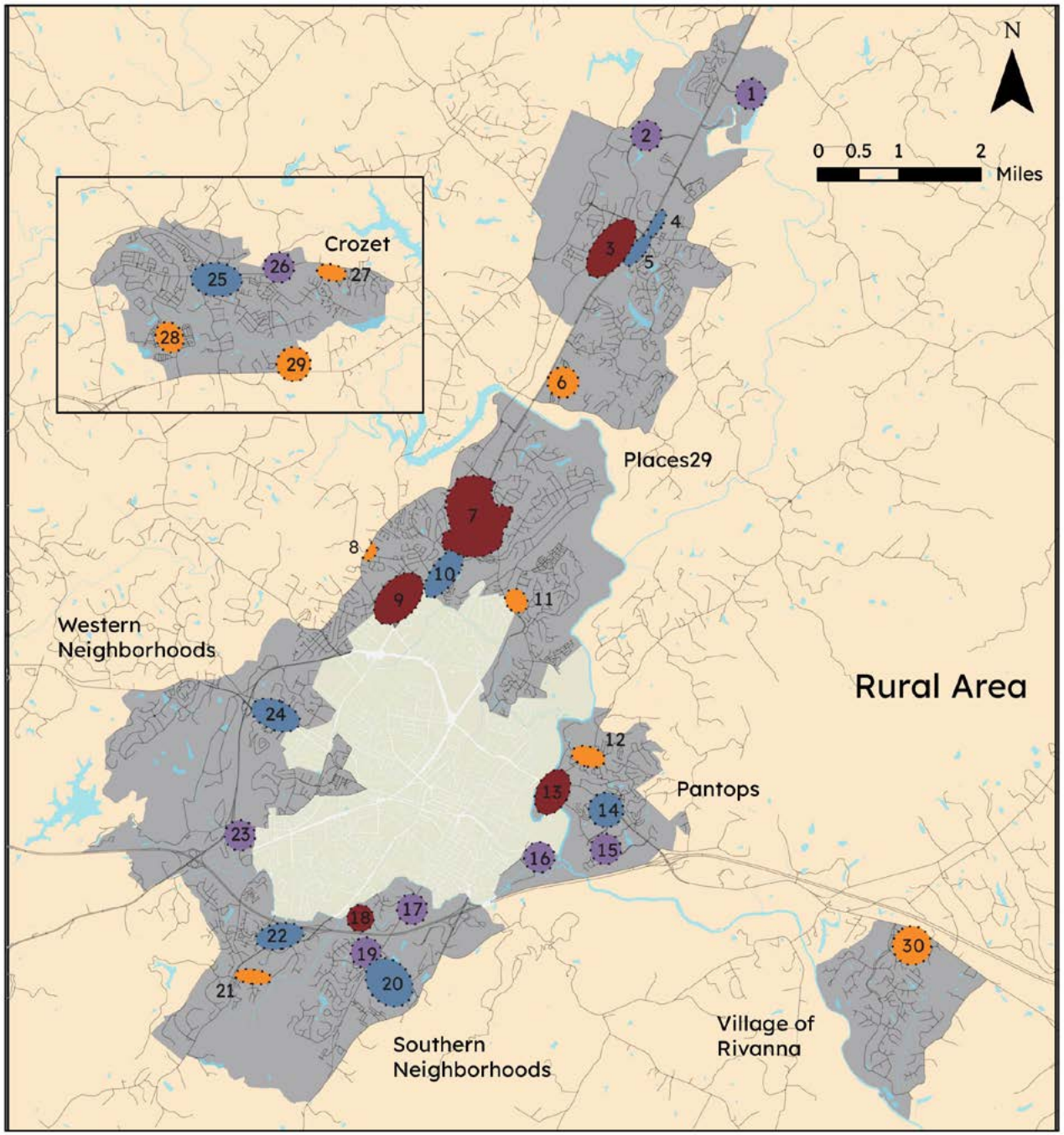
ACTIVITY CENTERS & EMPLOYMENT DISTRICTS

Regional Centers:
3. Hollymead Town Center
7. Rio29
9. Hydraulic/29
13. Lower Pantops
18. 5th Street

Employment Centers:
1. Rivanna Station
2. N Fork Research Park/Airport
15. Peter Jefferson Place
16. Broadway
17. Avon Street Extended
19. Mill Creek Industrial Park
23. Fontaine Research Park
26. Rt 240/Starr Hill/Music Today

Community Centers:
4. North Pointe
5. Timberwood Shopping Center
10. Hillsdale Drive
14. Rivanna Ridge
20. Mill Creek Drive
22. 5th St/Old Lynchburg Rd
24. Ivy Rd/Old Ivy Rd
25. Downtown Crozet

Local Centers:
6. Brookhill
8. Whitewood/Hydraulic
11. Rio Road E/Gasoline Alley
12. Route 20/Riverside Village
21. Southwood
27. Wickham Pond
28. Old Trail
29. Clover Lawn
30. Rivanna Village



Note: Activity Center colors do not correspond with future Land Use Categories.

Local Centers

The Local Centers have the least intense commercial uses and are relatively small. They are typically geared toward providing limited commercial offerings to neighborhoods within a quarter-mile radius.

Building Height

1 story to 4 stories.

Multimodal Transportation

Bike and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods, Activity Centers, and Employment Districts. Transit stops are encouraged along transit routes.

Parking

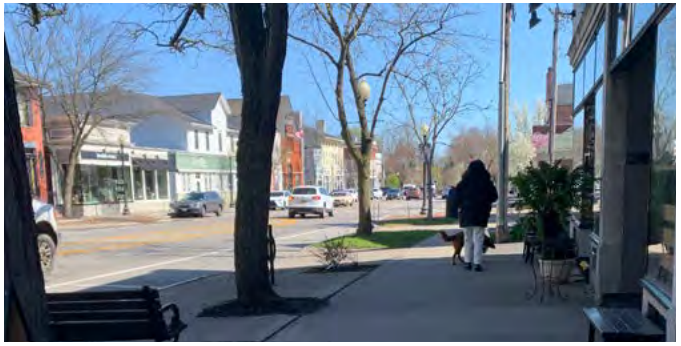
Parking is relegated to the side or rear of buildings or uses screening. On-street parking is encouraged.

Public Civic & Open Space

Interconnected publicly accessible spaces with active or passive recreational amenities. Examples include:

- Appropriately scaled plazas and seating areas (e.g., 5 to 10+ tables or benches) with large shade trees
- Pocket parks (typically 0.25 to 0.5 acres) with hardscape, landscaping, and a combination of passive recreational amenities (such as benches, picnic tables, and pavilions or shade shelters) and smaller active recreational amenities (such as exercise stations or playground equipment)
- Pollinator gardens
- Natural areas with public trails and educational signage
- Off-leash pet area with fencing, shade, water, and benches

Images show development patterns, built form, and environment associated with center type and are for illustrative purposes.







Source: DRPT Multimodal Systems Design Guidelines.

Community Centers

Community Centers are focal points for commercial and cultural activities that are accessible by a variety of transportation options. They may be oriented toward a major multimodal corridor as defined in the VDOT Multimodal Systems Design Guidelines (e.g., Ivy Road and 5th Street).

Building Height

At least 2 stories and up to 6 stories.

Multimodal Transportation

Bike and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods, Activity Centers, and Employment Districts. Enhanced transit stops are encouraged along transit routes. Wider sidewalks/pedestrian connections are encouraged in commercial and mixed-use areas, including to providing space for outdoor seating.

Parking

Parking relegated to the side or rear of buildings or on-street parking is encouraged.

Public Civic & Open Space

Publicly accessible spaces with active or passive recreational amenities. Examples include:

- Appropriately scaled plazas and seating areas (e.g., 10 to 15+ tables or benches) with large shade trees
- Parks (typically 0.5 to 1.5 acres) with hardscape, landscaping, and active recreational amenities such as exercise stations, playgrounds, interactive water features, and natural playscapes
- Amphitheaters, spaces for farmers/craft markets, and other event spaces
- Community gardens
- Natural areas with public trails and educational signage
- Open/maintained/unprogrammed lawn areas
- Off-leash pet area with fencing, shade, water, and benches

Images show development patterns, built form, and environment associated with center type and are for illustrative purposes.







Source: DRPT Multimodal Systems Design Guidelines.

Regional Centers

Regional Centers are vibrant and urban areas with goods, services, and entertainment activities accessible by a variety of transportation options. They may serve as a regional destination.

Building Height

At least 3 stories and up to 8 stories.

Multimodal Transportation

Bike and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods, Activity Centers, and Employment Districts. Enhanced transit stops are encouraged along transit routes. Wider sidewalks/pedestrian connections are encouraged in commercial and mixed-use areas, including providing space for outdoor seating.

Parking

Parking is relegated to the side or rear of buildings or on-street parking. Structured parking is encouraged.

Public Civic & Open Space

Publicly accessible spaces with active or passive recreational amenities. Examples include:

- Appropriately scaled plazas and seating areas (e.g., 15 to 20+ tables or benches) with large shade trees and walking paths
- Parks (typically 1.5 to 2.5+ acres) with hardscape, landscaping, and active recreational amenities such as exercise stations, playgrounds, interactive water features, and natural playscapes
- Amphitheaters, spaces for farmers/craft markets, and other event spaces
- Multi-purpose athletic fields/courts
- Skate-parks
- Community gardens
- Natural areas with public trails and educational signage
- Open/maintained/unprogrammed lawn areas
- Off-leash pet area with fencing, shade, water, and benches

Images show development patterns, built form, and environment associated with center type and are for illustrative purposes







Source: DRPT Multimodal Systems Design Guidelines.

Employment Districts

Employment Districts are clusters of office, research & development, flex, and light industrial uses that play a critical role in the County's economic development initiatives. Their goal is to expand high-paying employment opportunities for area residents. The purpose of identifying Employment Districts is to designate areas that should retain office, research & development, flex, and light industrial land uses, and to identify major employment hubs for multimodal transportation connections with the County's future Multimodal Systems Plan. There are limited locations in the Development Areas where office/research & development/flex/light industrial designations occur, especially in clusters. Opportunities to support areas that are emerging as an Employment District or could redevelop into an Employment District should be considered carefully.

Businesses consistent with the County's economic development initiatives and land uses consistent with underlying office/research & development/flex/light industrial land uses should be targeted. Additionally, emerging industries and businesses such as green technology, clean energy generation/storage, and incubator and maker spaces should also be considered. This list should not be interpreted as comprehensive or to exclude related sectors that support existing businesses.

Secondary uses include residential, commercial, and retail uses supporting employment uses. When incorporated, residential uses are encouraged to provide live/work opportunities, especially for workers employed by businesses in a District. The presence of residential uses should not preclude future light industrial uses in a District. Residential uses are encouraged on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.

More guidance is available in individual Area Plans and studies for specific Employment Districts, such as Starr Hill/Music Today in the Crozet Area Plan and the Broadway Blueprint Economic Development Revitalization Study (Phases 1 and 2).





Employment Districts accommodate businesses that are important to the local economy.

CENTERS INTERPRETATION POLICY

The following guidance should be used when evaluating new development proposals in Activity Centers in concert with the Center Place Type guidance:

1. The Activity Centers function as an overlay that encourages a higher intensity of uses than the underlying Land Use Designations. Land uses should generally be consistent with underlying Land Use Designations. More development intensity and infill are encouraged with appropriate form and scale for each Center Place Type.
2. Activity Center recommendations are intended to be flexible. The same type and intensity of development will not be possible for every center location, even among the same center types. Review of applications in Activity Centers should consider the surrounding context and contribute to an overall mix of uses across a broader area.
3. Applicable Area Plans provide more guidance. The Activity Centers in this section of AC44 outline general expectations. More detailed recommendations may be included in the Area Plans.
4. Center Boundaries: The general locations of each center are shown on the Activity Center and Employment Districts Map. These boundaries are approximate. Adjustments should be considered, including with future Area Plan updates and with requests with development applications that are outside of and next to center boundaries.
5. Building Height: Taller buildings above the high end of the recommended range may be appropriate. Impacts on neighboring properties, including lighting, structured parking, and service and loading areas, should be considered and mitigated, particularly when buildings are located next to smaller-scale residences.
6. Ground Floor/Active Ground-Story Uses: Examples of active ground-story uses include, but are not limited to: retail, restaurants, services (e.g., gym/fitness studios, hair salons, pharmacies, libraries), educational/institutional uses (e.g., museums, places to take classes/attend programs), and some studios/flex spaces (e.g., arts/crafts and maker spaces). Active ground-story uses are encouraged throughout Activity Centers but will not be feasible and successful in all locations. Considerations for where to locate active ground-story uses and where to construct buildings to allow future conversion to active ground-story uses include:

- Locating active uses along major corridors and roads with a higher volume of pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic. Concentrating active ground-story uses in busier areas increases their likelihood of success.
- Locating active uses in buildings that have foot traffic that is ‘built in’, such as an apartment or office building.

7. Vertical Mixed-Use Buildings: Have multiple land uses in the same structure (e.g., some combination of residential, commercial, office, institutional, and/or research & development/flex/light industrial uses). Vertical mixed-use buildings are expected in Regional Centers, at least in the highest-intensity areas or ‘core areas’ and encouraged in other Activity Centers. Active ground-story uses may be included in a vertical mixed-use building and are defined above.
8. Public, Civic, and Open Space: As the intensity of land uses increases, a higher concentration of amenities and urban open space/recreation areas is expected to support the anticipated increase in the number of users. Amenities and open/recreation spaces may be small in scale/acreage but should be sufficient to support surrounding community members and visitors. These spaces should be linked to other public open spaces and ideally be located along the public right-of-way frontage for easy access and visibility.

PROTECTING & INCREASING ACCESS TO NATURE

The protection of natural resources in the Development Areas is important, ensuring that community members can connect with and explore nature. Zoning Ordinance requirements provide extensive protection for waterways, floodplains, steep slopes, and other environmental resources. This chapter recommends updates to the Zoning Ordinance and collaboration with community partners to protect important environmental features, reduce stormwater runoff, and mitigate the heat island effect with improved tree coverage. It is also recognized that impacts to some natural resources will occur as new development proposals strive to meet the higher density and intensity goals for the Development Areas.

The Rivanna River is a beautiful natural feature and major recreational resource in the community. The 2022 Rivanna River Urban Corridor Plan completed by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) studied the portion of the Rivanna River in the Development Areas (Pantops) along the City/County border. The Plan recommends protecting and restoring streambanks, removing invasive species, improving water quality, adding trail connections to nearby neighborhoods, conducting an inventory of historical and cultural resources, orienting and connecting development to the river, and developing a robust wayfinding system.

Other ongoing and future projects can continue to engage with the Rivanna River, including the Free Bridge Lane promenade, allowing small commercial uses along greenways to serve pedestrians and cyclists, and extending the Old Mills Trail to Milton. A bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Rivanna River near the existing vehicular-focused Free Bridge would also provide a safe, comfortable multimodal connection between the Pantops Development Area and the City of Charlottesville, creating more opportunities for residents and visitors to access recreational, retail, and employment opportunities.



View of the Rivanna River, next to Woolen Mills.

Increasing tree coverage in the Development Areas was a consistent community priority heard throughout the AC44 process. This chapter includes several actions for equitably increasing tree coverage, focused on ensuring native tree species can thrive, filling in gaps in existing neighborhoods, and ensuring trees and infrastructure fit well together. It also recommends a tiered system for tree coverage requirements for new development. Less tree coverage would be required as the intensity of the development increases, as higher-intensity land uses typically involve more land disturbance and impervious surface area. Denser and taller development also provide more opportunity for 'building up instead of out' or building taller and more densely to preserve more overall open space compared to larger lot development.

Along with implementing AC44's Parks Chapter, AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter and the Rivanna River Urban Corridor Plan, and increasing tree coverage in the Development Areas, there are other opportunities to increase access to nature and improve air and water quality. They include joining the I Biophilic Cities network, which encourages collaboration with other localities, contributions to the network's resource library, and tracking local biophilic indicators over time to measure progress. It also involves connecting and building on the area's 'green network', which ranges from parks to pollinator gardens to green roofs. These natural features and 'nature-based solutions' filter stormwater runoff, provide habitats for native species, provide shade, and create beautiful spaces for residents and visitors to spend time in nature.



Study area in the Rivanna River Urban Corridor Plan (TJPDC, 2022).

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	DALU 1: *Increase the use of infill, higher-density development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment in the Development Areas.*
ACTION	
1.1	Update the Zoning Ordinance to support infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment especially in Activity Centers.
1.2	Update the Zoning Ordinance to allow residential uses in commercial zoning districts by-right in some locations, especially in Activity Centers.
1.3	Develop public realm standards for Activity Centers and other identified mixed-use corridors to include elements such as shade trees, bike parking, street furniture, pedestrian-level lighting, and other elements that are consistent with the Community Design Guidelines.
1.4	Coordinate with VDOT for approval of urban street standards that are consistent with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Multimodal Design Guidelines.
1.5	Update the County's lighting requirements to reduce light spillover, glare, blue spectral content, and excessive brightness, prioritizing a safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially in mixed-use areas such as Activity Centers.
1.6	Use equitable and sustainable community and building design guidance to inform updates to standards and requirements, such as the American Institute of Architects' Framework for Design Excellence and Whole Building Design Guide's Green Building Standards and Certification Systems.
1.7	Establish incentives and identify opportunities for public-private partnerships to support redevelopment of underused areas in the Development Areas where infrastructure is already in place, such as for structured parking or connecting to public water and sewer.
1.8	Update the Land Use Buildout Analysis as set under the Development Area Utilization Review section in Part II of AC44. If estimated supply does not sufficiently exceed estimated demand over a 10-to-20-year time horizon, consider how other recommendations in this Plan could be leveraged to increase the capacity within the existing Development Areas.
1.9	Monitor the proportion of development occurring within the Development Areas compared with the Rural Area. If the proportion of residential development begins to increase in the Rural Area, develop options for further encouraging and directing growth to the Development Areas and discourage subdivisions in the Rural Area. (2024 baseline: 17% of new dwelling units in the Rural Area)
1.10	Continue participation in the Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee (LUEPC) and the Three-Party Agreement, including by coordinating with the University of Virginia on recommended land uses for Area A and Area B in the Development Areas.

OBJECTIVE	DALU 2: *Increase the number of living-wage jobs and housing units in designated Activity Centers and Employment Districts.*
ACTION	
2.1	Reduce or eliminate vehicle parking requirements, especially for non-residential land uses and in designated Activity Centers. Investigate parking maximums and shared parking requirements, especially in Regional Centers.
2.2	Establish a policy that encourages developers to support multimodal transportation infrastructure and program investment in exchange for a reduction in the minimum number of parking spaces needed for a development.
2.3	Update the County's residential bonus density requirements to remove the minimum lot size and street frontage requirements to allow for additional open/natural/recreational space to be retained and for amenity-oriented lots.
2.4	Identify and fund Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects that would support Activity Center development, such as multimodal transportation facilities, public parks and plazas, and other public infrastructure.
2.5	In Employment Districts, use tools, partnerships, and funding sources such as Capital Funding Grants and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Community Improvement Grants to support employment-generating land uses, especially those uses that are consistent with the County's target sectors for economic development.
OBJECTIVE	DALU 3: *Equitably invest in existing neighborhoods in the Development Areas with increased multimodal connectivity and equitable access to Activity Centers, parks, open space, and community facilities and services, and infrastructure improvements that prioritize underserved communities.*
ACTION	
3.1	Allow small-scale commercial uses along major off-road connections and greenways used by pedestrians and bicyclists. Small-scale commercial uses could include kiosks, food/drink stands, mobile libraries, and food trucks.
3.2	Use a multimodal systems planning approach to coordinate land use and transportation planning in the Development Areas, including connecting Activity Centers, Employment Districts, dense residential development, schools, parks, and other key destinations.
3.3	Coordinate with the Town of Scottsville on shared areas of interest, including opportunities for transportation improvements, parks and trails, and other public infrastructure projects, as well as opportunities for enhanced social/human services and affordable housing projects.
3.4	Integrate new public facility location choices with transit route, walking and biking infrastructure development and broadband/digital access capacity.
3.5	Collaborate with a representative range of community members to identify equitable and accessible locations and services for new public facilities.
3.6	Incorporate publicly accessible trails and green spaces and opportunities for contact with native ecosystems in the design of community facilities and public gathering spaces.

OBJECTIVE	DALU4: *Increase access to nature, green infrastructure, and tree coverage in the Development Areas.*
ACTION	
4.1	Update the street tree requirements in the Zoning Ordinance to provide appropriate spacing, soil volume, and buffers, and to require native species and increase biodiversity to ensure street trees can thrive and are more resilient to pests and disease.
4.2	Develop and apply tiered standards for tree coverage that are tiered based on residential density and intensity of non-residential uses.
4.3	Create grading and tree preservation requirements and/or incentives for new development and update the tree replacement requirements.
4.4	Collaborate with local partners, community organizations, and property owners to preserve and protect clusters or 'groves' of healthy and native canopy trees and to plant native street trees along corridors with few or significant gaps in street trees. Use data such as existing tree canopy and Tree Equity Score to prioritize tree planting locations.
4.5	Coordinate with VDOT to minimize the impact of street trees on VDOT infrastructure by using appropriate tree species.
4.6	Explore creating incentives or requirements in zoning and development processes for green infrastructure, including for stormwater management and for transportation infrastructure. Prioritize areas with significant impervious surface and higher heat vulnerability from the heat island effect.

AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

RURAL AREA LAND USE

GOAL: Albemarle County's Rural Area will have thriving farms and working forests, rural communities, protected water supplies, healthy ecosystems, and protected natural, historic, cultural, and scenic resources, with a land-use pattern based on large parcels suitably sized agricultural and silvicultural production and for unfragmented habitats. Land use in historic rural communities will prioritize adaptive reuse, historic preservation, water supply protection, energy efficiency, and businesses and services that support rural land uses and community members.



Batesville is a scenic crossroads community in the County's Rural Area.

Objective 1: Develop and implement policies for protecting rural land-use patterns in the Rural Area, especially for land conservation, agriculture, and forestry, while prioritizing large and unfragmented habitats.

Objective 2: Protect natural systems, water supplies, and historic and cultural resources through the implementation of natural area preservation, adaptive reuse, historic preservation, and education policies and practices.

Objective 3: Increase the use of land conservation programs to implement the Objectives of AC44's Rural Area Chapter and Environmental Stewardship Chapter.

Objective 4: Support local agricultural and forestry production and value-added processing.

Objective 5: Increase the adaptive reuse of existing structures in rural communities for uses that provide services and meet daily needs for rural residents.

Objective 6: Encourage land uses that support large and unfragmented rural properties while mitigating their potential impacts.

Objective 7: Plan for and manage non-residential land uses and existing development in the Rural Area.

CONTEXT

Albemarle County's Rural Area encompasses diverse landscapes ranging from the low-lying valleys of the Rivanna River and James River to the steep ridges of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Rural Area contains about 689 square miles encompassing 95% of the county. Within the Rural Area, the County's Growth Management Policy prioritizes the preservation of agricultural, forest, historic, cultural, and scenic resources.

The County equally prioritizes the conservation and restoration of the natural environment and ecosystems in the Rural Area. These natural resources provide tangible ecological benefits to community members in the form of clean drinking water and air quality, dark skies, and biodiversity preservation. The Rural Area also plays a critical role as one of the best defenses against climate change, including carbon sequestration. These daily benefits are shared by rural and urban residents alike.

Based on community input during the AC44 process, protecting waterways and dark skies continue to be community priorities. Nearly half of Rural Area land is in water supply watersheds for public drinking water supplies. The night sky is not only a source of beauty and wonder but also is essential for migrating birds. Light pollution is the biggest threat to the dark sky and primarily comes from overly bright and misdirected lighting sources. AC44's Cultural Resources Chapter provides recommendations for updating the County's lighting requirements to protect dark skies, while balancing the need for a safe environment, especially in the Development Areas.

In 1971, when the County's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted, about 60% of new residential development occurred in the Rural Area. That figure has since decreased to 16%. This dramatic change resulted primarily from the land conservation policies and subdivision regulations developed in the 1970s and the County's 1980 Zoning Ordinance update to meet preservation, conservation, and restoration objectives. While the rate of residential development in the Rural Area has decreased significantly over the past 50 years, it is essential to regularly monitor the ratio of development in the Rural Area compared to the Development Areas and to leverage land use and conservation tools in support of the Growth Management Policy. If the rate of residential development in the Rural Area starts to increase, especially in proportion to the Development Areas, then updates to these land use and conservation tools may be needed.

The Rural Area recommendations in this chapter are intended to balance the need for equitable access to services for the 43% of the county's population living in the Rural Area (as identified by the 2020 Census), while also being consistent with the Growth Management Policy. The farms, homes, and businesses owned by this population require some private and public services and facilities. Some of these services may be provided by small, rural-scale businesses, such as country stores. Other services are essential services for public safety and community facilities and include fire stations, community centers, and schools. Consistent with the Growth Management Policy, the level of public investments and services vary between the Rural Area and the Development Areas. This chapter prioritizes conservation of land in the Rural Area and provides policy guidance for residential uses in the Rural Area as well as the relative appropriateness for a variety of non-residential land uses. The Community Facilities chapter provides more guidance on public facilities and services in the Rural Area.



Rural roads are often recognized for their scenic qualities.

MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

From 2017 to 2022, the number of farms in the Rural Area decreased by 5% and the acreage of land in farms decreased by 8%, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture. The rate of residential development in the Rural Area has decreased since the 1990s and early 2000s, continuing at a lower but steady rate since the 2008 recession.

The Rural Area has diverse habitats and landscapes with essential resources that support residents, thriving businesses, native species, and ecosystems:

- About 46% of Rural Area land is in public water supply watersheds. Water in these areas drains into public water supplies such as the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir. These watersheds provide drinking water for the City of Charlottesville, the Town of Scottsville, and the County's Development Areas.
- About 25% of Rural Area land is protected by conservation easements.
- About 66% of the Rural Area is forest cover.
- About 29% of the county's land area is in 12 registered historic districts, which are primarily in the Rural Area.
- The County's Biodiversity Action Plan identifies large forest blocks, which are forests with 100 acres or more of interior forest. There are 179 large forest blocks in the county that comprise about 157,143 acres when including forest interior and edge habitat. The majority of these forest blocks are in the Rural Area.

While local agriculture faces challenges, farm loss in Albemarle County has been at a slower pace compared with Virginia overall:

- **About 38% of land in the Rural Area land is in farmland,** according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture. This percentage has not changed significantly over the last 30 years, but has declined overall since peaks in 1997 (41.8%) and 2017 (41.4%).
- Over 65% of Rural Area land has important soil for agriculture and about 94% has important soil for forestry.
- About 10% of farms practiced no-till planting and 8% of farms used cover crops. Both are important practices for water quality improvement and reduced emissions.
- The total value of agricultural products produced and sold in the county in 2022 was $43 million.
- Albemarle County ranks second in the state for fruit production.
- According to a study by the Virginia Office of Farmland Preservation, about 272,900 acres of farmland in Virginia were converted to low-density residential development from 2011 to 2016.
- Slightly more than half of U.S. farm households report losses from their farm businesses each year. Therefore, income losses for farms are not unique to Albemarle County. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture: "The proportion incurring farm losses is higher for households operating smaller farms, where most or all of their income is typically derived from off-farm activities."
- Residential development in the Rural Area has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years:
- From 2014 through 2023, an average of 128 dwelling units were built each year, ranging from a low of 76 units (2023) to a high of 153 units (2017). That finding reflects a 37% decrease in the average number of units built each year compared to the period from 1994 to 2013 (203-unit average).

RURAL AREA LAND USE APPROACH

The County's Rural Area and Growth Management policies establish the following land use approach for the Rural Area:

1. *Conserve and restore the natural environment, with a focus on water quality, as well as historic, cultural, and scenic resources.*
2. *Maintain large and unfragmented habitats to support a strong rural economy and the Objectives of AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter.*
3. *Discourage new residential development.*
4. *Support and promote primarily agricultural or forestry uses or supporting land uses to agriculture (e.g., food processing) or forestry. Other appropriate non-residential land uses are described later in this chapter (Objective 5 and Objective 7). Uses should also be evaluated based on their location and potential impacts.*
5. *Maintain distinct boundaries between the Development Areas and the Rural Area without 'transitional' development to avoid sprawl.*

Consistent with AC44, there will be future updates to the Zoning Ordinance for the Rural Area Zoning District. Potential new permitted uses in the Rural Area Zoning District should be evaluated based on the following considerations:

- Maintain and enhance land for working farms and commercial forestry operations.
- Protect, restore, and maintain land and water ecosystems and healthy water supplies.
- Maintain and enhance wildlife habitat connectivity.
- Preserve and enhance rural landscapes supporting historic resources.
- Support low-impact uses to encourage the economic viability of rural properties.
- Discourage residential growth and development and the related demand for increased public services.
- Require that uses are compatible in scale to the surrounding buildings, both in height and footprint.
- Promote uses that allow land to return to agricultural/forestry or conservation use.
- Promote opportunities for diverse revenue streams for agribusinesses (lodging, food service, recreation, or agritourism activities related to the primary agricultural use).
- Operate without public water and sewer.
- Minimize demand for groundwater.
- Serve rural areas via existing rural roads.
- Encourage uses of distributed power sources to increase the reliability of power.
- Consider broadband availability.

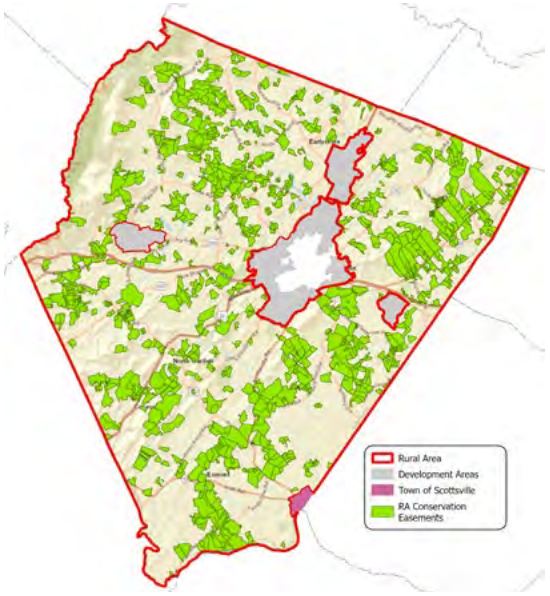
LAND CONSERVATION

Forests cover about two thirds of the Rural Area. Between 2008 and 2016, forests and other natural land cover in Albemarle County sequestered an average of nearly 1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, with forests contributing the most.

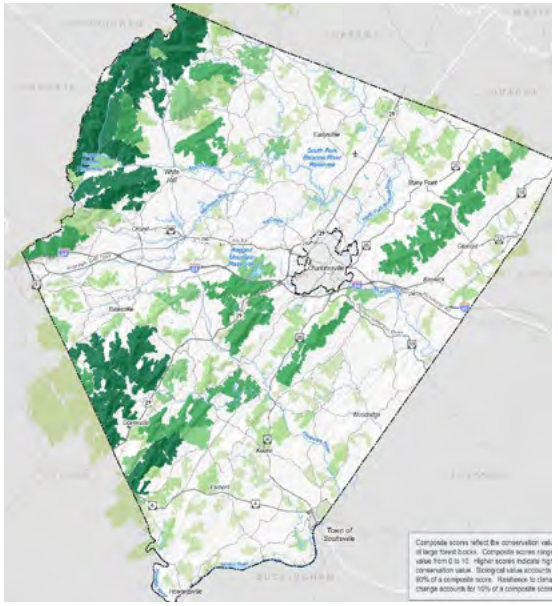
The Rural Area is also the primary source of the public water drinking supply supporting the Development Areas and the City of Charlottesville. The watersheds of the reservoirs and river-water intakes that supply public water to the community cover about 319 square miles of the Rural Area.

Between 2006 and 2019, about 25,000 acres of forested land were converted to other uses. This highlights the importance of land conservation to achieve the County's land use and climate action priorities in the Rural Area. Ten organizations, including the County and the County-appointed Albemarle Conservation Easement Authority (ACEA), hold voluntary permanent conservation easements that limit development and protect resources on rural land. About 112,000 acres (about 25% of the Rural Area) have been protected by easements. Of that total, over 30,000 acres are easements held by the County and/or the ACEA. These conservation easements benefit all community members by helping to maintain a clean water supply and biodiversity. Land conservation also has fiscal benefits for the community, as land in open space uses requires less in public expenditures than the same land converted to residential uses, and also supports outdoor sports such as hunting and fishing.

The County's land conservation programs are necessary to support the Growth Management Policy, preserve large tracts of land, make land conservation possible for lower-income rural landowners whose land is at risk of sale for development, and protect important areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan.



Map of existing conservation easements in Albemarle County (January 2024).



Map of large forest blocks in the county.

RURAL AREA LAND USE PLAN

Previous Comprehensive Plans treated land uses in the Rural Area as a single land use category and showed them as a single land use type for all 689 square miles on future land use maps. AC44 includes a recommended action to develop and adopt a Rural Area Land Use Plan (see Action 1.1). Rather than a 'one size fits all' approach, a Rural Area Land Use Plan would recognize that the Rural Area is a mosaic of different land uses and natural areas, including biodiversity-rich areas, rural communities, scenic views, heritage properties, and historic districts. This approach for the Rural Area Land Use Plan would include conservation and restoration of natural, historical, cultural, and scenic resources and appropriate small and rural-scale land uses. AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter provides more recommendations for protecting and restoring the natural environment.



Natural and scenic resources are important aspects of the Rural Area.

RECOMMENDED SUPPORTING RURAL LAND USES

There are rural-scale land uses and public facilities appropriate in the Rural Area to support agriculture, forestry, and existing rural communities, and would expand opportunities for diverse revenue streams. Industrial uses should augment local agriculture and forestry and be at appropriate locations in the Rural Area to mitigate potential impacts. Marketing local foods and agricultural products is assisted by the availability of local distribution and aggregation facilities such as warehouses for locally grown produce and meat. These facilities need to be located on public roads supporting traffic. These collection and distribution facilities help connect farms to consumers and provide more opportunities for agricultural uses to thrive in the Rural Area. Large commercial distribution centers such as department store warehouses are not appropriate in the Rural Area.



Community garden at Yancey Community Center.

For rural communities, supporting land uses include essential public safety services and daily needs for rural residents that can use existing buildings, such as health care (including small-scale doctors/ dentist offices and mobile clinics), childcare, fire/rescue and police services, job training programs, community gathering spaces, country stores/ small-scale markets, local artisans/ crafters, daycare, post offices, emergency shelters, and access to affordable and healthy food.

Community input supported the concept of Community Resilience Hubs and emphasized the importance of identifying options for providing or supporting essential services such as food access, community gardens, internet/phone service/broadband, emergency preparedness and response, and places for community gathering.

Existing historic structures can provide opportunities for adaptive reuse and often have a building scale and footprint consistent with the surrounding rural character.

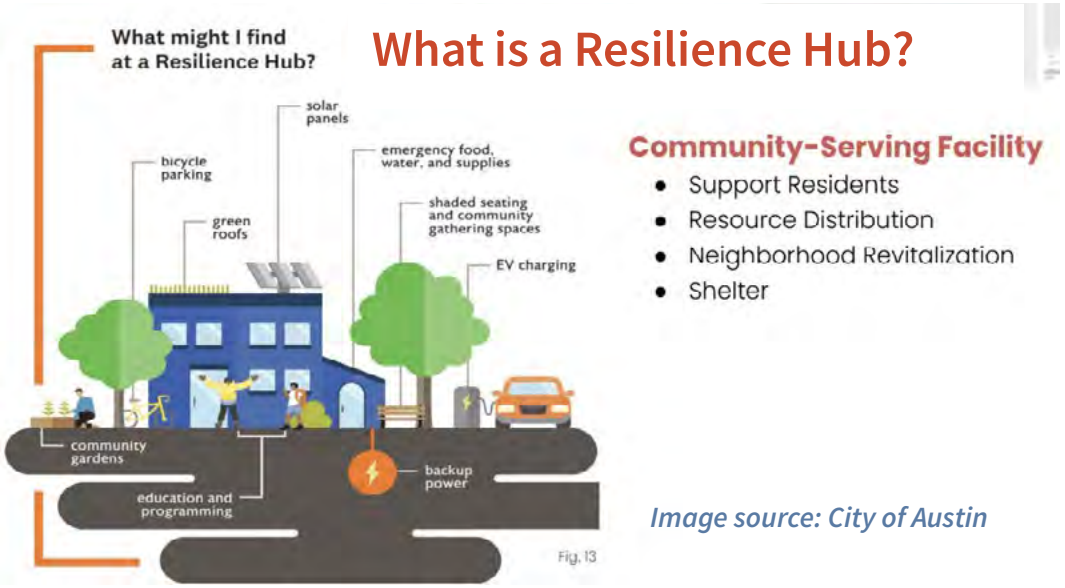


Image source: City of Austin

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	RALU 1. *Develop and implement policies for protecting rural land-use patterns in the Rural Area, especially for land conservation, agriculture, and forestry, while prioritizing large parcels and connected habitats.*
ACTION	
1.1	Develop and adopt a Rural Area Land Use Plan to provide recommendations for the range of land conservation needs and land uses in the Rural Area, including agriculture, forestry, and rural communities. The Rural Area Land Use Plan will be adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan and: • Recognize multiple geographic areas within the Rural Area with specific conservation needs, rather than a "one size fits all" approach. • Provide recommendations for conserving and restoring native ecosystems, wildlife habitat connectivity, biodiversity, aquatic ecosystems and healthy water supplies. • Provide recommendations for protecting the Rural Area to maintain and enhance land for working farms and commercial forestry operations as well as rural landscape contexts for historic resources. • Include a geographic analysis of conservation needs in the Rural Area and identify an approach for designating and protecting focus areas across the Rural Area. • Include a map of rural focus areas identifying conservation priorities and proposed land use.
1.2	Develop location standards for renewable energy land uses in the Rural Area, such as utility-scale solar, and implement the Climate Action Plan while protecting forests and other important landscapes.
1.3	Establish routine annual meetings with the University of Virginia to review plans for the Rural Area properties held by both the University and the University of Virginia Foundation (Area B) for compliance with AC44.
OBJECTIVE	RALU 2. *Protect natural systems, water supplies, and historic resources through the implementation of natural area preservation, adaptive reuse, historic preservation, and education policies and practices.*
ACTION	
2.1	Update ordinance requirements for permitted by-right residential development to encourage maintenance and restoration of native forest vegetation and vegetated stream buffers per the Stream Health Initiative.
2.2	Evaluate Special Use Permits and development applications based on considerations including the presence of rare habitats and species, as identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan or as designated endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2.3	Petition the Commonwealth for revised enabling legislation to permit adoption of updated requirements for clustered subdivisions ("rural preservation developments") in the Rural Area. If successful, revise the rural preservation development design standards in the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the total area of these subdivisions used for residential lots, and to increase protection of soils and natural systems.
2.4	Assess the creation of a transfer of development rights program for the Rural Area.
OBJECTIVE	**RALU 3.** ***Increase the use of land conservation programs to implement the Objectives of AC44's Rural Area Chapter and Environmental Stewardship Chapter.***
ACTION	
3.1	Revise the Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Ordinance to: • Clarify scoring requirements for candidate properties including definitions and scoring criteria that target easements on lands with large forest blocks and other priority areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan. The process should include completion of the scoring-system update process reviewed by the ACE Committee in 2021. • Reactivate the ACE program to make land conservation possible for lower-income landowners. • Source predictable funding for easement purchases.
3.2	Conduct outreach to landowners in high-priority conservation areas as identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan to encourage and support voluntary land conservation through donated and purchased conservation easements.
3.3	Align monitoring and enforcement staffing for management of County- and ACEA-held conservation easements to be sufficient to review all easements annually.
3.4	Provide landowner outreach, support, and public education to increase awareness and understanding of the County's land conservation programs.
3.5	Update tree protection and replacement requirements to limit tree removal and increase number of trees replanted for mitigation.
3.6	Provide subject matter expertise and data regarding county land held in easements to other organizations operating conservation easement programs in the county.

OBJECTIVE	RALU 4. *Support local agricultural and forestry production and value-added processing.*
ACTION	
4.1	Use land-conservation tools to reduce the conversion of rural land for agriculture and forestry to other uses such as residential, commercial, and large-scale utility uses.
4.2	Update zoning regulations to allow appropriately scaled rural light industrial and commercial uses that support local processing and retail sales for local agriculture and forestry on properties with agricultural and silvicultural uses.
4.3	Increase opportunities for by-right farm worker housing in support of agricultural and forestry production and develop performance standards that meet or exceed state and federal requirements.
4.4	Update the Zoning Ordinance to permit warehouse and distribution facilities for locally produced goods in the Rural Area.
4.5	Revise the regulations for 'special events' so they are possible on registered historic properties or heritage properties with property ingress and egress onto public roads. Review and update noise regulations to limit the impacts of amplified sound from permitted events.
4.6	Through incentives and partnerships, adopt beneficial agricultural practices for building healthy soil and sequestering carbon to meet County climate action and mitigation goals.
OBJECTIVE	RALU 5. *Increase the adaptive reuse of existing structures in rural communities for uses that provide services and meet daily needs for rural residents.*
ACTION	
5.1	After conducting community engagement through the Zoning Modernization project, allow updated uses in existing non-residential structures in rural communities, prioritizing adaptive reuse of existing older structures and small-scale commercial uses that provide services and meet daily needs for rural residents. Examples of land uses include health care (including small-scale doctors/dentist offices and mobile clinics), fire/rescue and police services, job training programs, community gathering spaces, country stores/small-scale markets, local artisans/crafters, daycare, post offices, emergency shelters, and access to food. Small-scale uses should be similar in building height and footprint as existing non-residential buildings in the Rural Area, such as existing country stores and offices. Buildings should generally be 1 to 2 stories and have a building footprint of 5,000 square feet or smaller. When the proposed accessory use is a restaurant, the following considerations should be used when weighing appropriateness: 1) impact on existing water and sewer facilities; 2) road capacity; and 3) impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding rural character. These uses may be informed by performance standards. Use the considerations in the 'Rural Area Land Use Approach' for updating the Zoning Ordinance to guide which uses are appropriate to allow. Allowed uses should either have performance standards or be allowed by the special use permit process to address and mitigate impacts. Some uses should be prohibited.

OBJECTIVE	RALU 6. *Encourage land uses that support large and unfragmented rural properties while mitigating their potential impacts.*
ACTION	
6.1	Add small-scale, outdoor recreation uses (not to include indoor lodging) that have minimal impact on natural resources, infrastructure, and adjacent properties to the list of uses permitted in the Rural Area zoning district, especially where these uses can co-exist with rather than replace existing agricultural and silvicultural uses.
OBJECTIVE	RALU 7. *Plan for and manage non-residential land uses and existing development in the Rural Area.*
ACTION	
7.1	Use existing buildings and community facilities as community resilience hubs. AC44's Community Facilities & Infrastructure Chapter lists actions related to resilience hubs.
7.2	Develop community plans that support the recommendations in this chapter and enhance the quality of life of rural communities. Community plans should include recommended land uses, transportation improvements, private well and septic feasibility for any potential new land uses, historic or cultural resources to protect or adaptively reuse, and natural areas to protect and restore. Potential land use changes should prioritize small-scale uses that serve the surrounding community, such as country stores, offices, daycare, medical services/offices, community resilience hubs, and public institutional uses (e.g., community centers, schools, fire/rescue stations, post offices).
7.3	Review and update existing commercial and industrial zoning for properties in the Rural Area. The process should prioritize land use and zoning opportunities to support agricultural, recreational, silvicultural, and related/supporting industries in these locations.
7.4	Protect human health, property values, and ecosystem health from the impacts of extraction, recognizing the areas in the county where mineral extraction is permitted (natural resource extraction overlay). Require development plans or plats to include a note regarding mineral rights to notify potential future property owners.



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TRANSPORTATION

DEVELOPMENT AREAS GOAL:
Albemarle County's transportation network will meet the mobility needs of all roadway users by increasing safe, comfortable, and accessible options for walking, biking, transit, and driving. The transportation network will provide multimodal travel to vital destinations and use placemaking to encourage mode shift and enhance quality of life.



Shops at Stonefield streetscape.

DEVELOPMENT AREAS OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Develop transportation plans to create safe, comfortable, and accessible multimodal connections between key locations in the Development Areas.

Objective 2: Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and connectivity to support future land use policies and support safe, comfortable, and convenient travel for people of all ages and abilities.

Objective 3: Through regional planning, deliver increased reliability and frequency of public transit service.

Objective 4: Increase the efficiency and connectivity of the transportation network.

Objective 5: Strengthen regional and intercity transportation.

Objective 6: Reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Objective 7: Promote sustainable and equitable transportation solutions, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions particularly through a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

RURAL AREA GOAL: *Albemarle County's transportation network in the Rural Area will balance the mobility needs of Rural Area residents and the movement of goods. The transportation network will connect Rural Area residents to vital destinations and provide recreation opportunities where feasible while maintaining a rural character.*



Street crossing in the Rural Area.

RURAL AREA OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Prioritize investment in Rural Area transportation projects that improve safety and maintain rural character.

Objective 2: Improve the regional transit system to serve commuters and residents in the Rural Area and surrounding counties requiring connections to the Development Areas for basic needs.

Objective 3: Reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Objective 4: Improve Rural Area community members' equitable access to walking and bicycling opportunities for transportation and recreation where feasible and appropriate to support healthy, active lifestyles, and create opportunities for social interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Multimodal transportation planning in Albemarle County aims to create safe, accessible, and efficient travel options to support the movement of people and goods. Historically, U.S. transportation projects have focused on moving cars quickly, often at the expense of pedestrian and cyclist safety. Additionally, land use and development patterns have incentivized housing farther from urban centers, leading to dependence on personally owned vehicles and under-investment in transit systems. However, to promote equity and reduce environmental impacts, expanding transportation choice is increasingly critical.

Achieving a high-quality multimodal transportation network will take decades, with investments from the public and private sectors. The recommendations in AC44 provide a long-term vision that will be implemented incrementally as funding becomes available and opportunities arise. Future transportation planning will build on AC44 and provide more detailed guidance, especially in the Development Areas.

A successful transportation implementation strategy will:

- Support the land use strategies outlined in the Development Areas Land Use Chapter and the Rural Area Land Use Chapter of AC44.
- Focus resource investment on locations where it has the highest impact on the greatest number of community members.
- Prioritize local funding and relevant Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) grants for multimodal improvements, while using VDOT SMART SCALE grants to focus on vehicular operations and safety improvements that also enhance multimodal options.
- Build the County's capacity to fund, construct, and administer more projects.

The County's Growth Management Policy works in tandem with AC44's transportation policies. The Growth Management Policy's central tenet directs future growth and increasing density into the Development Areas and where it is more efficient and cost effective to provide transit services and multimodal infrastructure. A second tenet of the policy to mix employment, housing, and residential uses shortens the average travel distance, making it easier to use alternative travel modes and reduce vehicle miles traveled. As a result, ***the County's transportation policies place more emphasis on developing a robust multimodal transportation system in the Development Areas while still striving to maintain safe and efficient travel in the Rural Area.***



A robust multimodal transportation system is an important part of the County's transportation policies for the Development Areas.

MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

Transportation is a key aspect of quality of life and affordability in the community. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector is also an important part of implementing the County's Climate Action Plan and meeting the target of zero net emissions by 2050. The following data inform the recommendations in this chapter. They should be monitored over time to track progress and identify where changes in strategies are needed.

QUALITY OF LIFE/AFFORDABILITY

Housing and transportation costs are closely tied together. While housing is typically more expensive in urban and walkable areas, transportation costs are lower. As housing costs rise, more low and moderate-income households may be forced to move away from Albemarle County, resulting in longer commute times for people employed in the County or the City of Charlottesville. While some in-commuters prefer to live in other localities, other people may want to live closer but are unable to afford the higher housing costs in the County and City.

- The national Housing and Transportation Affordability Index (H+T Index) considers the average combined cost of housing and transportation for each locality. In Albemarle County in 2024, combined housing and transportation costs accounted for 45% of a household's annual income, on average. Transportation alone accounted for 18% of household income, or $15,860 on average annually. Since 2021, the annual household transportation costs have increased by about $2,000.
- According to the same H+T Index, the average Albemarle County household vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2024 were 19,514. VMT are a major driver of greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector. Since 2021, the annual VMT has decreased by about 3,000 miles in Albemarle County.
- The ability to live closer to work, shopping, and school also reduces how far people need to drive. Albemarle County's average commute is 22 minutes; the average commute in several adjacent counties is 30 to 40 minutes. Many residents in these counties commute into the County and City for work. Given that many vehicles are fossil-fuel powered, air quality along those commuting routes is negatively affected. (Source: U.S. Census, 2019-2023 American Community Survey [ACS] 5-year data, Table S0801





Multimodal connections are critical next to dense development.

Multimodal transportation planning is critical for addressing climate change. The following numbers illustrate the significant room for improvement in transportation infrastructure and trip choice:

- In 2022, based on the County's most recent emissions report, greenhouse gas emissions from transportation accounted for about 44.7% of the County's calculated total emissions. This was the highest share out of all emissions sectors, which includes buildings, waste, and agriculture/landscape.
- Between 2019 and 2023, about two thirds of county residents commuted to work by driving alone, while less than 5% walked, bicycled, or used public transit. The work-from-home rate has more than doubled since the 2015-2019 data collection period, reducing solo driving and traffic congestion. (Source: U.S. Census, 2019-2023 ACS 5-year data, Table S0801.)

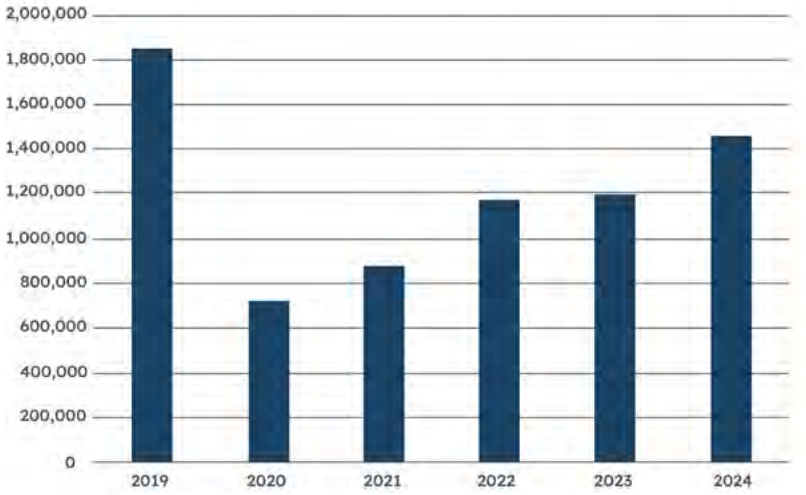
By integrating land use and transportation planning, the County aims to facilitate the development of diverse housing and employment, especially in the Activity Centers, enabling residents to live closer to work, retail, and shopping destinations. This approach reduces household spending on housing and transportation while reducing vehicle miles traveled. The mixed-use development planned for in the Activity Centers encourages walking and cycling enhancing safety and accessibility. Additionally, expanding transportation options supports the County's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Jaunt provides demand response para-transit for a service area that is outside of a ¾-mile buffer from Charlottesville Area Transit's (CAT's) fixed bus routes. Jaunt provides a similar service for the County's Rural Area and other rural counties, linking them with the County and the City of Charlottesville for access to medical and social services, employment, shopping, and social and educational resources.

- From July 2023 to June 2024, Jaunt's ADA and Rural Demand Response served 56,970 passenger trips, traveled 337,429 miles, and provided 23,889 service hours in Albemarle County. (Source: DRPT Transit Performance Data Dashboard)
- Jaunt operates four CONNECT commuter fixed routes. Two routes serve Buckingham and Nelson counties and two routes in Albemarle County serve Crozet and Route 29 North. From July 2023 to June 2024, the two Albemarle County CONNECT routes served 23,948 passenger trips, traveled 105,325 miles, and provided 5,132 service hours.

For fixed-route bus service, county residents can use CAT, which serves the City of Charlottesville and urban areas in the county (portions of Places29, the Southern and Western Neighborhoods, and Pantops). As of August 2025, CAT continues to be fare-free. In 2023, Albemarle County and CAT launched MicroCAT, a new on-demand transit rideshare service. MicroCAT provides a transit option in a portion of the Development Areas that matches passengers traveling in the same direction in shared minivans. The service helps address "transit deserts" – areas that fixed routes cannot reach efficiently. Funding for MicroCAT will be reviewed with each County budget cycle.

Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) Ridership, 2019-2024



Source: Dept. of Rail & Public Transit

COMMUTER MODE-SHARE, 2019 TO 2023



- From July 2023 to June 2024, there were 1,374,671 CAT bus passengers. Ridership continues to recover from the decline that started before the COVID-19 pandemic. (Source: DRPT Transit Performance Data Dashboard)
- MicroCAT operates in two areas – Pantops and Route 29 North – both identified as areas of high need for increased mobility access in a 2022 transit study. In 2024, there were 51,643 rides using MicroCAT.

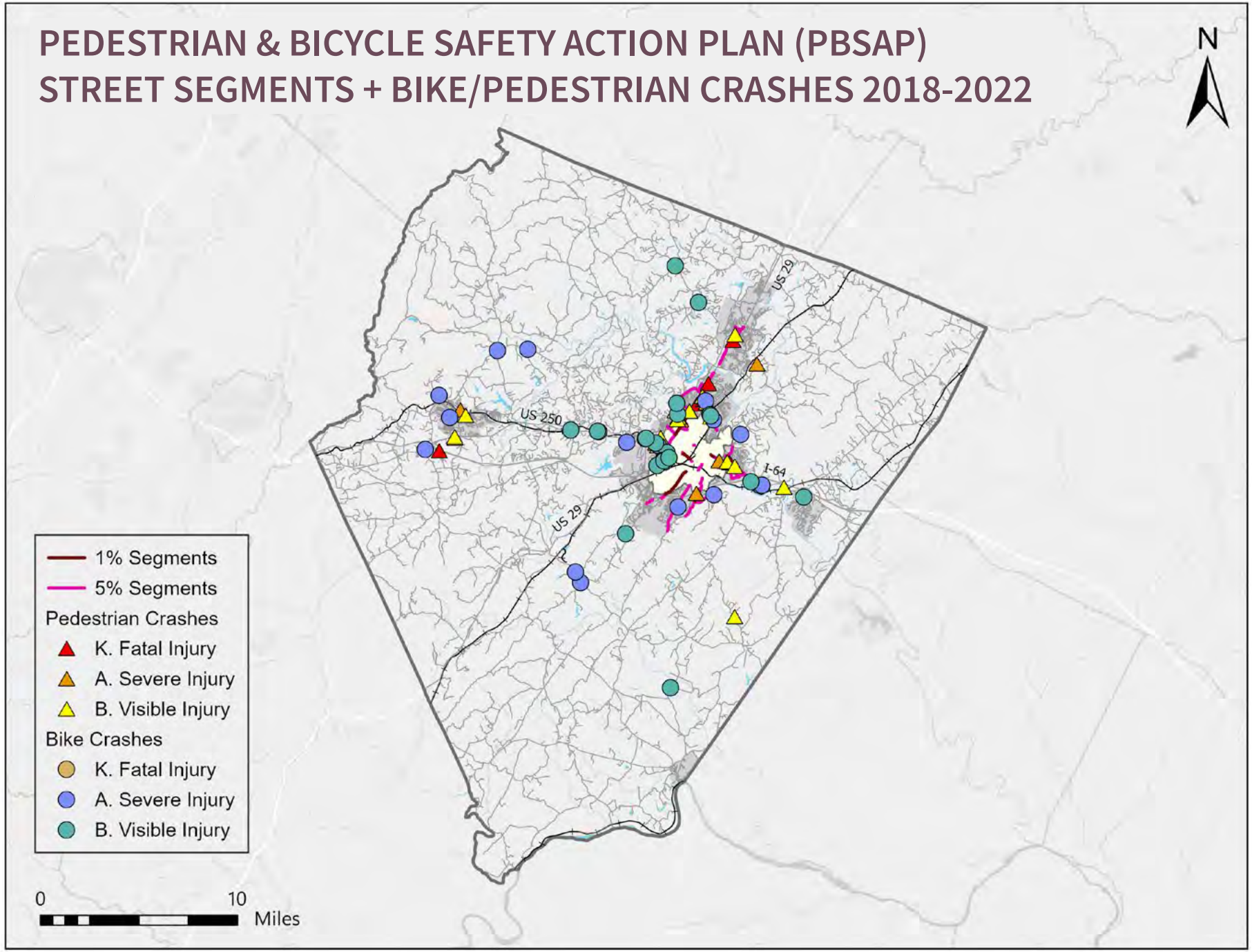
SAFETY

Safety is a priority in the County's multimodal transportation planning. From 2011 to 2022, U.S. pedestrian deaths increased 68%, with 7,522 fatalities in 2022. Cyclist deaths increased 13%, to 1,105 fatalities. In the county from 2018 to 2022, there were 72 fatal crashes, with 77 total fatalities and 708 serious crashes resulting in 798 serious injuries (Source: Move Safely Blue Ridge Safety Action Plan). VDOT calculated comprehensive fatal crash costs of $15,446,715 and serious injury costs of $903,948. While road projects aimed at improving vehicular safety and travel efficiency are important, designing infrastructure with safety in mind for all road users is the priority for the County.

The County relies on VDOT data, including pedestrian and bicycle crashes and the Potential for Safety Improvements (PSI) database, to identify and prioritize hazardous road sections. PSI provides a snapshot of high-risk areas but does not predict future safety issues. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan (PBSAP) also provides valuable direction for multimodal corridor safety improvements.

VDOT's V-Trans Mid-Term Needs is a policy guide created by the Commonwealth Transportation Board that identifies and prioritizes transportation needs for the next 10 years. It includes priority locations for pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements and guides localities on best strategies to prioritize improvements in conjunction with Safe Streets for All and the Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program. Some identified projects will need further study so revenue sharing and SMART SCALE grant applications for funding can be submitted.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE SAFETY ACTION PLAN (PBSAP)
STREET SEGMENTS + BIKE/PEDESTRIAN CRASHES 2018-2022



TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

DEVELOPMENT AREA CHALLENGES

The County aims to create a transportation network that meets the needs of all users. However, the County faces common challenges found in most localities such as high peak-hour demand, a fragmented multimodal network, and limited funding. With 66% of working residents commuting alone and rising housing costs pushing workers into long commutes, congestion is expected to grow as the population increases by 31,000 people by 2044.

Expanding road capacity is costly. It often leads to induced demand, making multimodal solutions – transit, biking, and walking – essential. Induced demand is when drivers change their transportation mode choice or relocate their place of residence or employment, to take advantage of increased roadway capacity.

A well-planned multimodal system supports dense, mixed-use development, improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality. However, the county's infrastructure remains car-centric, with limited pedestrian, bike, and transit accommodations.

VDOT owns and maintains nearly all public roads in the county, controlling design standards for new and existing infrastructure. Current VDOT standards tend to prioritize efficient vehicular movement over other modes, with wide travel lanes and minimal traffic-calming measures that can lead to higher travel speeds, which ultimately result in a higher rate of severe and fatal crashes, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. This becomes particularly problematic when constructing roads for peak-hour demand which results in open roadways that encourage speeding and disobedience of traffic safety regulations.

VDOT also administers many transportation infrastructure funding programs. More broadly, limited funding at all levels – local, state, and federal – amid rising project costs challenges multimodal planning efforts. Costs across every transportation project phase – preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction – have risen sharply over the previous decade. And yet, funding for transportation projects is difficult to obtain and highly competitive, with long delays between allocation and availability of funds.

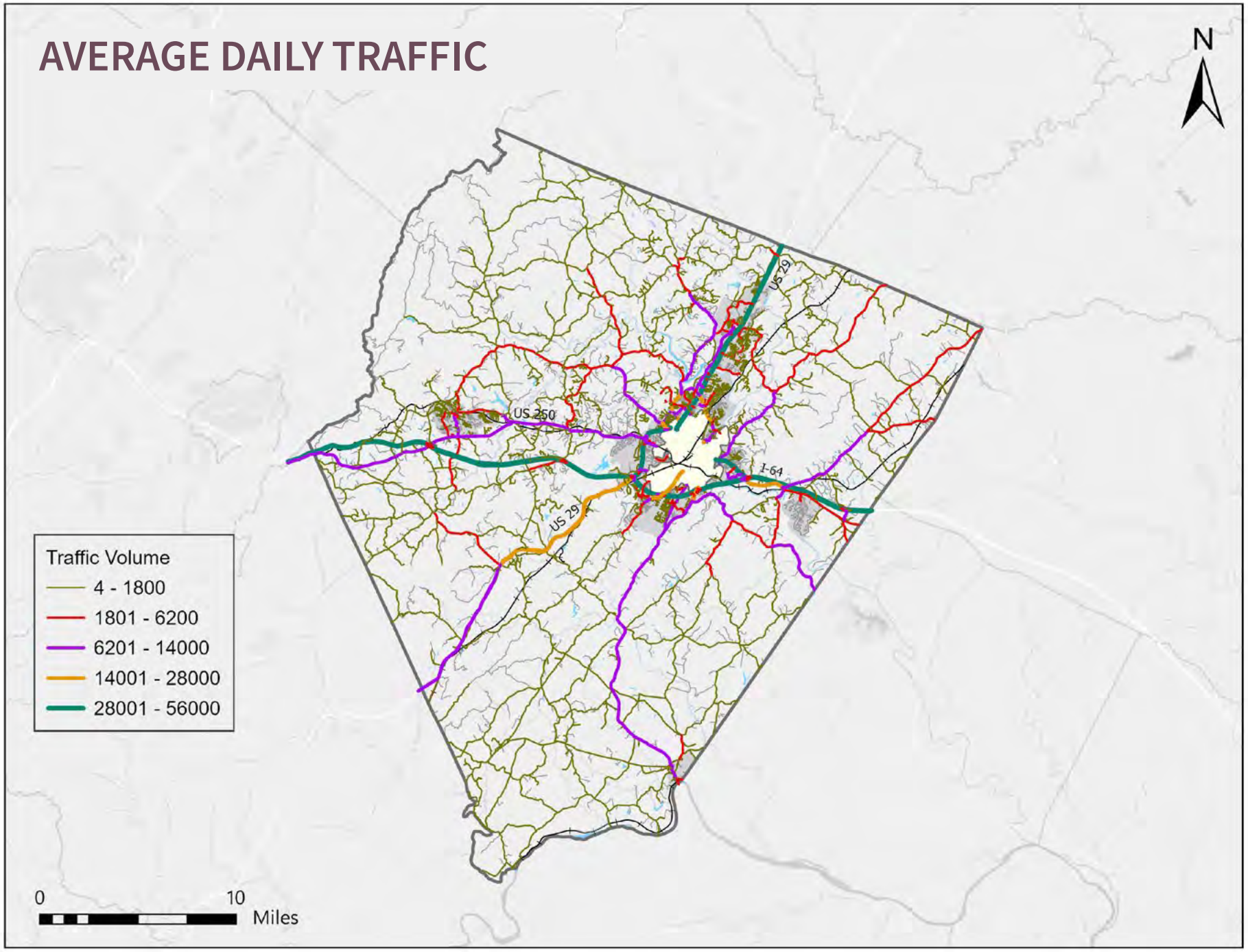
Limited local funds make small-scale projects difficult to implement outside larger state-funded initiatives. Additionally, inter-jurisdictional coordination is essential but complex, requiring collaboration with state and regional partners.

To address these challenges, the County plans to develop a Multimodal Transportation Plan to gain greater control over road design and to prioritize projects amid funding limitations. Increasing investment in small to mid-sized bike, pedestrian, and transit projects is critical to building a connected, multimodal network.



The intersection of U.S. Route 29 (Seminole Trail) and Rio Road East.

AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC



RURAL AREA CHALLENGES

Since VDOT owns and maintains all public roads in Albemarle County, collaboration with VDOT is essential to managing the rural roadway network in a way that serves rural communities effectively.

While roadway safety is a challenge in the Development Areas, the rural roadways in Albemarle County present a different set of safety issues. These challenges include narrow, windy roads with little clear zone or shoulder next to the roadways. Vehicular collisions with wildlife is another challenge that may occur more often in the Rural Area than in more urban parts of the county. Roadways can have a barrier effect on wildlife movement. Over the past 20 years, studies have shown that wildlife crossings (overpasses and underpasses) are an effective way to provide connectivity for wildlife, reduce costly collisions, and reduce threats to wildlife biodiversity.

Finally, Rural Area multimodal transportation needs differ from those in the Development Areas. An aging rural population requires some level of transit service to access their basic needs. Biking, running, and walking does occur on rural roads for many reasons, often for recreation, exercise, to visit neighbors, or to access resources in crossroad communities. Pedestrian safety on narrow roads can be an issue, particularly when roads are improved without those existing uses taken into consideration. Planning for transportation needs to consider these valid existing uses.



Many rural roads are recognized for their scenic qualities.

PRIORITIES

DEVELOPMENT AREAS PRIORITIES

In the Development Areas, transportation planning focuses on meeting the mobility needs of all community members by increasing safe, comfortable, and accessible transportation options. The transportation network will include multimodal connections to daily destinations and incorporate placemaking strategies to encourage mode shifts (switching transportation methods) and enhance quality of life.

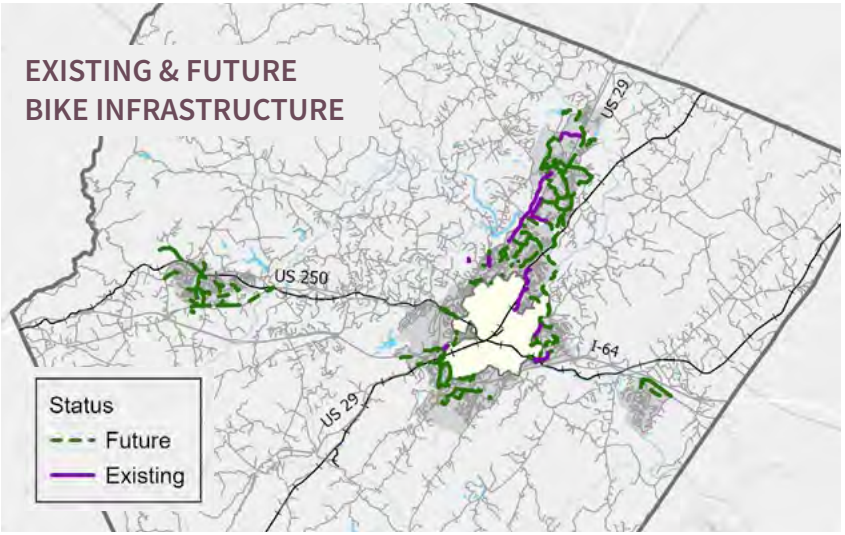
Coordinated land use and transportation planning is an important aspect of creating walkable, vibrant, and mixed-use Development Areas. Land use recommendations guide how and where Albemarle County will grow, including accommodating demand for housing, businesses, and recreational spaces. Multimodal transportation planning connects neighborhoods, Activity Centers, Employment Districts, schools, parks, and other key destinations. Additionally, land use recommendations impact human experience and the feasibility of transportation options, such as ensuring sufficient density for transit to be viable and walking or biking to destinations to be feasible. When streets are designed as public spaces with sidewalks, street trees, and seating for restaurants, they are more active and adjacent storefronts are more successful.

Activity Centers, as outlined in AC44's Development Areas Land Use Chapter, are a key implementation tool for coordinated land use and transportation planning. Activity Centers encourage a variety of businesses, services, and housing options that are connected by multimodal transportation options with access to high-quality open and recreational spaces. Activity Centers envision communities where people can walk, bike, or take transit to and from a wide array of housing choices and the daily destinations where they shop, work, and recreate. Implementation requires investments in public infrastructure, amenities, and services to support higher-intensity land uses that are also attractive places to live and visit.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

To encourage more people to walk and bike in Albemarle County (including accessing transit stops), improvements and more connections are needed to ensure that these modes are safe and comfortable. Investment in pedestrian improvements should support the creation of highly walkable nodes in the Development Areas linking pedestrians to where they want to go. This means prioritizing filling in the gaps in the existing sidewalk network and making roads safer for pedestrians to cross. Second, pedestrian projects should seek to connect Activity Centers to neighborhoods, schools, and parks that may be in or next to the Activity Center. Finally, pedestrian travel should be a major consideration with all infrastructure projects, both privately and publicly funded.

Investment in bicycle infrastructure should focus on creating safe bike facilities that connect Activity Centers. Initially, the focus should be developing an arterial network of bike lanes and shared use paths located along roads or as greenways within open space. The feedback heard during the AC44 Comprehensive Plan update emphasized the need for walking and biking infrastructure that is separated from vehicular traffic. Sidewalks and pathways also need to be accessible to all users, including people with strollers and wheelchairs.



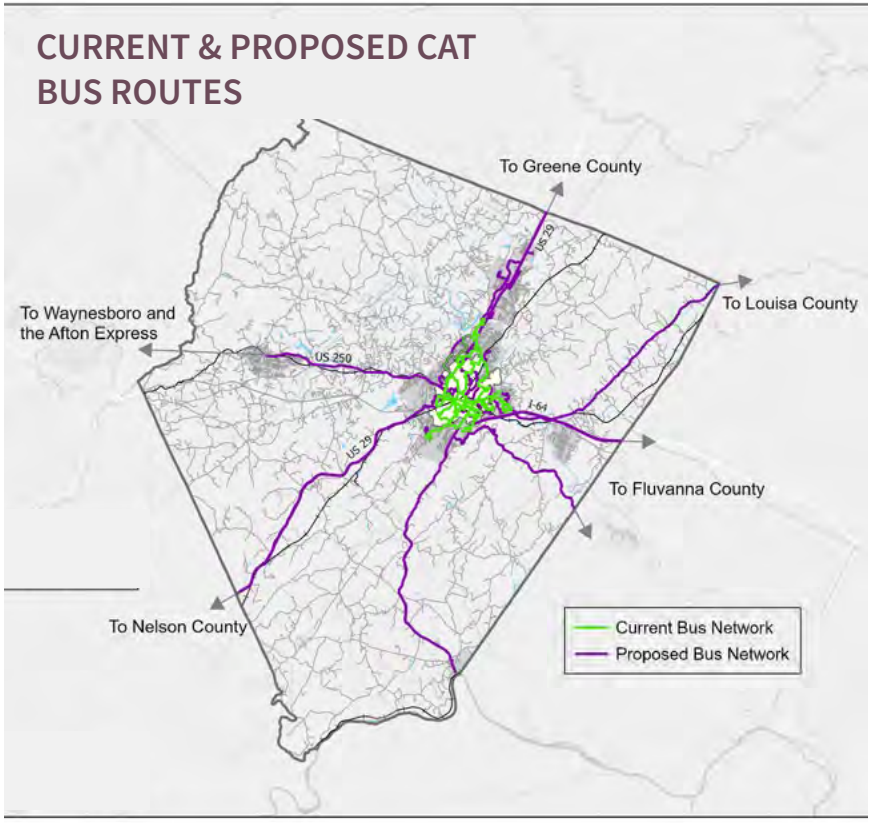
TRANSIT

Frequent, reliable future transit service should increase connectivity among the Activity Centers and occur frequently. Where favorable, microtransit service (such as MicroCat) can help solve the "first/last mile" problem to get users to their destinations. Microtransit can be a compliment to decreasing transit route times by increasing frequency, throughput, and efficiency.

Transit planning often occurs across jurisdictions and regional coordination is necessary. For that reason, Virginia's General Assembly authorized the creation of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Regional Transit Authority (CARTA) in 2009. Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville are the current members of CARTA. The Authority focuses on promoting the development of regional transit services that provide an alternative to driving on increasingly congested area roadways and uses the 2022 Regional Transit Vision Plan as a guide for project prioritization and investment.



The CONNECT service is a commuter service design to pick up and drop of users at fixed stops.



VEHICLE (AUTO/FREIGHT)

While expansion of existing roads (adding more lanes) does not reduce congestion in the long term, well-designed new roads and/or bridges can expand the network and better distribute traffic. Therefore, the County will continue to identify and construct new facilities where necessary. Additionally, the County will continue to work with VDOT and its regional partners to identify where maintenance is needed and request needed repairs to existing infrastructure. The Existing and Future Roadways Map shows roads that the County is pursuing for implementation. The Area Plans highlight other proposed roadway improvements.

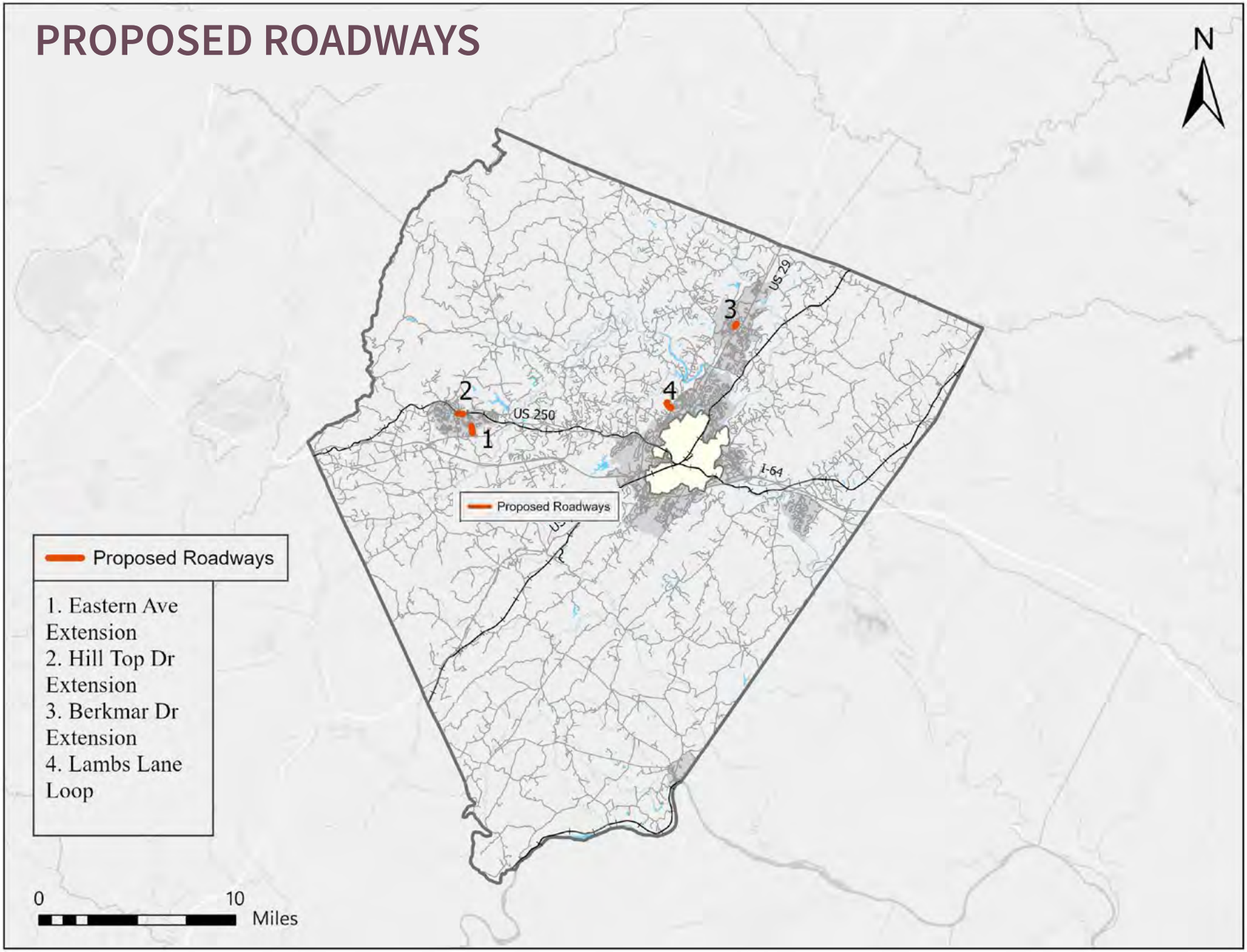
AIR & RAIL

Air and rail travel in Albemarle County is largely administered by private or quasi-public agencies outside of the County government. State and federal agencies provide oversight. The County participates in the administration of air travel as a member of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport Authority. Air service is provided through Charlottesville Albemarle Airport, a commercial airport in northern Albemarle County. The County's priority related to air service is to continue to support the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport Authority and its master plan for future development.

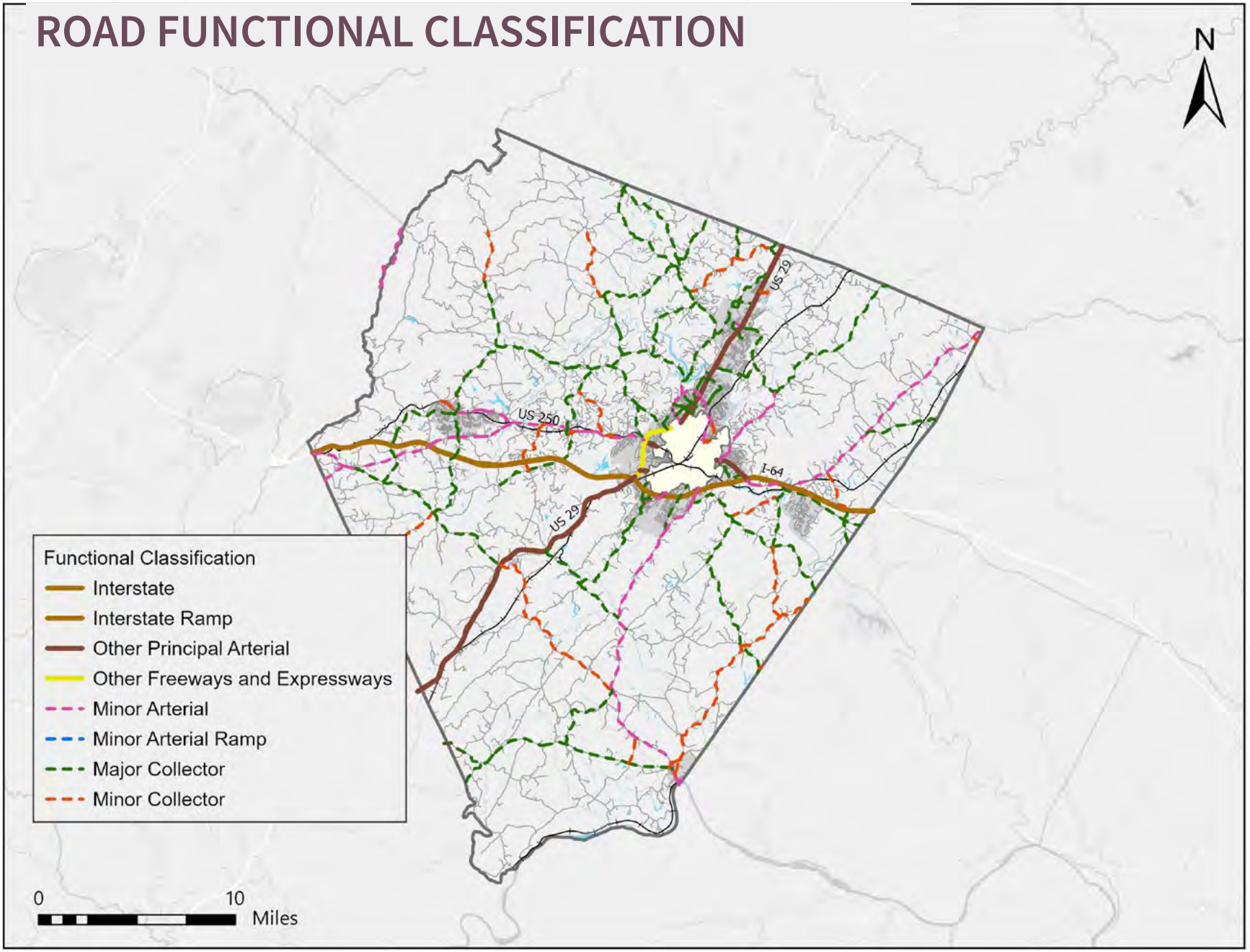
Amtrak provides passenger rail service from Charlottesville to New York City, Washington, D.C., and Roanoke as well as destinations beyond. The County supports an increased frequency of existing north-south Amtrak trains as a viable alternative to increasing regional traffic on Route 29 and other area roads. The County also supports The Commonwealth Corridor project to increase east-west passenger train service from the tidewater region to western parts of Virginia such as Bristol and Clifton Forge. The local freight service provided by Buckingham Branch will continue to be supported by the County.

The Multimodal Transportation Plan effort outlined later in this chapter provides further detail on these priorities.

PROPOSED ROADWAYS



ROAD FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION



AREA PLANS

Each of the County's five Area Plans and one Small Area Plan (Rio29) include more detailed recommendations for transportation. Area planning allows for a more focused study of individual Development Areas or neighborhoods within a Development Area, as compared to the broader Comprehensive Plan. These Area Plans include implementation recommendations specific to each study area, such as intersection improvements, sidewalks, bike facilities, shared-use paths, park and rides, and transit stops. They also outline future transportation and street networks, including connections to the County's parks and trails network. New development and redevelopment projects are expected to provide the transportation infrastructure and improvements recommended in these Area Plans. The County and VDOT will also continue to prioritize, fund, and build projects, which may also be part of public-private partnerships.

Additionally, the recommendations in the Area Plans align with complementary regional planning efforts, including the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission's Jefferson Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan, and other regional transit, transportation demand management, and planning initiatives.

RURAL AREA PRIORITIES

In the Rural Area, transportation planning focuses on safety, protection of rural character, and the movement of goods. The rural transportation network will connect residents to key destinations and provide recreational opportunities where possible. Due to limited funding and the support of the Growth Management Policy, transportation services are prioritized in the Development Areas.





New development and redevelopment projects are expected to provide the transportation infrastructure and improvements recommended in these Area Plans.





The County works with VDOT to identify where improvements are most needed.

SAFETY

The County can address traffic safety in rural areas by using crash data to identify high-risk areas and prioritize implementation of safety improvements in these locations. Improvements might include widening shoulders, enhancing pavement markings, enforcing speed limits, installing traffic calming measures, providing or upgrading intersection lighting, and ensuring regular road maintenance.

Currently, the County works with VDOT to identify where improvements are most needed, to identify and design the most appropriate solutions, and to apply for state funding.

VDOT's Rural Rustic Roads Program provides funding to pave the County's unpaved roadways. Some roads should remain unpaved to preserve areas' rural character and to continue to provide recreation opportunities. Other rural roads serve a more vehicular-oriented purpose and should be paved for safety and ease of maintenance. In 2024, the use of the Rural Rustic Roads Program funding was expanded to include the maintenance of unpaved roads. The County recognizes the importance of the rural roadway network. It will continue to use Rural Rustic Roads funds to improve safety for all roadway users.

The objectives and actions in this chapter aim to meet the unique needs of the Rural Area and address the comments and concerns shared by rural residents during the Comprehensive Plan update and in everyday communications with County staff.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

In Albemarle County, para-transit in the Rural Area provides an essential service for residents who cannot drive to get to work, appointments, or social activities. Commuter transit services also reduce traffic congestion, improve local air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by transporting multiple people in a single vehicle. Currently, most rural transit services in the county and in surrounding counties consist of limited, primarily commuter services to and from Charlottesville and on-demand services provided by Jaunt that require day-ahead reservations with limited hours of service.

Current transit service in the County's Rural Area includes:

- **Jaunt**: Curb-to-curb, on-demand service from anywhere in rural county areas to anywhere in the county and city. Para-transit service is provided in the city and urban county areas.
- **CONNECT**: A commuter service that brings people from fixed stops and rural park and rides to fixed stops in the City of Charlottesville in the morning, with return rides in the evening. There are four routes – Lovingston CONNECT, Buckingham CONNECT, 29 North CONNECT, and Crozet CONNECT. The routes include stops in the county.
- **Brite Bus Afton Express**: Commuter service to the University of Virginia, UVA Medical Center, 5th Street Station, and downtown Charlottesville from Staunton, Fishersville, and Waynesboro, with a few stops in the county. Completion of a park and ride for this service at I-64 Exit 107 near Crozet is expected in fall 2026.

Future transit improvements in the Rural Area will focus on increasing residents' access to existing transit services and augmenting existing services as needed. Commuter service and connections to vital destinations (e.g., health facilities, community centers) will be prioritized. Regional collaboration will continue, recognizing that many surrounding localities also continue to grow, with the potential for an increasing number of passengers who need to get to urban parts of the county and city.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

While the Rural Area will see limited walking and biking investment compared to the Development Areas, recreation opportunities remain. Road paving that would fragment core habitats, reduce walkability, or encourage more residential development is discouraged. When necessary, paving projects should prioritize safety and rural character, adding wider shoulders where it is feasible, without altering character or increasing speeds, to provide space for recreational walking and biking. County transportation planning and Parks and Recreation staff will coordinate with VDOT and community members to investigate a rural roads program to support active recreational use of rural roads with low vehicle volumes.

Major greenways, such as the future Three Notched Trail, are exceptions, providing key connections between rural and urban areas and even to other localities. This is a future shared-use path connecting the Blue Ridge Tunnel to western Albemarle County/Crozet to the City of Charlottesville. These types of projects provide significant recreation and transportation benefits for residents and visitors and are encouraged in the Rural Area and the Development Areas.



Example of an off-street shared use path.

TOOLS FOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Beyond AC44, County transportation planners will rely on the development of the Multimodal Transportation Plan to delineate modal networks and articulate a long-term strategy for transportation planning given limited resources and other constraints.

WHAT IS A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN?

The Multimodal Transportation Plan integrates land use and multimodal transportation planning. This strategic document takes a comprehensive look at a community's transportation system and recommends short- and long-term plans for infrastructure improvements. It builds on the vision and goals established in AC44, assesses current conditions, identifies transportation needs based on existing data, develops and evaluates alternatives, and prioritizes projects based on existing policy as well as input from community members and stakeholders. It serves as a blueprint for addressing the community's transportation needs.

Specifically, the Plan maps existing and future modal transportation networks – including vehicular, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks – along with the key land use destinations they connect and identifies the modal emphasis for the identified corridors. The Modal Emphasis Map will be key to the County's Capital Improvement Program planning efforts. Typical cross sections are included to describe the amount of space dedicated to the multimodal infrastructure elements along the roadways and within the rights of way. The map and cross sections will be drafted to meet the requirements of Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Multimodal guidelines. This will allow the County to access VDOT's more urban Multimodal Design Standards for Mixed Use Urban Centers.

Due to the high cost of infrastructure projects and the long timelines for grant funding, not all transportation needs can be addressed immediately. County staff must develop a systematic approach to prioritize potential transportation projects based on criteria that align with County goals, such as safety, access to key destinations, economic impact, and congestion reduction. Prioritized projects are included in a phased implementation plan. This plan identifies timelines, likely funding sources, and phasing for each project. The County will continue to use its Transportation Leveraging Fund to provide the funding match required by some state grants.

After adoption, County staff will evaluate the Multimodal Transportation Plan periodically to determine if the transportation needs are being met across the County. Staff will then adjust their work program, as directed by the Board of Supervisors.

Localities use transportation plans frequently and there are common elements among the various plans. When the County creates its Multimodal Transportation Plan, staff will look at examples from around Virginia and the country to make sure best practices are followed.





Access to transit and protected bike paths allow residents to choose how they get to their destination.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Multimodal Transportation Plan is a long-term foundational policy plan for Albemarle County. It will be implemented incrementally over time as funding is available and as opportunities arise that align with the project prioritization process. Actions will be accomplished through:

- **Prioritization of infrastructure investments**: The Plan will direct staff to seek local, state, and/or federal funding to complete infrastructure projects based on a project's priority and its categorization in a phased implementation plan. Publicly funded projects will use the Plan to guide decisions on which modes are prioritized in constrained scenarios and on construction standards for each infrastructure element on various roadway types.
- **Feasibility studies and conceptual design efforts**: Before infrastructure investments can be made or requested through grant funding applications, potential improvement projects are often refined through additional study and design. The priority list and phased implementation plan will guide County staff's use of limited local funds to facilitate studies and design efforts.
- **Street design standards**: VDOT has adopted the Multimodal System Design Guidelines into its Roadway Design Manual and has a process for incorporating adopted plans from localities. Ultimately, this gives the County more control over and certainty in infrastructure design decisions.
- **Area Plan updates**: Identified current and future transportation needs and potential improvements to address those needs will be included in updates to individual plans. These processes are the appropriate tool for making detailed design decisions in each Activity Center.
- **Development review**: County staff will coordinate on transportation-related site design. Project applications must meet relevant requirements and standards for new roads, sidewalks, shared-use paths, bike lanes, street trees, and parking. The Multimodal Transportation Plan will provide a clear framework for planners, policymakers, and developers by identifying current and future multimodal transportation needs and improvement projects.

In summary, the Multimodal Transportation Plan will:

- **Serve as a guiding document with a clear vision and goals that are built on the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **Align the County's land use and transportation goals.**
- **Describe clearly the County's plans to develop cohesive, connected circulation networks for all travel modes.**
- **Provide a thorough assessment of current and anticipated transportation needs**
- **Describe clearly which mode(s) will be prioritized in constrained scenarios.**
- **Facilitate effective communication with a variety of stakeholders, including elected officials, residents, and development professionals using established strategies, terminology, and graphics.**
- **Establish a prioritized list of projects and a clear implementation plan to effectively address transportation needs despite the County's limited fiscal and other resources.**

IMPLEMENTATION: DEVELOPMENT AREAS

OBJECTIVE	DA TRANSP 1. *Develop transportation plans to create safe, comfortable, and accessible multimodal connections between key locations in the Development Areas.*
ACTION	
1.1	Develop a Multimodal Transportation Plan that includes a Modal Emphasis Map that identifies multimodal transportation facilities that link key destinations such as the Activity Centers, schools, and parks in the county and city.
1.2	Include multimodal facilities in all plans and studies, such as County-led corridor and master plans and VDOT Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions (STARS) and pipeline studies, and as part of the development review process.
1.3	Seek approval from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and VDOT for the Multimodal Systems Plan based on the urban street standards in the Multimodal Transportation Plan.
OBJECTIVE	DA TRANSP 2. *Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and connectivity to support future land use policies and support safe, comfortable, and convenient walking travel for people of all ages and abilities.*
ACTION	
2.1	Identify gaps in the pedestrian network, prioritizing locations within Activity Centers, connections to Activity Centers, and connections to schools, parks, and other community facilities, and areas with safety issues for pedestrians.
2.2	Identify projects that can be constructed quickly with minimal site plan design and permits (Low/No Plan projects) and develop an agreement with VDOT to help fund and implement these projects.
2.3	As part of the annual County budget process, establish a steady funding stream for pedestrian and bicycle projects in the County CIP.
2.4	Ensure bike facilities are separated from vehicular traffic, where appropriate and feasible.
2.5	Require bike parking for multi-family and non-residential site plans and subdivisions.
2.6	Develop a policy to clarify the County's role in debris removal from, and ongoing maintenance of, shared use paths to ensure that paths are safe and adequately maintained; this policy will likely need to be developed collaboratively with other departments and VDOT.
2.7	Improve bike and pedestrian network connectivity between the county, the city and the University of Virginia, especially along major road corridors, greenways, and adjacent mixed-use areas between the city and the county.
2.8	Provide and require amenities that enhance the bicycling and pedestrian experience, such as safe and secure bicycle parking, street furniture, street trees, and other shade structures where appropriate and in all Activity Centers and Employment Districts.

2.9	Support the responsible expansion of micro-mobility devices within select portions of the Development Area to improve mobility and access for a diverse group of users.
2.11	Through strategic investments in urban design, infrastructure, developer incentives, and education, increase the percentage of walking and cycling trips as a percentage of all trips in urban areas.
2.12	Develop an equity lens to review transportation infrastructure projects through the design phase, considering the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and younger and older road users, especially in traditionally underserved areas. Ensure that infrastructure improvement projects equitably foster safety and comfort for all road users
OBJECTIVE	**DA TRANSP 3.** ***Through regional planning, deliver increased reliability and frequency of public transit service.***
ACTION	
3.1	Actively participate in ongoing regional efforts such as the Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transit Authority (CARTA) to increase transit access, efficiency, and funding.
3.2	Evaluate the benefits and costs of continued, refined, integrated, and/or expanded microtransit, especially as a first/last mile solution within a fixed route transit system.
3.3	Enhance safety, comfort, and accessibility at transit stops for all users; prioritize stop improvements in low-income and underserved areas.
3.4	Provide high-quality and ADA/PROWAG-compliant transit stops that are tied into the pedestrian and bicycle networks.
3.5	Require transit stops in Activity Centers and Employment Districts to include shelters, benches, and other amenities
3.6	Through strategic investments in transit infrastructure, facilities, and services, increase the percentage of transit trips as a percentage of all trips in the rural and urban areas.
3.7	Enhance the public realm around bus stops with amenities such as art installations and bike parking.
OBJECTIVE	**DA TRANSP 4.** ***Increase the efficiency and connectivity of the transportation network.***
ACTION	
4.1	Collaborate with VDOT and the City of Charlottesville to expand the implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), which aims to improve traffic flow, safety, and efficiency, especially as it relates to improving the efficiency of the transit system.
4.2	Support ongoing Travel Demand Management (TDM) programming currently managed by the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), including developing a regional system of park-and-ride lots, ride-sharing services, and van-pooling.

4.3	Investigate additional TDM programming that could be managed by the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO or Albemarle County, including greater support for remote work.
4.4	Collaborate with VDOT and FHWA regarding safety and operations improvements for major corridors, such as Route 29, U.S. 250, and I-64 and parallel facilities to these major corridors.
4.5	Require development that minimally uses cul-de-sacs and disconnected streets. Where cul-de-sacs are necessary, they should include pedestrian and bicycle connections to nearby streets.
OBJECTIVE	**DA TRANSP 5. *Strengthen regional and intercity transportation.***
ACTION	
5.1	Investigate and support local, regional, and state policy and legislative efforts to expand and improve the accessibility and frequency of intercity rail and bus transportation options.
5.2	Provide support for the Charlottesville Amtrak passenger train station to meet future demand.
5.3	Support current DRPT efforts to provide passenger rail service along the east-west CSX/Buckingham Branch rail line and increased passenger service along the north-south Norfolk Southern rail line.
5.4	Continue to participate in the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport Authority and in updates to the airport's Master Plan.
5.5	Plan for, invest in, and support infrastructure projects that provide regionally significant transportation improvements for goods movement by collaborating with the Economic Development Office to identify priority routes and locations for transportation improvements.
5.6	Provide transit access to the airport.
OBJECTIVE	**DA TRANSP 6. *Improve safety by reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries.***
ACTION	
6.1	Design Placemaking Streets per DRPT Multimodal Design Guidelines within Activity Centers with appropriate design speed to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.
6.2	Implement priority recommendations from the Move Safely Blue Ridge Action Plan.
6.3	Analyze the costs and benefits of the following policies as potential complements to the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan: Vision Zero, Complete Streets, and the Safe System Approach.

6.4	Use safety data (such as crashes and crash severity) to identify and prioritize locations for potential infrastructure improvements. Recognize that data identifying safety concerns for the most vulnerable road users differ from the data available for vehicle users in quantity, quality, and availability; investigate alternative data sources to assess safety concerns for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
6.5	Prioritize the safety of students traveling to/from school by expanding Safe Routes to Schools efforts and identifying more opportunities to fund infrastructure projects near schools.
6.6	Investigate educational programming intended to improve road user safety, such as a ticket diversion program, and road user safety.
6.7	Collaborate with the Albemarle County Police Department and VDOT to refine the County's process to respond to speeding complaints. Proactively reduce speeds to improve safety. Prioritize the installation of red-light cameras at high-crash intersections.
6.8	Collaborate with VDOT to explore more funding mechanisms and opportunities to implement traffic-calming programs and infrastructure along a variety of road types, where appropriate. Establish a county program to address traffic calming concerns.
OBJECTIVE	DA TRANSP 7. *Promote sustainable and equitable transportation solutions, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions particularly through a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.*
ACTION	
7.1	Establish a policy that encourages the construction of green streets, to enhance the streetscape and manage stormwater.
7.2	Develop a long-term maintenance plan for street trees in the right of way.
7.3	Apply an equity lens to transportation projects, considering the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and younger and older road users to ensure safety and comfort for all road users.
7.4	Support land use policies, such as planned Activity Centers, aimed at shortening the distance between housing, jobs, and services that reduce the need to travel long distances daily.
7.5	Increase the availability of affordable housing options with proximity to vital destinations, as well as transit stops, pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle infrastructure.
7.6	Through investments in local electric vehicle charging infrastructure and incentives for property owners to do the same, continuously increase the percentage of electric vehicles on County roads.

IMPLEMENTATION: RURAL AREA

OBJECTIVE	**RA TRANSP 1.** ***Prioritize investment in Rural Area transportation projects that improve safety and maintain rural character.***
ACTION	
1.1	Invest in transportation projects in the Rural Area prioritizing Primary Routes with the highest traffic volumes and safety needs. Plan for greatest investment on Corridors of Statewide Significance, such as I-64, Route 250, and Route 29.
1.2	Use the Rural Rustic Roads program to determine appropriate road paving in the Rural Area, prioritizing safety as well as the protection of rural character, environmentally sensitive resources, and historic districts.
1.3	Focus truck traffic on appropriate roadways by planning for, investing in, and supporting infrastructure projects on regionally significant transportation routes. Support Rural Area communities seeking through-truck restrictions, as appropriate, recognizing that the design, character, or adjacent land uses of some roadways are not compatible with frequent heavy vehicle traffic.
OBJECTIVE	**RA TRANSP 2.** ***Improve the regional transit system to serve commuters and residents in the Rural Area and surrounding counties requiring connections to the Development Areas for basic needs.***
ACTION	
2.1	Evaluate the benefits and costs of continued, refined, and/or expanded rural on-demand transit service in the Rural Area.
2.2	Actively participate in ongoing regional efforts to increase transit access and efficiency and to advance CARTA's mission.
2.3	Improve access in the Rural Area and surrounding jurisdictions to commuter transit services such as Jaunt CONNECT routes, Afton Express and the Virginia Breeze.
OBJECTIVE	**RA TRANSP 3.** ***Reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.***
ACTION	
3.1	Implement priority recommendations from the Move Safely Blue Ridge Action Plan and investigate the costs and benefits of the following policies as potential complements: Vision Zero, Complete Streets, and the Safe System approach.
3.2	Develop strong collaborative processes with the Albemarle County Police Department, Albemarle County Fire Rescue, VDOT, and other partners to gather and analyze safety-related data.
3.3	Create safe wildlife crossing locations in areas with a relatively high volume of crashes involving wildlife and connect habitat blocks.
3.4	Implement educational programming such as a ticket diversion program and road sharing best practices to improve road user safety.

OBJECTIVE	RA TRANSP 4. *Improve Rural Area community members' equitable access to walking and bicycling opportunities for transportation and recreation where feasible and appropriate to support healthy, active lifestyles and create opportunities for social interaction.*
ACTION	
4.1	Support the federally supported Three Notched Trail Shared Use Path between Charlottesville and the Blue Ridge Tunnel.
4.2	In collaboration with VDOT, investigate potential funding mechanisms to improve multimodal safety through spot improvements such as wider shoulders and enhanced line-of-sight. Identify and prioritize locations for spot improvements such as prominently used bike routes, including U.S. Bike Route 76.
4.3	In collaboration with Albemarle County Parks & Recreation and residents, investigate a recreational rural roads program that supports active recreational and commuter use of rural roadways with low vehicle volumes. Include community identification, parking, and signage. Identify potential roads, some of which may already be used for walking, running, and biking.
4.4	Widen shoulders where appropriate based on safety standards to provide safe space for recreational walking and biking.



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THRIVING ECONOMY

GOAL: *Albemarle County will have career and educational pathways for upward economic mobility so all community members thrive. Economic development initiatives and programs will recognize the different expectations and features for the Development Areas and Rural Area and the connections with transportation, land use, environmental stewardship, community facilities and services, and housing. Albemarle County will value and support its vital local assets, including the natural environment, historic resources, local businesses, and arts and culture.*



Woolen Mills includes spaces for local businesses to operate.

Objective 1: Recognize and implement the Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) as the primary document and process used to identify economic development actions and strategies. The EDSP will be developed, updated, and implemented consistent with, and supportive of, AC44 and the County's Growth Management Policy.

Objective 2: Ensure the availability of sufficient land with existing or planned infrastructure, including a diversity of sites across the Development Areas to accommodate future business and industrial growth, especially for target sectors.

Objective 3: Retain and support Rivanna Station and further develop the remainder of the Rivanna Futures property in a manner that is consistent with, and supportive of, Rivanna Station.

Objective 4: Strengthen business retention, expansion, and attraction prioritizing industries consistent with AC44 and the EDSP.

Objective 5: Increase the local workforce's access to job training, career development, and career-ladder jobs.

Objective 6: Reduce barriers to workforce participation.

Objective 7: Encourage the growth of a thriving and modern agricultural economy.

INTRODUCTION

Achieving a thriving and sustainable economy is an essential component of quality of life and well-being in Albemarle County. A thriving and sustainable economy offers residents job opportunities, competitive wages, and career advancement. A strong economy also enhances the visibility of the community, attracts visitors, and retains current residents.

Providing equitable access to jobs, pathways to small business success, a range of career ladder employment opportunities, and access to employment and workforce training helps elevate the opportunities of community members to achieve financial stability. These opportunities need to be paired with other community attributes that overlap with all AC44 elements, including housing, childcare, public infrastructure and utilities, recreation, and transportation. These quality-of-life factors inform decisions on where to locate for both employees and employers.

Providing for a thriving economy involves not only the need for economic development efforts/initiatives that support business development, but other efforts to support the provision of education, training, and workforce development, the provision of adequate land, structures, and infrastructure to support business development, and the provision of essential services for businesses and employees.

The County's Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) guides the investment of resources to support the community's economic priorities. It identifies the County's strategic direction, priorities, and action steps regarding economic development related to land use.

THE COUNTY PRIORITIES BELOW HAVE GUIDED PAST AND CURRENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS:

- Support a vibrant economy that offers a broad range of job opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration at all levels (local, regional, and state) to maximize economic opportunities.
- Support entrepreneurship and the growth of local business.
- Recognize and support local educational institutions and support efforts that build a talented workforce
- Leverage local intellectual capital to promote expansion of business interests to attract investment and enhance the livability of the community.
- Support the provision of physical infrastructure (utilities, power, communications, transportation infrastructure) and social infrastructure (e.g., child care, housing, education/career training, transportation services/alternatives, and cultural institutions).
- Attract investment of private capital into the local economy that grows jobs, creates opportunity, increases tax revenues, and builds on public investment for necessary infrastructure

The EDSP and its periodic review and update process will continue to establish, refine, and update this guidance and direction for economic development efforts.

MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

This section provides a general overview of recent data and trends related to the local economy and employment. Additional data for the county and region are available in the EDSP and its associated background resources.

- Virginia Employment Commission data (Q3 2024) indicate that 2,608 of 4,103 county businesses in the county have four or fewer employees.
- Virginia Employment Commission data (2024) lists the highest top employment sectors in the county:
  - *Higher Education*
  - *Healthcare*
  - *National Security*
  - *Biotechnology*
  - *Agribusiness and food processing*
  - *Tourism and hospitality*
- Virginia Employment Commission data (2024) list the top 10 employers in the county (by total number of employees):
  - *The University of Virginia*
  - *Albemarle County*
  - *Sentara Healthcare*
  - *The U.S. Department of Defense*
  - *Crutchfield Corporation*
  - *Northrop Grumman*
  - *Atlantic Coast Athletic Club (ACAC)*
  - *Boar's Head Inn*
  - *Walmart*
  - *Farmington Country Club*
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in the county grew by 2.5% from December 2023 to December 2024.
- The County continues to strengthen existing business retention and/or expansion to help existing businesses succeed. As of June 2024, the County leveraged $877,000 in local dollars to secure $1.8 million in state grants for 10 existing businesses to support expansions in the county. In total, these business expansions have/will result in $70 million of capital investment and create 491 jobs.





The defense industry plays an important role in the local economy. It includes the Army National Guard Ground Intelligence Center at Rivanna Station and contractor Northrup Grumman.

The defense industry is one of several industries with major local economic impacts. Notable entities for this industry include Northrop Grumman and Rivanna Station.

- Total county impact (2020): $567.2 million.
- Total jobs (direct, indirect, and induced): 4,790.
- In 2023, the County purchased 462 acres around Rivanna Station with the intent to both retain and grow the defense sector in the community, an initiative known as Rivanna Futures. Since acquiring the land in 2023, the County has rezoned 172 acres for light industrial use. This is now one of the largest development opportunities in the county.
- In 2024, the University of Virginia announced the creation of the National Security Data and Policy Institute and the establishment of a strategic research and development partnership between the Institute and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The biotechnology and life sciences sector is another area of opportunity for the region.

- Gross regional product for this industry in the county is $269 million, the highest of any sector that is export-oriented (goods and services are sold outside of the county).
- More than 75 companies are located in the region, with more than 1,900 employees.
- The Commonwealth BioAccelerator, which opened in 2025, is an accelerator program for biotechnology and life sciences companies that accepts 4-8 companies and provides access to mentorship, technical support, and crucially, shared wet lab space.
- The Manning Institute, which is anticipated to open in 2027, will host up to 100 clinical research laboratories within the Fontaine Research Park to advance research, development, commercialization, and manufacturing of new cellular, gene, and immunotherapies is expected to continue to grow opportunities in this sector.

Outdoor recreation activities, historic resources, and other local assets bring visitors to our area and drive the tourism and hospitality economy. The local visitors bureau is the direct marketing organization that supports the tourism sector in the region.

- The tourism sector represents a $1.3 billion annual economic impact on the regional economy, with more than half of direct visitor spending occurring in county lodging, dining, destination, and recreation locations.
- There are more than 45 wineries, cideries, distilleries, and breweries in the county. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture (2022), grapes are now a top five crop (from an acreage standpoint). This is a change from the 2017 Census of Agriculture, when grapes did not make the top five list.
- In 2024, thanks to the efforts of the county's family vineyard and winery owners and with the assistance of the local visitors bureau, the region was recognized as "Wine Region of the Year" by Wine Enthusiast. Strategic partnerships with Discover Black Cville, 'Tourism for All' with Destinations International TripAdvisor, and Wheel the World ensure that the region is welcoming and accessible to all.
- The local visitors bureau's 2024 tourism master plan, Destination 2045: Crafting Our Tourism Future Together, guides its efforts to promote the region.

DIVERSE ECONOMY & TAX BASE

A diversified economy includes a wide range of economic activities rather than relying heavily on a single industry or sector. It can include manufacturing, service, and agricultural sectors as well as different types of businesses and industries. Diversification makes an economy more resilient to economic shocks and provides more opportunities for growth, provides a range of jobs that are suitable for a variety of education levels and interest areas, and provides a more resilient tax base. For Albemarle County, a more diversified tax base would lessen the current heavy reliance on property taxes as the County's primary revenue source and create a 'balanced revenue system' that is more responsive to economic changes.



North Fork Town Center.

County efforts to diversify the economy and tax base encouraged in the EDSP and AC44 include, but are not limited to:

- Focusing efforts in key target sectors to understand and address industry needs in areas including building, site, and infrastructure needs, workforce development and training, and entrepreneurship support.
- Evaluating opportunities to improve the policy environment, including improving/streamlining zoning and development processes generally, while aligning with target sector needs.
- Undertaking business attraction efforts, including marketing, branding, and storytelling.
- Working regionally to advance shared interests and opportunities.
- Encouraging tourism. Promoting local attractions/ destinations and events and preserving rural character and cultural resources can generate revenue from tourism-related activities such as accommodations, restaurants, outdoor recreation, and retail.

The County's economic development efforts have been, and will continue to be, focused on building and maintaining a diverse and resilient economy and tax base.

CREATING A HEALTHY ECONOMY

A healthy local economy includes a diversity of business types that provide goods and services in the region and beyond. A traded sector business produces a good or service locally and then sells to customers outside of the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Charlottesville and Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, and Nelson counties, generating an import of new financial resources into the community. In contrast, non-traded businesses primarily serve the local community and circulate financial resources between businesses and people. However, the financial resources circulated will eventually 'leak out' of the community, which is why a well-balanced mix of traded and non-traded businesses results in a more vibrant and resilient economy.

Strengthening traded (or "primary") sector businesses helps drive demand for non-traded sector businesses, which improves the business climate.

TARGET INDUSTRIES

The County's EDSP identifies three target sectors:

- Intelligence and national security
- Biotechnology and life sciences
- Agribusiness and food processing

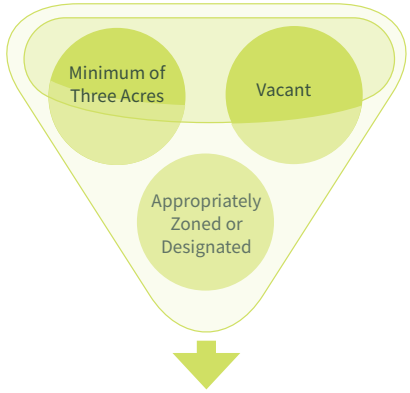
These sectors were selected because the EDSP's analysis found they are among the largest strengths in the existing local economy, offer future-facing opportunities for expansion and maturation, and provide a variety of access points for community members with a range of education and training.

Summary of Non-Residential Findings: Land Use Buildout Analysis, 2022

Land Use Type	20-Year Demand Forecast		Maximum Buildout Estimate
	Low	High	
Retail (sq. ft.)	1.0 M	1.3 M	1.9 M
Office (sq.ft.)	750,000	1.0 M	2.7 M
Industrial (sq. ft.)	950,000	1.1 M	5.5 M
Hotel (rooms)	750	900	2,554



22,900 Total Development Area Parcels

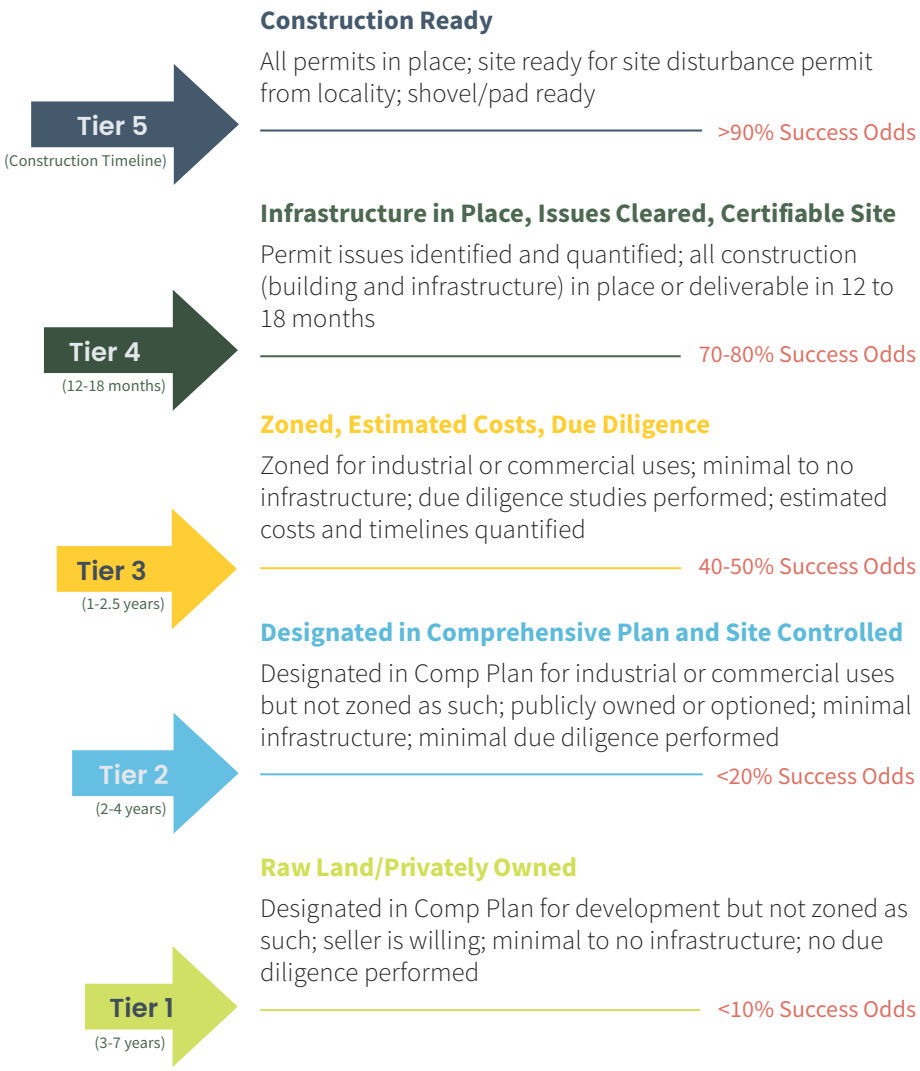


39 Development Area Tier Qualified Parcels

Of 22,900 total parcels, 39 parcels meet the criteria for the tier analysis on the next page. Only one site meets Tier 4 criteria – construction ready.

Tier System Analysis for Site Selection

Defined by Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)



LAND USE BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

Land use is a critical factor for the support, growth, and sustainability of economic development in Albemarle County. The designation of adequate land for commercial, industrial, and office uses is essential for existing and future businesses to expand and thrive. These lands are mostly located in the County's Development Areas.

The County periodically conducts an analysis of land use and development capacity in the Development Areas; most recently, this analysis was completed in 2022 and in 2025. The County's 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis captures past trends for development as well as projections for potential buildout capability in the future for different categories of land use in the county. The analysis divides non-residential land uses into retail, office, industrial, and hotel uses. It estimates a maximum theoretical buildout for each non-residential land use category based on buildable land in the Development Areas.

Summary findings from the 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis include:

- For retail, office, industrial, and hotel uses, there appears to be adequate land available to accommodate each use in relation to the projected demand over the next 20 years.
- However, demand forecasts are projections based on historical trends of development. It is expected that constraining factors, including the availability of land, cost of development, and environmental constraints will limit the buildout potential of available land. As a result, actual buildout is expected to be less than the maximum buildout estimate.
- Maintaining a sufficient inventory of non-residential land to meet market needs is important for maintaining a vibrant economy.



Old Trail Village.



Apartments at Riverside Village.

A secondary analysis of the 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis identified prime properties for employment-generating uses for traded industries. Evaluation criteria included adequate size (defined as 3 or more acres), vacant land, and appropriate zoning (e.g., light industry).

- The analysis found that only 39 parcels in the Development Areas are prime for non-residential development, and many of these parcels are small (less than 5 acres) or have other limiting factors, such as sensitive environmental features, that limit developability.

Another measure, a Tier Analysis, illustrates the availability of readily developable land. This measure ranges on a scale from Tier 1 to Tier 5. Tier 1 sites are the least ready for development (raw land) to Tier 5 (site is ready for construction, with all approvals in place). Albemarle County Economic Development staff reviewed each of the 39 parcels identified as prime for non-residential development.

- Only one property in the Development Areas met the description of a Tier 4 site where infrastructure is in place, site challenges have been addressed, and a project could be brought to market in 12 to 18 months.
- None of the properties met the definition of a Tier 5 site.
- County staff estimated that nine more properties could also support development in a 12-to-18-month timeframe. These properties could require some extension of infrastructure.

These studies identify the need to ensure that there is sufficient developable land and structures/buildings available, that these properties and buildings are affordable to support market demand for economic activity and growth, and there is a specific need to provide for sites ready for development (zoned and with existing or readily available infrastructure). The County will continue to conduct the Land Use Buildout Analysis and Tier Analysis at regular intervals (typically every two to three years) to make sure data remain current.

2025 LAND USE BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

The 2025 Land Use Buildout Analysis saw a continuation of development patterns and trends observed in the 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis. The chart below compares the theoretical maximum non-residential buildout to the high-end of the projected 20-year demand forecast for retail, office, industrial, and hotel room uses. Although the square footages of theoretical maximum buildout for each land-use type has declined since 2022, they still exceed the high-end of the projected 20-year demand forecast.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these demand forecasts are projections based on historical trends of development. Constraining factors will limit the buildout potential of available land, and it is expected that actual buildout will be less than the theoretical maximum buildout estimate.

Finally, while the Land Use Buildout Analysis provides important information about the supply of available land, but it does not holistically examine "site readiness" as described in the EDSP, which focuses on other factors such as proximity to necessary infrastructure and zoning. A focus on identifying and removing barriers to investment within the supply of available land will increase the utilization of land in the Development Areas.

For more information, please see the 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis Report and the 2025 Land Use Buildout Analysis Memorandum in Appendix E.

Use Type	2022	2025	20-Year Demand Forecast (High)	2022-2025 Trend
Retail (square feet)	1,959,849	1,324,443	1,300,000	Lower
Office (square feet)	2,725,883	1,376,864	1,000,000	Lower
Hotel Rooms	2,554	1,591	900	Lower
Industrial (square feet)	5,565,023	4,898,087	1,100,000	Lower

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	TE 1. *Recognize and implement the EDSP as the primary document and process used to identify economic development actions and strategies. The EDSP will be developed, updated, and implemented consistent with, and supportive of, AC44 and the County's Growth Management Policy.*
ACTION	
1.1	Use the County's EDSP to guide implementation of the County's economic development priorities. Refer to the EDSP's actions and priorities for the County's economic development efforts.
OBJECTIVE	TE 2. *Ensure the availability of sufficient land with existing or planned infrastructure, including a diversity of sites across the Development Areas to accommodate future business and industrial growth, especially for target sectors.*
ACTION	
2.1	Maintain an adequate inventory of land use plan designated and zoned lands for light industrial, flex, and office uses. Prioritize maintaining such existing designated and zoned lands over proposals to convert such lands to other uses. Develop strategies to ensure protection and appropriate use of high-value sites and Employment Districts from the encroachment of incompatible land uses and redevelopment pressures.
2.2	Support the provision of a full range of available and affordable sites and structures/building space covering the full spectrum of company/business growth (from small scale/start-up endeavors to large scale/corporate businesses). Focus on sites and buildings suitable for target-sector industries and/or businesses that meet the needs of the local workforce and local artists/crafters.
2.3	Develop a policy for the acquisition of land for economic development, emphasizing sites that meet or could be retrofitted to meet the definition of a Tier 4 or Tier 5 site.
2.4	Explore use of County-owned land to address priority land use needs, including employment-generating uses, affordable housing, and public facilities (e.g., schools, parks). Consider opportunities to develop a mix of uses that address multiple needs. Prioritize opportunities consistent with the target sectors and provide career-ladder job opportunities that meet the needs of the local workforce.
2.5	Regularly update the Development Areas' Tier Analysis to evaluate areas for site readiness as part of updating the EDSP. Coordinate timing with the update of the Land Use Buildout Analysis when feasible. Use the results to inform land use decisions, community facilities/infrastructure, and the EDSP to increase the availability of Tier 4 and Tier 5 sites.
2.6	Initiate rezonings for land that is suitable for employment uses, especially in designated Activity Centers and Employment Districts in support of the Growth Management Policy, the Future Land Use Plan, and the EDSP.
2.7	Develop and implement strategies to address the infrastructure and site readiness needs of future business and industrial growth, including the pursuit of state and federal grant opportunities.

OBJECTIVE	**TE 3.** ***Retain and support Rivanna Station and further develop the remainder of the Rivanna Futures property in a manner that is consistent with, and supportive of, Rivanna Station.***
ACTION	
3.1	Plan for complementary future public and private land uses next to Rivanna Station consistent with the relevant economic vitality and land use recommendations in AC44 and the EDSP.
3.2	Establish a Military Overlay Zoning District to provide uses and activities compatible with the Rivanna Station military facility.
3.3	Consider a Defense Production Zone (VA State Code § 58.1-3853) for Rivanna Futures.
OBJECTIVE	**TE 4.** ***Strengthen business retention, expansion, and attraction prioritizing industries consistent with AC44 and the EDSP.***
ACTION	
4.1	Modernize and streamline the development review processes to improve timeliness and efficiency of the review.
4.2	Update the priority/expedited review process for proposed development projects to implement the recommendations of AC44, the EDSP, and the County's Climate Action Plan effectively.
4.3	Leverage local and regional partnerships to build the county's tourism and outdoor recreation sectors, including working with the City of Charlottesville, the Town of Scottsville, and the local visitors bureau).
OBJECTIVE	**TE 5.** ***Increase the local workforce's access to job training, career development, and career-ladder jobs.***
ACTION	
5.1	Promote and attract the development of industries providing career-ladder job opportunities.
5.2	Ensure local and regional workforce development and education partners are aware of employers' future workforce needs and desired skill-sets. Facilitate and support communication and coordination among the partners in establishing efforts to address needs. Use state and federal programs that support workforce development.
5.3	Support Albemarle County Schools to increase training and connections with local employers, using the career and technical education model.
5.4	Update the priority/expedited review process, with appropriate eligibility criteria and measures, to facilitate projects that include public-private partnerships and provide career-ladder jobs to meet the needs of the local workforce.

OBJECTIVE	TE 6. *Reduce barriers to workforce participation.*
ACTION	
6.1	Update the Zoning Ordinance to reduce barriers to land uses providing essential support services for workers, such as childcare, and implement essential transportation and infrastructure improvements needed to access employment opportunities (e.g. transit, bike, and sidewalk improvements).
6.2	Update the Zoning Ordinance to reduce barriers for home occupations with minimal impacts on surrounding properties. Engage with community members to identify barriers and possible solutions, including prospective and current business owners.
6.3	Address the lack of childcare facilities to support workforce participation.
OBJECTIVE	TE 7. *Encourage the growth of a thriving and modern agricultural economy.*
ACTION	
7.1	Improve and encourage development of infrastructure that supports agribusiness (broadband, cold storage, small scale rural manufacturing capacity).
7.2	Explore land use and zoning policies and regulations to enable small/appropriately scaled agricultural related businesses and support services consistent with the County's Growth Management Policy.
7.3	Consider modifications to expand opportunities for diverse revenue streams for agribusinesses (e.g., lodging, food service, recreation, agritourism activities related to the primary agricultural use).
7.4	Encourage efforts that support and advance rural entrepreneurship and agribusiness sector partnerships, connect local producers with local and regional buyers/distributors/markets, and provide business resources to local producers/farmers/small agribusinesses.
7.5	Support the growth of existing agricultural activities, including, but not limited to, the wine industry, craft breweries, distilleries, and agritourism.

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AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

HOUSING

GOAL: *Albemarle County will be a welcoming community where all community members can access safe, quality, and affordable housing choices. Housing is recognized as a foundational community need that is integrated with transportation, land use, goods, services, jobs, and parks and trails. The Development Areas will have an increasing variety of housing types and supply, including through redevelopment and infill.*



Cottage-style homes fronting a walkway with garage access in the rear.

Objective 1: Increase the overall housing supply and housing choice to meet the varied housing needs of current and future county residents.

Objective 2: Permit a range of housing types that are affordable for all income levels, especially in locations that are within or walkable to Activity Centers and locations with job opportunities, public transit, and community amenities.

Objective 3: Increase long-term affordable and workforce housing options in Albemarle County through the development of new units and the preservation of existing units.

Objective 4: Preserve and maintain the county's aging housing stock in the Rural Area and Development Areas.

Objective 5: Increase the funding for low- and moderate-income homeowners to maintain and remain in their existing housing units and to reduce their energy cost burdens.

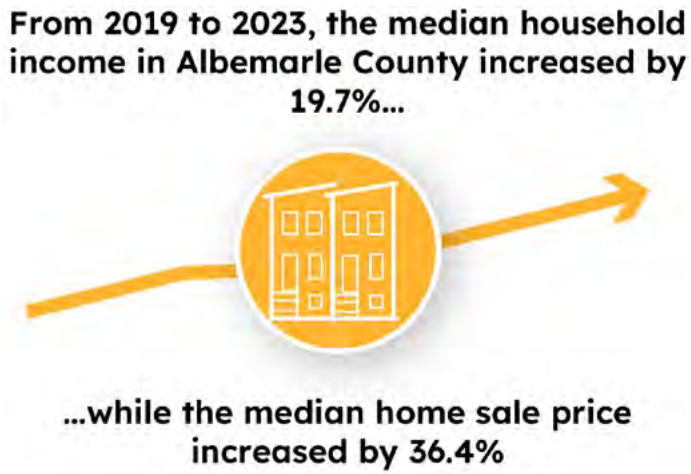
Objective 6: Address unmet needs for people living unsheltered and work to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time, promoting the best practice of housing first.

Objective 7: Increase affordable and accessible housing options in the community.

INTRODUCTION

Housing that is affordable and accessible is a fundamental need in the community. In recent years, and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, homeowners have seen their housing values increase while renters have faced low vacancy rates and rapidly rising rents, and it has become increasingly difficult to purchase a home. In total, 45% of Albemarle County renter households and 47% of renter households nationally are cost-burdened, meaning they spend than 30% of their income on housing costs.

The Charlottesville area is now the second most expensive housing market in Virginia, behind only Northern Virginia. Income growth is not keeping up with the pace of rising housing costs, especially for lower-income households. A variety of factors contribute to the rising costs of housing. The County and local partners can take several actions to address and increase affordable housing in the community. This chapter includes priority recommendations from the County's Housing Albemarle housing policy, with additional actions focused on land use, zoning modernization, equity, and climate action.







A variety of housing options can lead to home ownership.





Albemarle County needs more missing middle housing and accessory dwelling units to fill the need for affordable housing.

MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

The cost of both for sale and for rent housing units has continued to increase locally.

- According to 2010 data from the U.S. Census, Albemarle County's median home value was $337,200. By 2023, it was $492,800, an increase of 46.1%.
- From 2010 to 2023, the median gross rent increased by 44%, with the 2023 median rent estimated at $1,607.

As housing sizes and demographics continue to change, there is a need for a variety of housing types at a variety of price points.

- Housing choice is important to support affordability and accessibility. For example, community members need options to age in place, which may range from one-story single-family homes to one-bedroom apartments or accessory units.
- Between 2010 and 2023, the percentage of residents in Albemarle County over the age of 65 increased by 6.5% to 21.2%.
- During the same period, the county's average household size decreased from 2.55 people per household to 2.31 people per household.
- In 2023, about 28% of all U.S. households were single-person households, which is more than twice as high as in 1960.





Townhomes on Delphi Drive.

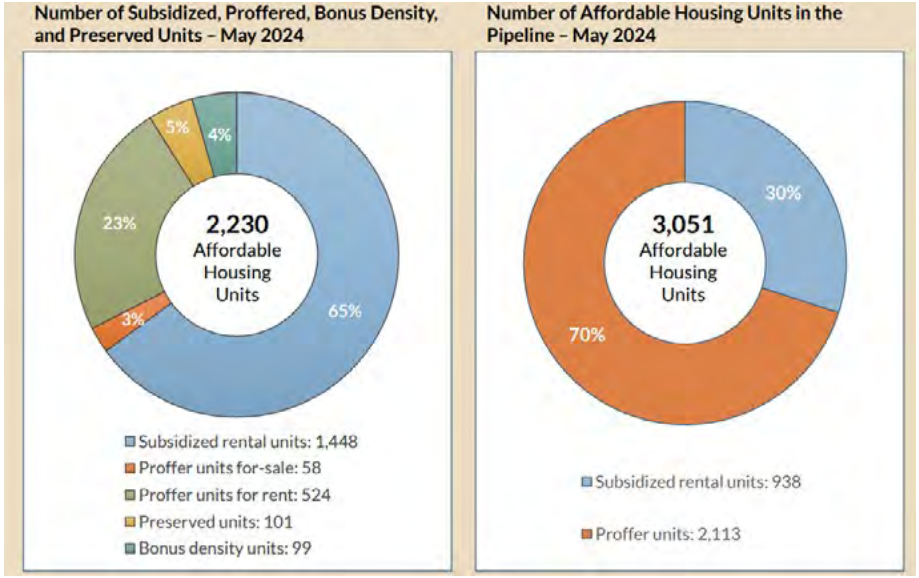
To address these factors, a variety of solutions are needed at the local, state, and federal levels. Locally, there are many tools that the County can use to increase the local housing supply and housing choice (access to a variety of housing types at a variety of price points). There are also homeowner and maintenance support tools that connect residents with subsidies and other programs, such as home repair and weatherization. Localities that have allowed more housing to be built relative to their population growth have typically experienced more stable housing costs and lower rates of cost-burdened households and homelessness, as compared to localities that have allowed relatively less housing to be built. While increasing housing supply can help stabilize housing costs and decrease vacancy rates, there will always be a need for subsidies to bridge the gap for low-income households. Preventing existing community members from losing their housing is essential to affordability, including measures such as tax relief, home repair, and energy efficiency upgrade programs.

According to the 2019 Regional Housing Needs Assessment published by the Central Virginia Regional Housing Partnership, the County needs to add and preserve about 10,070 affordable units to the local housing stock by 2040 to meet affordable housing needs. This includes long-term preservation of existing affordable units and the construction of new affordable units.

Housing choice enables community members to live near where they work, to remain in their community as they age, and to afford the cost of housing and other household expenses without burdening household budgets. These benefits of housing choice are important for quality of life and mitigating climate change. When people cannot afford housing near employment, daily needs, and community amenities, commutes and other vehicle trips are lengthened, increasing transportation costs and emissions. One of the major goals for the County's proposed Activity Centers is housing located closer to employment and key destinations.

These proposed Activity Centers are areas of higher density containing multi-family housing located in proximity to employment uses. The smaller-unit housing types expected in these areas are often more affordable and easier to maintain, with lower energy costs. However, fewer smaller units are being built today. In the 1980s, about 40% of all new units built were less than 1,400 square feet. Today, that share of smaller units is estimated at 7% of new units built. Multi-family and mixed-use buildings often share walls, naturally insulating units. These building types can also share infrastructure, such as streets, parking, and utilities.

Continued innovations in housing construction hold increased potential to create units that are more affordable, climate resilient, and energy efficient. This includes the rise in off-site housing construction, especially modular units. In January 2024, the Commonwealth of Virginia was the first state to adopt the International Building Code/Modular Building Institute Standards for Off-Site Construction, highlighting the growing importance of this construction method.



Existing affordable housing units and affordable housing units in the pipeline, as of May 2024.



Courtyard homes are a type of missing middle housing.

OFF-SITE CONSTRUCTION HOUSING TYPES

Off-site construction housing is built in components in a factory or fabrication facility and then assembled on site. This type of housing now includes manufactured and modular housing units, which can range from single-family detached to multi-family homes. Off-site construction is becoming increasingly common across the country. It is typically less expensive and has a shorter timeline to complete than traditional on-site construction. However, challenges remain in scaling up its production, including regulatory and financial barriers and the need for fabrication facilities within a reasonable distance of where housing needs to be reassembled.



Manufactured

- Do not have a permanent foundation and must be on a steel chassis
- Can be relocated, though relocation is typically challenging and expensive
- Built 1976 (the year the HUD Code was adopted) and later
- Virginia State Code requires Comp Plan recommendations for manufactured housing
- Insured and financed as personal property (like a car)
- Depreciating asset

Photo credit: Department of Energy



Modular

- Have a permanent foundation
- Built to state and local building code requirements
- Typically sections of the house are built off-site and then are brought to the site and assembled
- Insured and financed as real property (like other real estate)
- Create equity for owner

Photo credit: Russell Heeter Photography in Urban Land Institute article



Mobile

- Do not have a permanent foundation; can be relocated
- Built before 1976 (the year the HUD Code was adopted); therefore, new mobile homes are not being constructed (they would need to be built to manufactured housing standards)
- Insured as personal property (like a car)

Photo credit: City of Fargo, ND

HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION

Housing affordability extends beyond the cost of a housing unit, as overall affordability also includes the cost of transportation, energy bills, and daily needs. Rising rents and home values tend to push lower-income residents farther from transit and job centers and even outside of the county itself. According to the 2022 OnTheMap data from the U.S. Census Bureau, about 61.2% of people employed in Albemarle County commute in from a different locality, while 38.8% of people live and work in the county. Allowing higher-density housing near public transit corridors and in walkable areas reduces transportation costs, lowers vehicle emissions, and reduces parking needs.

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index (H+T Index) provides estimates for housing and transportation costs by locality. The most recent H+T Index estimates indicate that transportation costs in Albemarle County consume an average of 18% of household income, with an annual average cost of $15,860. Together, housing and transportation costs consume 45% of household income in the county.

TOP 10 PLACES RESIDENTS ARE COMMUTING FROM

Job Counts by Counties Where Workers Live - All Jobs (2021)

	COUNT	SHARE
Albemarle County, VA	16,711	32.5%
Charlottesville city, VA	5,743	11.2%
Fluvanna County, VA	3,156	6.1%
Greene County, VA	2,528	4.9%
Louisa County, VA	1,819	3.5%
Augusta County, VA	1,807	3.5%
Waynesboro city, VA	1,168	2.3%
Nelson County, VA	1,084	2.1%
Orange County, VA	1,073	2.1%
Rockingham County, VA	1,061	2.1%
All Other Locations	15,279	29.7%

HOUSING & LAND USE

Land use categories designated on the County's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provide recommendations for housing types and densities. AC44's Development Areas Land Use Chapter and corresponding Area Plans provide recommendations for the form and scale of buildings and the layout of new development. The form and layout of development can provide important benefits, including recreational and open space, safe places to walk, and street trees for shade. However, site design requirements can also increase the cost and reduce the construction feasibility of new development (and therefore housing), including stepbacks (higher floors of the building are further 'setback'), building setbacks (how far buildings are from the street and each other), and parking.

While many site design requirements are important for safety and well-being, there are opportunities to use zoning ordinance updates for advantageous site design modifications that are consistent with current best practices. For example, a 2023 study by the Rutgers Center for Real Estate ('How Much Is Enough? Parking Usage in New Jersey Rental Units') found that lowering mandated parking requirements for residential developments lowered initial construction costs and decreased ongoing operating costs, allowing for lower rents compared with 'over-parked' developments.



Building form and scale

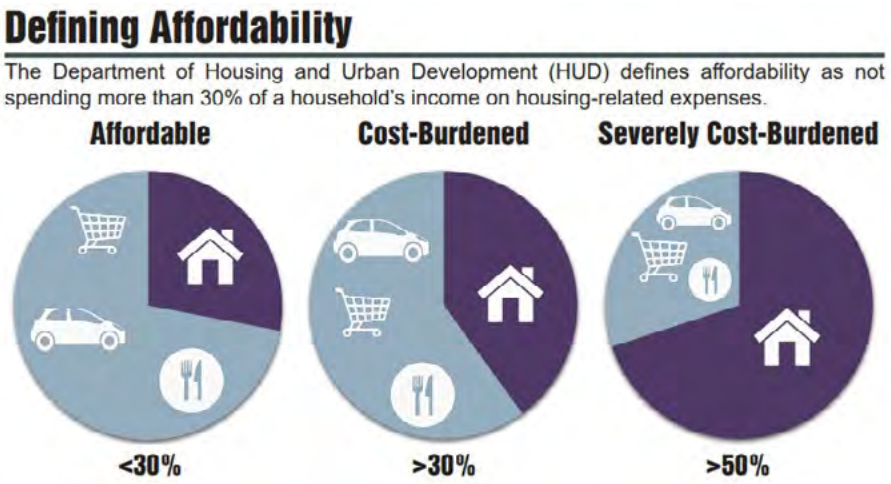
WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

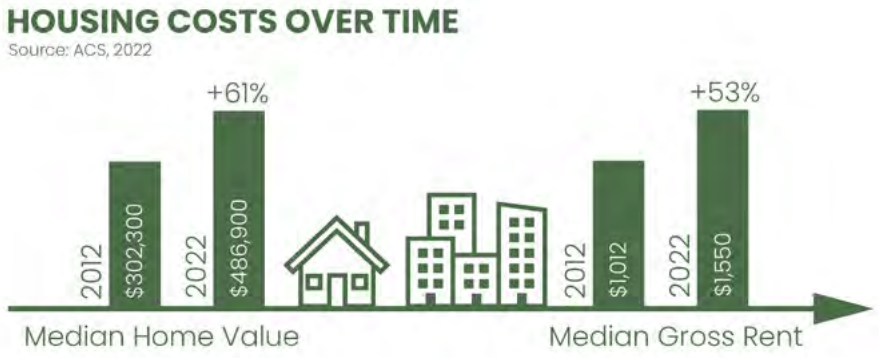
Housing affordability considers both household income and the cost of buying and renting housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers housing to be affordable when a household spends no more than 30% of its monthly gross income on housing costs. For homeowners (62% of county households), this cost includes monthly mortgage payments, property taxes, and insurance. For renters (38% of county households), the cost includes monthly rent and any tenant-paid utilities. Households are considered severely cost-burdened if they pay more than 50% of their monthly income for housing.

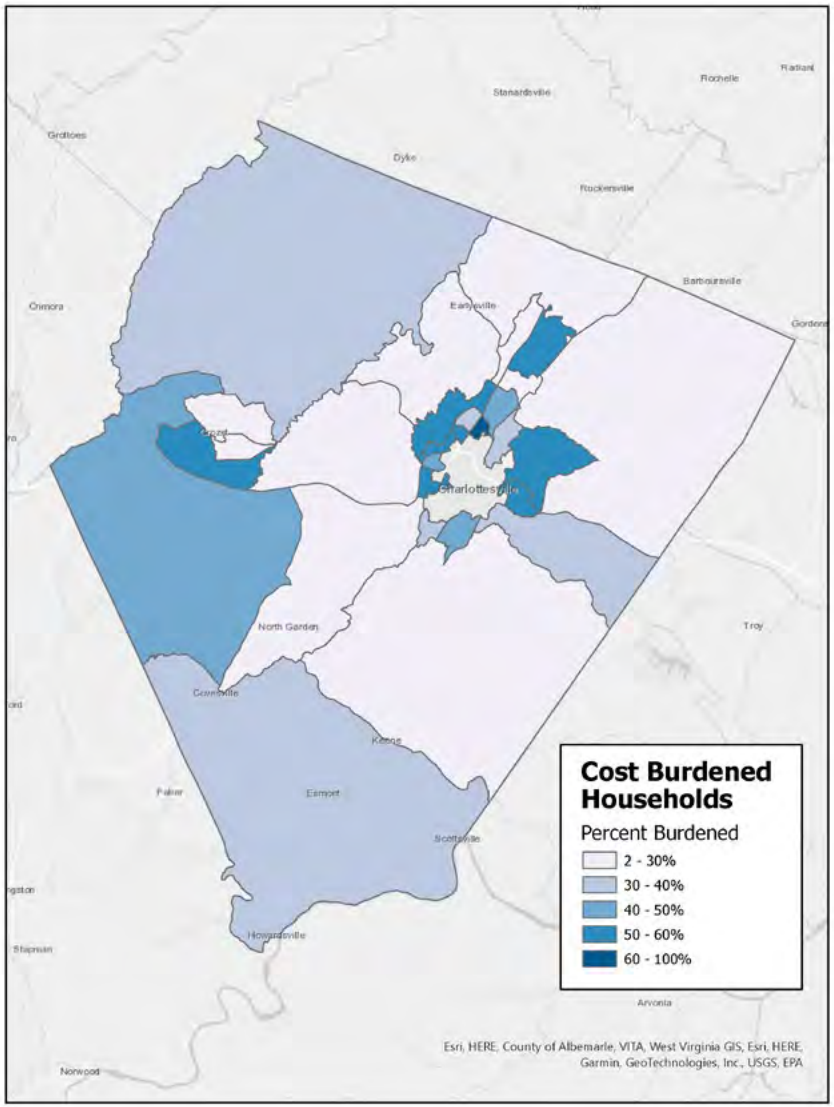
The County uses Area Median Income (AMI) to determine household income limits for affordable housing programs. The AMI indicates the midpoint of incomes for a given area, with half of household incomes above the AMI and half below. Regional data is used to determine income limits. Housing Albemarle defines affordability requirements as rentals for households earning up to 60% AMI and homeownership for households earning up to 80% AMI.

LOCAL HOUSING COSTS

While AMI in the community is relatively high, the cost of housing is also high and continues to rise. The county is part of the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which also includes the counties of Fluvanna, Greene, and Nelson, and the City of Charlottesville. For the Charlottesville MSA in fiscal year 2024 , a family of four is considered low income with a household income of $97,650 per year (80% AMI), very low income at a household income of $61,050 (50% AMI), and extremely low income with a household income of $36,650 (30% AMI) or less. Statewide in Virginia, these figures for a family of four are $90,950 (80% AMI), $56,850 (50% AMI), and $31,400 (30% AMI). The Charlottesville MSA has higher incomes than the state overall but also has higher housing costs.







LOCAL COST OF LIVING

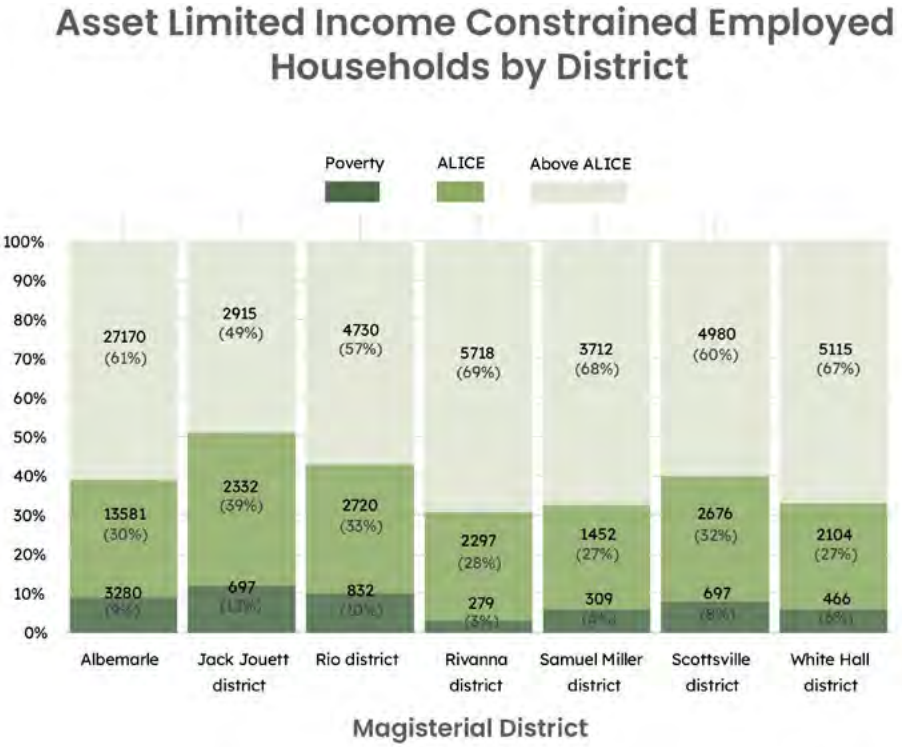
The Orange Dot Report , published by Piedmont Virginia Community College and the Virginia Equity Center, estimates the cost of living in the region, including the counties of Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson, and the City of Charlottesville. The report estimates the costs of food, shelter, clothing, utilities, childcare, transportation, and other necessary household costs by locality. According to the most recent report published in October 2024, about 5,010 households in the county (18%) do not earn enough income to meet their basic needs, compared with 22% of households in the region. While the county has the smallest percentage of households at this threshold, it has the greatest total number of households that do not have sufficient income. Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville continue to be the most expensive localities in the region, driven by the costs of housing and childcare. The report estimated that, in 2021 (most recent data available), a family needed an annual income of at least $63,321 to afford the basic costs of living in the county.

High housing costs impact individual households and the broader community, including from an economic development standpoint. Employers may find it difficult to attract or retain employees due to concerns about housing affordability, and employees may end up moving further away from their place of employment. Community members will also have less income leftover after paying for housing costs to spend on other sectors, including spending at local businesses.

A related concept to cost-burden is energy-burden, which refers to the percentage of household income that goes toward energy costs. Housing that is most affordable in terms of rent or property value is also often older, which may lead to higher energy costs. Homes with outdated, inefficient appliances, poor insulation, and insufficient weather sealing can cost residents hundreds of dollars per month in energy bills, reduce home comfort and quality of life, and contribute to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. Continued partnerships with groups such as the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) and the Albemarle Housing Improvement Program (AHIP) are important to provide assistance and allow community members to stay in and afford their homes.

The United Way uses a measure called Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) to assess whether household incomes are sufficient to meet the local cost of living. ALICE is different than the federal poverty line; it is adjusted for local costs. This 2022 ALICE data shows the variation in poverty and ALICE rates by magisterial district in the county.

The Economic Policy Institute's (EPI's) Family Budget Calculator estimates what families need to afford a modest standard of living in different localities across the country. The calculator includes costs such as housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and other necessities, and is intended to highlight the gap between household earnings and the actual cost of living. According to the EPI tool, a family of four (two adults, two children) living in Albemarle County would need $123,728 annually ($10,311 monthly) to meet basic needs. It is important to note that this tool differs from federal data such as HUD's Area Median Income (AMI) and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data, which remain foundational for housing affordability measures. The EPI tool provides additional context by illustrating how local costs, such as transportation and childcare, shape affordability challenges. It can be understood as a supplemental lens for understanding the pressures individuals and families face when navigating the local housing market and making economic decisions at large.





Quadplex on the corner of 2nd Street NW and Hedge Street.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

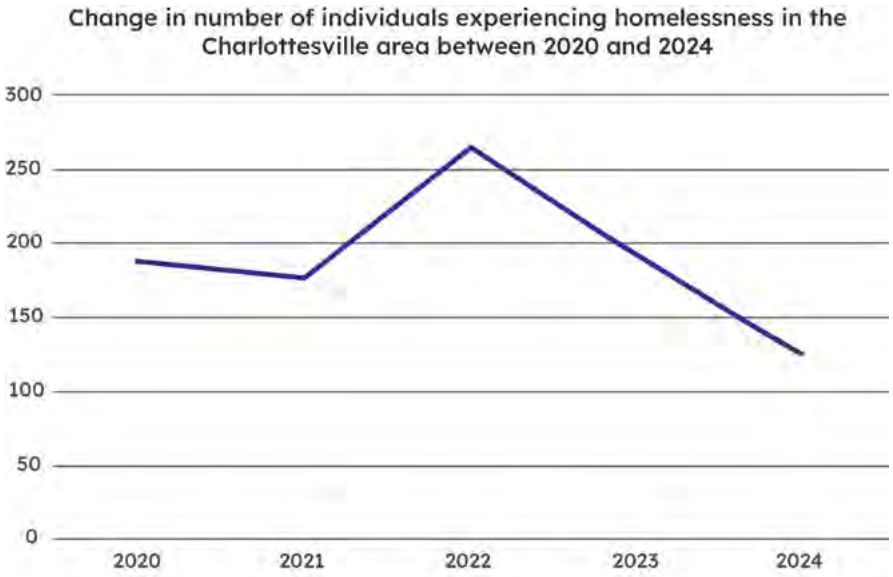
Discussions of housing types often bring several options to mind: single-family detached, single-family attached/ townhouse, and multifamily/apartments. However, there are a variety of other housing types to consider, including duplexes, multiplexes, bungalow courts, courtyard buildings, and live-work units. These housing types fall between single-family detached houses and larger apartment buildings; they are compatible in scale and form with single-family houses (and may be located in a walkable neighborhood). As often-overlooked options, these housing types are considered 'Missing Middle Housing.'

Missing Middle Housing units tend to be more affordable, as units are usually smaller than traditional larger-lot single-family houses and the land cost is often split between multiple units. Some Zoning Ordinance restrictions can limit or prohibit development of these units. For example, larger lot/yard size requirements, restrictions on the types of units permitted, setbacks (how far buildings are from each other and the street/sidewalk), and parking requirements can reduce the feasibility of developing Missing Middle Housing. Housing Albemarle recommends reducing barriers to developing affordable and workforce housing, which could include updates to these types of zoning ordinance requirements to allow innovative housing types like co-housing and tiny houses.

Missing Middle Housing tends to be more focused on form, rather than density. Form is how a site is designed, such as building homes around a shared open space or giving a multiplex unit the appearance of a single-family home. Density is the number of housing units divided by the total site acreage (units/acre). Density does not provide information on the form and scale of development, and does not distinguish among housing types, costs, or sizes.



'Missing Middle' housing illustration. Source: Opticos Design, Inc.



Source: HUD Point In Time Data, 2020-2024



Park Lane Apartments have been renovated to improve energy efficiency.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY & HOMELESSNESS

High housing costs and a lack of sufficient housing supply also increase the risk of homelessness for many lower-income households. According to the HUD Point-in-Time count, which counts sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January, the number of households experiencing homelessness in the Charlottesville region decreased by 34.55% from January 2023 to January 2024. During the same period, the number of homeless individuals in the state increased by 5.62%. In the Charlottesville region, 125 individuals were counted in the 2024 HUD Point-in-Time count, including 12 children under the age of 18. However, this statistic does not fully capture the scale of struggling households, as it does not count people who are doubled up in households or staying with family or friends.

Homelessness may generate serious consequences for individuals and households by increasing the risks of experiencing physical and mental health issues and lead to poor educational outcomes for children. Homelessness also strains local public services and budgets. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, supporting one chronically homeless person costs local governments, health providers, and social service agencies a combined average of $35,578 per year. The ‘housing first’ strategy, which provides housing for homeless individuals before addressing other challenges such as health conditions or unemployment, is now considered best practice. Ensuring enough affordable housing in the county to keep all residents safely and stably housed would result in improved health and well-being and significant savings for the community.

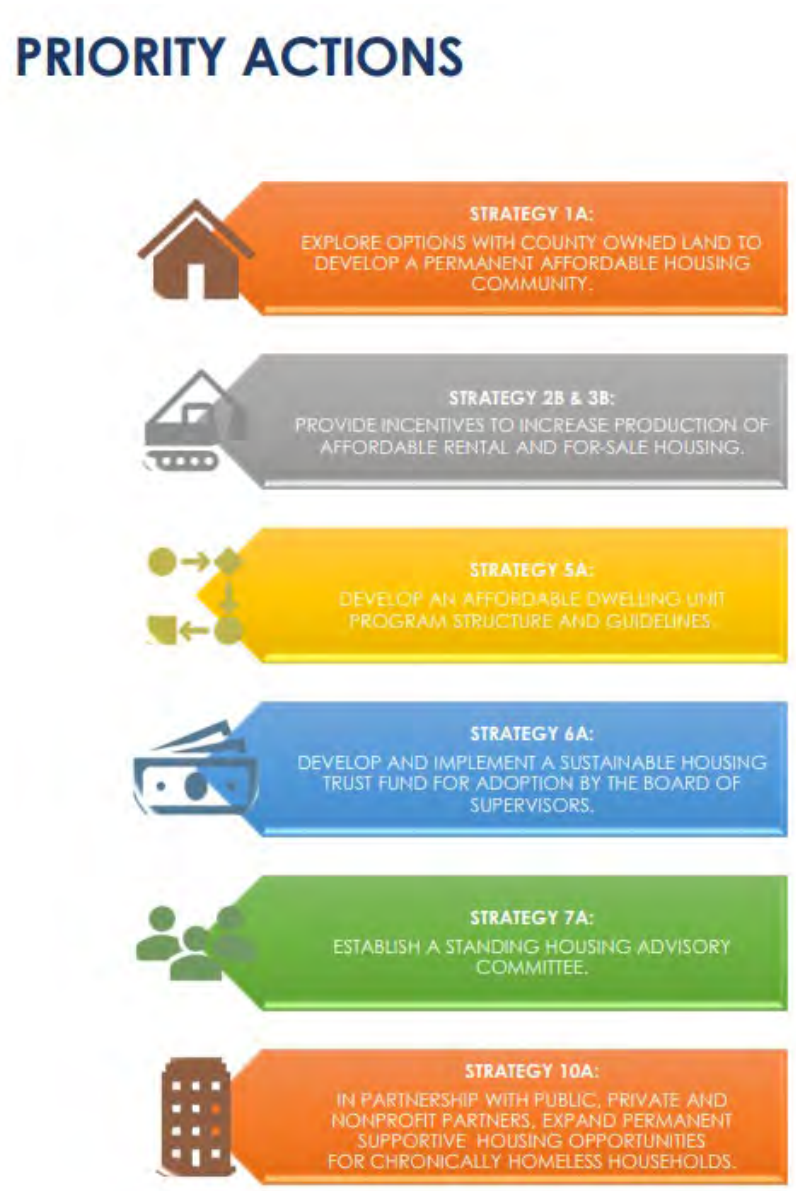
HOUSING ALBEMARLE

Housing Albemarle, the County's housing policy, was adopted in 2021. Its purpose is to make sure the County provides sufficient and appropriate housing options in the community by using the policy's implementation tools to meet the varied housing needs of all county residents.

Housing Albemarle is a separate plan document and is adopted as part of AC44. Its priorities (shown as 'Priority Actions' in the graphic) and recommendations related to land use have been incorporated into this chapter. New recommendations since the adoption of Housing Albemarle have also been added to this chapter. They include recommendations related to Activity Centers, more detailed guidance for Area Plan updates, adaptive reuse, and a greater emphasis on climate action. The Priority Actions in this chapter and Housing Albemarle work together to implement the County's housing objectives.



Apartments at Riverside Village.



Priority Actions from Housing Albemarle.

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	HSG 1. *Increase the overall housing supply and housing choice to meet the varied housing needs of current and future county residents.*
ACTION	
1.1	Update the County's Zoning Ordinance to incorporate and enact an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program as developed by the Office of Housing and allowed under Virginia Code Section 15.2-2304. [H.A. 5a, 5b]
1.2	In single-family neighborhoods, achieve greater housing supply and diversity by allowing small-scale residential structures such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes that align with the scale of the existing neighborhood. [H.A. 1a, 8b]
1.3	In residential zoning districts, allow external accessory units (AUs), developing a set of performance standards to ensure proposed accessory units integrate with the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood. [H.A. 1a, 8b]
1.4	Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing density bonus ordinance as a tool to achieve affordable housing, amending it as necessary to increase its use in by-right developments. [H.A. 1a, 8b]
1.5	Apply the 'Middle Residential' land use designation to additional locations in the Development Areas with new and updated Area Plans to increase housing choice.
1.6	Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures such as underused commercial or office spaces for conversion into housing in the Development Areas.
1.7	Evaluate which County-owned properties would be most suitable for affordable housing development, analyzing factors such as suitability for other future public uses (e.g. community facilities) and proximity to Activity Centers, jobs, public transit, and public parks and trails.
1.8	Promote access to safe, stable, and healthy housing regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, disability status, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity and veteran status. [H.A. Obj. 9 + associated strategies]

Housing Albemarle strategy overlap: *Orange text indicates actions with the same language as the Housing Albemarle (H.A.) strategy number reference noted in parentheses.*

OBJECTIVE	**HSG 2.** ***Permit a range of housing types that are affordable for all income levels, especially in locations that are within or walkable to Activity Centers and locations with job opportunities, public transit, and community amenities.***
ACTION	
2.1	Update the Zoning Ordinance to expand the allowance for modular or manufactured homes by-right in some residential and mixed-use Zoning Districts.
2.2	Update the Zoning Ordinance to allow, by right, and encourage the construction of innovative housing types and creative infill development, prioritizing increased density in the Development Areas and building 'up instead of out' to preserve environmental features/open space. [H.A. 8c]
2.3	Modernize and streamline the development review process to improve the timeliness and efficiency of review. Implement a priority development review process to increase the development of new affordable and workforce housing within appropriate locations including in and adjacent to Activity Centers and Employment Districts.
2.4	Collaborate with community partners to explore opportunities for subsidized/lower rent opportunities for community-serving commercial uses in affordable housing developments, such as grocery stores and day care.
2.5	Collaborate with community partners including faith-based organizations and institutes of higher education on affordable housing developments, including on underused land such as large parking areas in the Development Areas.
2.6	Work with non-profit housing partners, public health organizations, and other community service providers to engage with community members and identify housing and related needs (such as transportation) to be addressed.
OBJECTIVE	**HSG 3.** ***Increase long-term affordable and workforce housing options in Albemarle County through the development of new units and the preservation of existing units.***
ACTION	
3.1	Update Housing Albemarle at least every five years, adjusting affordable housing requirements and incentives based on current data/indicators. Calibrate affordable housing requirements to ensure the feasibility of affordable housing units being built through rezoning applications instead of a reduced number of units through by-right development or no development. In addition, the next review should include consideration of: • The role of the County's designated Rural Area in providing affordable housing. • Establishing specific targets for the total number of affordable units, and/or similarly specified targets. • Establishing commitments to support fair housing and tenant protection efforts at the county level. • Developing more incentives and programs that can address unique opportunities to achieve new or maintain existing affordable units.

3.2	Develop mechanisms, such as deed restrictions, to ensure that units developed using county incentives remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years for rental housing and 40 years for owner-occupied units. Adjust with *Housing Albemarle* reviews as needed. [H.A. 2e, 3c, 3d, 3e, 5a]
3.3	In all residential and mixed-use zoning districts, reduce residential minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, and minimum parking requirements to allow for more affordable and workforce housing development and residential densities consistent with future land use designations, with a focus on sustainable and climate-resilient design. [H.A.2c, 3b, 8a, 8b]
3.4	With each Comp Plan update, review Development Areas Area Plans, Comprehensive Plan land use designations and categories, and County ordinances to identify and remove barriers to the development of affordable and workforce housing. [H.A. 8a]
3.5	Use available grants, such as the Virginia Housing Community Impact Grant, to further advance affordable housing initiatives, including, but not limited to, strategic planning, enhancing housing production, and strengthening community resilience.
3.6	Coordinate with surrounding localities on affordable and workforce housing issues and opportunities, including through the TJPDC's Central Virginia Regional Housing Partnership. [H.A. 2f, 10e]
3.7	Actively facilitate and encourage community engagement and involvement in the development of affordable housing programs by establishing a standing housing advisory committee with diverse representation. [H.A. 7a]
OBJECTIVE	**HSG 4.** ***Preserve and maintain the county's aging housing stock in the Rural Area and Development Areas.***
ACTION	
4.1	Explore programmatic and funding options to encourage the preservation and maintenance of naturally occurring affordable existing rental housing units and existing owner-occupied units with an emphasis on resilient and energy-efficient practices. [H.A. 4b]
4.2	Examine the need for, and feasibility of, implementing a rental inspection district program to help ensure safe, decent, and sanitary living conditions for tenants, prioritizing historically under-invested areas, equitable engagement, and community health. [H.A. 4e]
4.3	Facilitate regular forums and workshops that not only cover general aspects of the Landlord and Tenant Act but also address specific concerns and rights of marginalized or vulnerable groups. [H.A. 9b]
4.4	Reduce and ease involuntary displacement during redevelopment and increase access to equitable relocation options, particularly for vulnerable communities such as those in manufactured home parks. [H.A. 4f]

OBJECTIVE	HSG 5. *Increase the funding for low- and moderate-income homeowners to maintain and remain in their existing housing units and to reduce their energy cost burdens.*
ACTION	
5.1	Continue to pursue state and federal grant funding for housing rehabilitation projects with an emphasis on energy-efficiency, including with the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) and the Albemarle Housing Improvement Program (AHIP). [H.A. 4a, 4d, 12f]
OBJECTIVE	HSG 6. *Address unmet needs for people living unsheltered and work to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time, promoting the best practice of housing first.*
ACTION	
6.1	With local partners and property owners, identify parking areas that can serve as safe and designated shelters for overnight parking for households experiencing homelessness who are living in their vehicles.
6.2	Work with local LGBTQ+ and other advocacy groups to improve staff training and ensure current shelters and housing programs are affirming and welcoming to LGBTQ+ youth and that these services are easily accessible to those who need them.
6.3	Engage individuals with lived experience of homelessness in the design of rapid re-housing programs.
6.4	Expand permanent, supportive housing opportunities for chronically homeless households in partnership with the public, private, and non-profit sectors. [H.A. 10a, 10b]
6.5	Allocate funding and staffing resources for homeless prevention and assistance programs, consistent with Housing Albemarle. [H.A. 10c]
6.6	Collaborate with community stakeholders on initiatives that address system issues contributing to homelessness and advocate for policy changes that dismantle institutional barriers. [H.A. 10a, 10c, 10d, 10e]
OBJECTIVE	HSG 7. *Increase affordable and accessible housing options in the community.*
ACTION	
7.1	Incentivize shared space initiatives, including community center kitchens and gardens, to foster collaboration and reduce costs associated with private spaces in our communities. [H.A. Obj. 11 + associated strategies]
7.2	Promote community awareness of affordable housing opportunities.
7.3	Explore opportunities to purchase blighted properties.
7.4	Support and promote housing options that allow for aging in place both within a community and at home. To combat social isolation among people with different abilities, encourage the creation of fully accessible communities with accessible design elements such as wheelchair ramps, handrails on both sides of x staircases, Braille directional signage, and barrier-free walkways. Ensure communities have easy access to public transportation options. [H.A. 11c]



AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

GOAL: *Albemarle County will have healthy, thriving, and resilient ecosystems by preserving, protecting, and restoring the natural environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The County will prioritize the protection, restoration, and expansion of areas that provide habitats and connect land and water networks for local species, act as natural carbon sinks, and enhance the community's resilience to climate change. The community will value the natural environment for its inherent beauty, benefits to the variety of local animals and plants, and its importance for quality of life for residents and visitors.*



Native pollinators play a valuable role in the natural ecosystem.

Objective 1: Protect and restore the quality and connectivity of rivers, streams, wetlands, floodplains, and forested riparian buffers, including by implementing the recommendations of the Stream Health Initiative.

Objective 2: Reduce the amount of unmanaged stormwater and other sources of nutrient and sediment pollution that enter natural waters, stream channels, and riparian areas.

Objective 3: Protect and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater throughout the county.

Objective 4: Protect and restore critical habitats for biodiversity and ecosystem health - including a network of large and well-connected native habitat blocks; priority areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan; the Mountain Protection Areas; forested habitat corridors; and riparian buffers - and protect and improve dark-sky conditions.

Objective 5: Remove barriers to wildlife movement and improve habitat connectivity.

Objective 6: Increase the community's capacity to prepare for and recover from natural and man-made hazards and the impacts of climate change, including excessive heat, drought, flooding, and wildfires.

Objective 7: Reduce our community's contributions to global climate change by emitting net zero greenhouse gases.

Objective 8: Reduce per capita energy use while increasing energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy use.

INTRODUCTION

Albemarle County's landscape, part of the Virginia Piedmont and located along the eastern flank of the Blue Ridge, provides a source of clean water for the community, vegetation and soils that sequester and store carbon dioxide and a home to a diverse array of native plant and animal communities. The County's policies for environmental stewardship involve protecting vital resources for the community's use and protecting healthy terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. These long-standing policies have been updated over time by earlier Comprehensive Plans, the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and the Stream Health Initiative.

In addition, the County strives to support the water-quality goals of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) and has elected to implement some aspects of the Act, such as riparian buffer protection. Voluntary adoption of all the provisions of the CBPA has been considered several times, most recently during the Stream Health Initiative. Close examination of the CBPA's enforcement in Tidewater communities found that Albemarle County would need to make significant investments in staffing to initiate and enforce the other elements of the CBPA, especially the agricultural and septic system requirements. Due to these factors, the County has chosen not to pursue adopting all provisions of the CBPA at this time.

In the Development Areas, the County's stewardship focus is on responsible growth that allows the community to meet climate action goals, mitigate the water-quality impacts of urban development to protect stream health, and equitably provide access to nature and green spaces in an urban setting. In the Rural Area, the focus is on landscape-scale conservation measures intended to protect public water supplies, improve stream health, protect and restore connected habitats for terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, support agricultural producers in adopting climate-smart practices, and maintain or increase forest cover and other natural landcover to meet the goals of the Climate Action Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan.







Local biodiversity depends on protected natural habitat. Photos credit: Scott Clark







Major issues facing environmental protection include the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, impacts of land development (e.g., rural residential development, increased impervious surfaces) on water supplies and stream health, erosion and pollution impacts on surface water and groundwater, reduction and fragmentation of wildlife habitats, and disconnection and isolation of habitats.

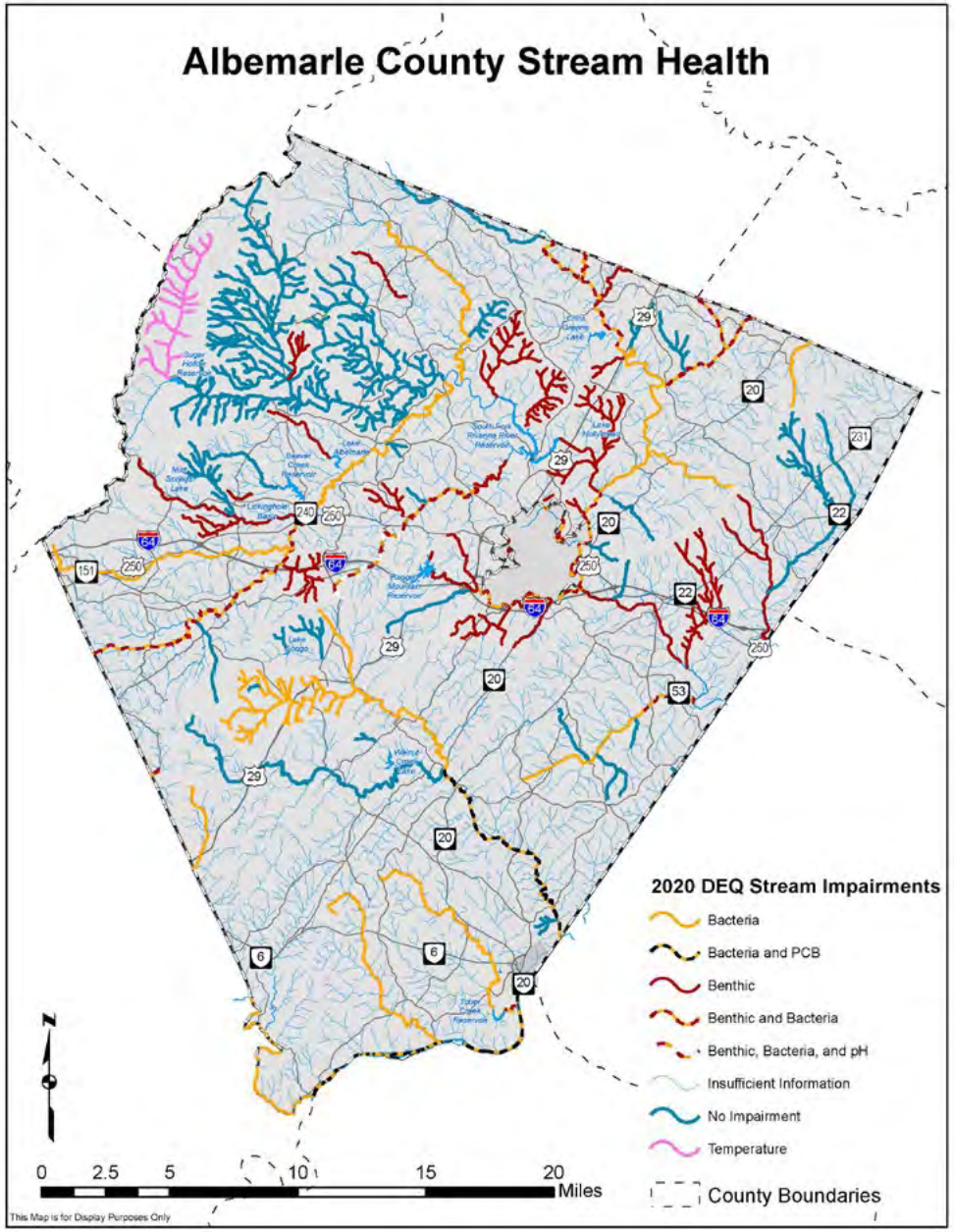


Forests and grasslands mitigate climate impacts through carbon sequestration and support a wide variety of native plants and animals.

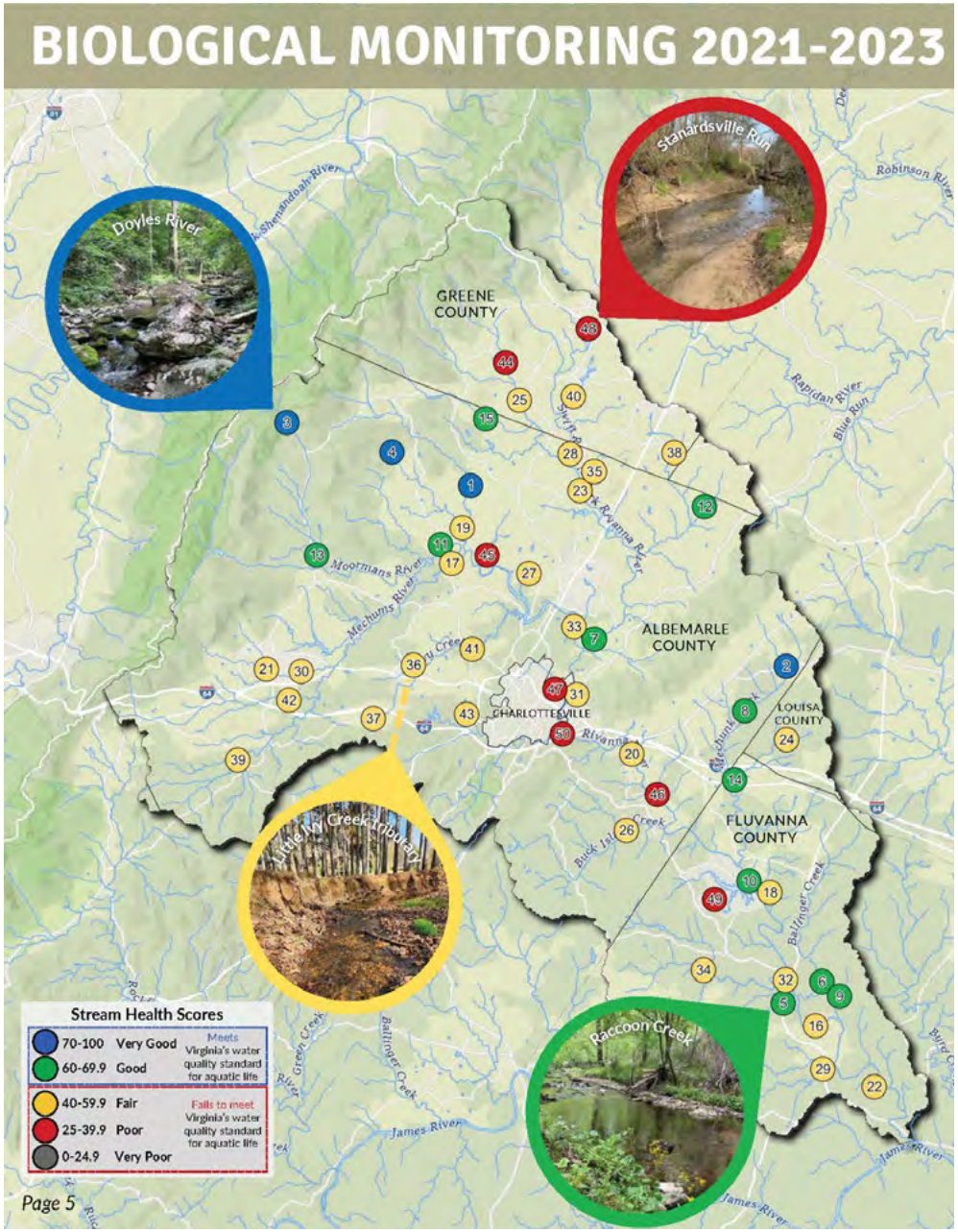
WATER QUALITY & STREAM HEALTH

Clean water is critical both for human use and for healthy ecosystems. Healthy streams have high water quality, well-vegetated riparian corridors, and thriving aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Beautiful and healthy waterways also contribute to the quality of life and recreation opportunities in the community. The Rivanna River runs from the foothills and mountains west of Charlottesville to the James River in Fluvanna County. Four local rivers – the Moormans, Rivanna, Rockfish, and James – are designated as Virginia Scenic Rivers. The Rivanna River was the first to receive this designation from the Commonwealth. County residents and visitors enjoy local 'blueways' (water trails that offer opportunities for floating or paddling small craft) and 'greenways' (trails which may be along waterways) that connect to parks, neighborhoods, and businesses in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville. Protecting the county's waterways is important for environmental stewardship as well as for recreation, quality of life, and economic vitality.

Factors contributing to the degradation of healthy streams and water quality include sedimentation from land disturbance and erosion, bacteria from human and animal waste, nutrient pollution from agricultural operations and lawn care, and chemical contamination. Climate change also impacts water quality due to more frequent flooding, droughts, and higher temperatures.



Albemarle County Streams Evaluation (Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, 2020). Many streams are impaired by excessive bacteria and/or poor benthic conditions (for aquatic organisms).



Rivanna River Report Card 2024. Stream health scores measured by sampling aquatic organisms over a five year period). Source: Rivanna Conservation Alliance







Top to bottom: Mechums River (western Albemarle), green frog, and spotted salamander. Image credit: Scott Clark, upper images; Ty Smith, lower image

Vision Statement: County Stream Health Initiative

Albemarle County will have clean, healthy stream systems that allow for safe utilization and support a diverse and resilient natural environment and a thriving rural economy. The quality of the water and riparian areas will provide important benefits such as drinking water protection, climate resilience, protection of biodiversity, erosion and sediment control, flood mitigation, and scenic beauty; and will maintain healthy aquatic and terrestrial habitat, support agriculture and other rural industries, and safely allow for recreational uses such as swimming, boating, and fishing.



Clean and healthy waterways support a variety of recreational opportunities including fishing.

The County can address these impacts on local waters by using land-conservation tools to limit the conversion of rural land uses and natural land cover to residential uses in the Rural Area; supporting the protection and expansion of riparian buffers along streams; controlling the erosion and stormwater impacts of permitted development in the Development Areas and the Rural Area; and implementing the recommendations of the Stream Health Initiative. In the Rural Area, protecting natural vegetation also helps to protect the groundwater sources that Rural Area residents depend on for their water supply. Protecting and restoring natural land cover, stream buffers, and natural floodplains also increases community resilience by mitigating large rainfall events and limiting the impacts of flooding.

In addition (as mandated by the federal Clean Water Act and state regulations), the County addresses impacts to water quality from development through the Virginia Erosion and Stormwater Management Program and the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Program and contributes to the implementation of local stream and Chesapeake Bay (TMDL) plans. As such, the County plays a central role in preventing pollution and sedimentation of aquatic ecosystems and public water supplies.



Kayaking on the Rivanna River.



Bee on pickerel weed



Cedar waxwings



Blackberry blossoms



Eastern tiger swallowtail



Eastern bluebird



Cardinal flower

Images credit: Scott Clark

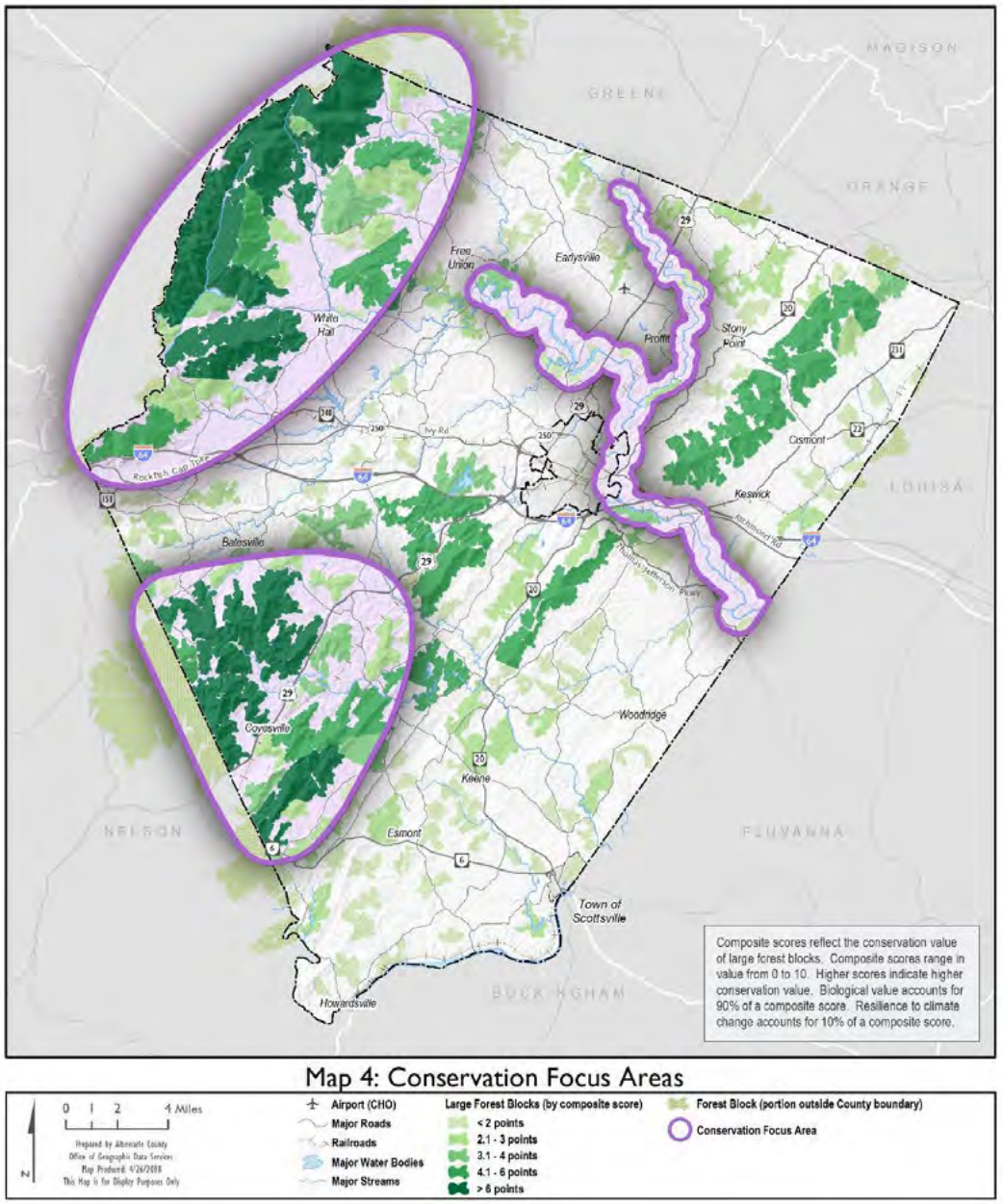
BIODIVERSITY

The county's varied terrain and water systems support diverse communities of native animals and plants. Since the U.S. colonial period, land clearing and other impacts have seriously impacted native wildlife. Still, as noted in the 2004 report of the County's Biodiversity Work Group, "We should not overlook the fact that an amazing biological world still exists in Albemarle County. Furthermore, the existing ecosystems continue to provide natural services essential to human communities."

Preservation of biodiversity in natural communities depends on protecting and connecting a network of large forest blocks. Large, intact forest blocks are important because many species can only survive within interior forest habitats. An important tool for conserving biodiversity is also retaining and improving habitat connections between these forest blocks. In nature, a harsh winter or dry summer can eliminate a species in one area or climate change can make a previously suitable habitat untenable. When this happens, habitat connections allow species to move to more suitable habitats or move between blocks to allow members of the same species to recolonize. If the County allows important blocks of forest become fragmented or isolated, the biodiversity within them is vulnerable to localized extinction.

The County can help protect and increase biodiversity by using land conservation programs to protect large blocks of native existing habitats, including forests and other native habitat types, as well as known sites of high conservation value; supporting the protection and restoration of streams for aquatic habitat; permitting and supporting environmental restoration projects; controlling the spread of invasive species; and limiting the impacts of light pollution on wildlife. The County can support habitat connectivity through land-conservation programs, through support for road and utility designs that maintain or restore landscape connections and include wildlife crossings, and through supporting removal of obsolete in-stream dams and other barriers to aquatic habitat connections. These actions should all be guided by the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Climate Action Plan, which need to be updated regularly to keep pace with landscape changes.

Fortunately, stewardship measures for any one goal will often provide benefits for others. For example, protecting forested land cover for carbon sequestration can, in many locations, also help protect the public water supply and stream health, and provide habitat for native wildlife. Similarly, protecting or restoring forested stream buffers for water-quality protection can also sequester carbon, provide habitat corridors to connect wildlife habitats, and reduce property damage caused by flooding.



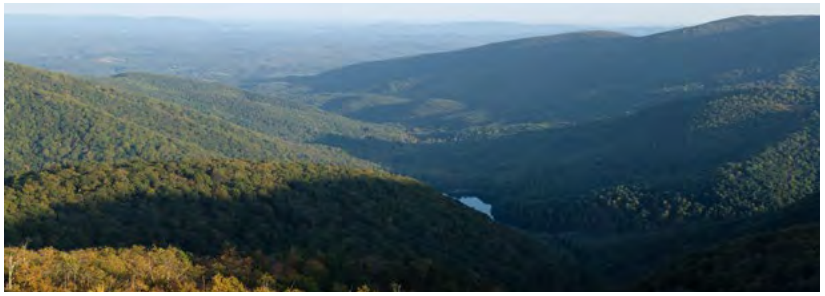
Map 4: Conservation Focus Areas

Conservation focus areas in Albemarle County from the Biodiversity Action Plan. Darker shades of green indicate priority protection forest blocks. The Rivanna River corridor is also included as a primary conservation zone.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

A resilient community strengthens the health and well-being of its members and its natural environment. By creating a stronger social, environmental, and economic baseline for the community, the County will be better able to prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant events that impact the community, including natural disasters and extreme weather events. The community can build on many existing local assets, including neighborhood groups, local businesses, nonprofits, schools, and informal mutual aid networks among community members.

Community resilience is relevant to and incorporated throughout AC44. In response to the challenges and impacts of climate change, the County established two major planning and implementation efforts – the 2020 Climate Action Plan and the in-progress Resilient Together project. The Climate Action Plan focuses on climate mitigation strategies, including greenhouse gas reduction. The Resilient Together project in collaboration with community partners includes recommendations for ensuring the community is strong, safe, and healthy in a changing climate. It addresses resilience to natural hazards and the effects of climate change and improving health outcomes in the community, including through local food systems. The County's adaptation and resilience strategies are discussed further below and in the Community Facilities & Infrastructure Chapter.



View of the Moormans River valley in the western part of the county.

Climate Mitigation Versus Adaptation

Mitigation: In terms of climate change, this term refers to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, either by reducing sources of these gases (e.g., the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat, or transport) or enhancing the "sinks" that accumulate and store these gases (such as the oceans, forests, and soil). The goal of mitigation is to avoid additional significant human interference with Earth's climate, "stabilize greenhouse gas levels in a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner" (from the 2014 report on Mitigation of Climate Change).

Adaptation: In terms of climate change, this term refers to adjusting to the actual or expected future climate and helping people withstand the effects of climate change. The goal is to reduce community risk from the harmful effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise, more intense extreme weather events, and food insecurity.

Source: NASA's Responding to Climate Change webpage.

Key Terms

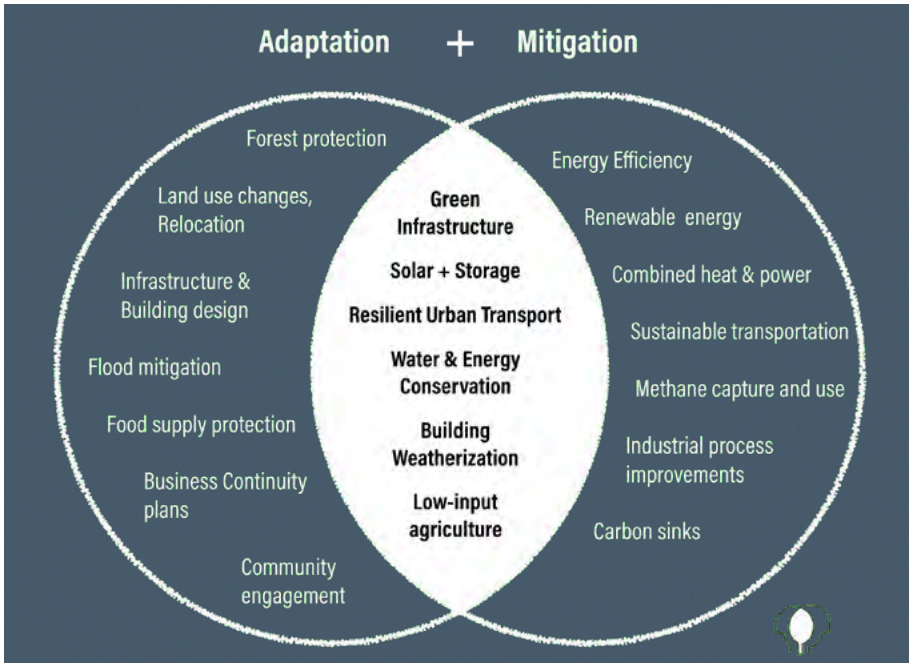
Equity: Providing resources and opportunities that each person needs to be successful. Equity recognizes that people have different circumstances and needs. Equity is different from equality, which assumes that everyone starts at the same place and faces the same challenges.

Resilience: The capacity of a system (can be social, economic, or natural) to cope with a hazardous event, trend, or disturbance; the ability to bounce back and recover after a climate impact.

Vulnerability: Social, health, or economic factors that increase the likelihood of harm or difficulty when exposed to a hazard.

"The discrepancies in scores between neighborhoods suggests distinct differences across the County in residents' connections to resources that expand choices, opportunities, and access across the County."
- Albemarle County Equity Profile

Resilient communities work to ensure that everyone can access a safe, healthy, and thriving future. However, not all community members have the same level of access to services and daily needs support and therefore face greater vulnerability during extreme weather events. For example, people who live in homes without air conditioning or access to public parks and street trees will be more exposed to heat waves and lower air quality. These community members have a different baseline, or starting point, and therefore are more at risk to extreme heat compared to people with air conditioning and access to shade. The County can use data and mapping to identify where investments such as street trees, parks, and building weatherization/efficiency upgrades can equitably decrease vulnerability. Recognizing existing disparities and working to remedy them in collaboration with community members is essential for making the entire community more resilient. Building up the community's resilience will also have beneficial impacts for the local economy, quality of life, and natural environment.

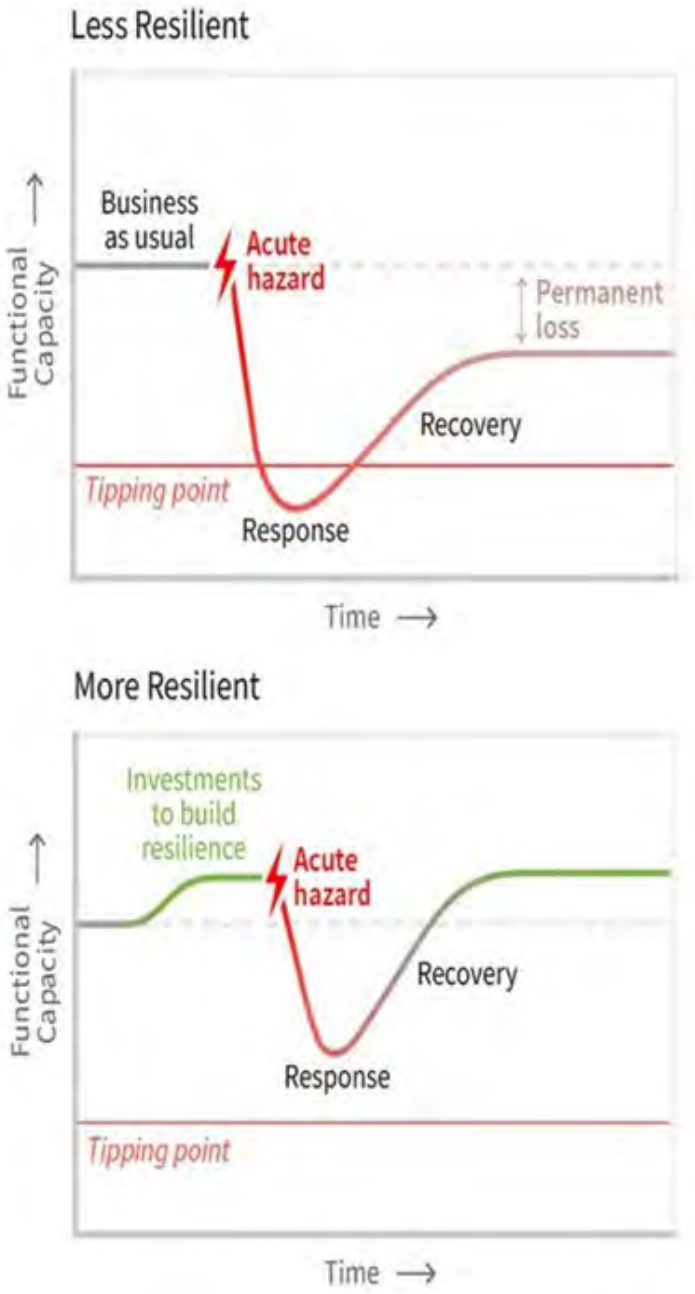


Adaptation and mitigation strategies. Source: Greenresilience.com

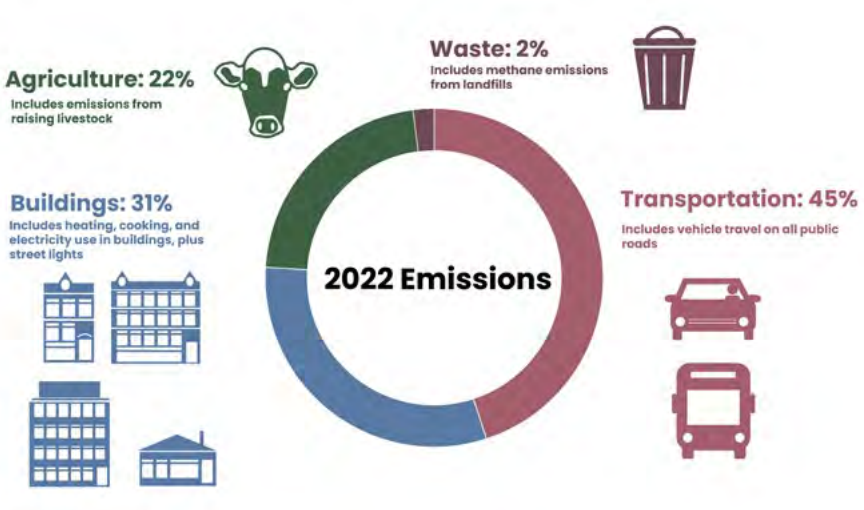
MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

The first step in resilience planning is to assess a locality's risks and vulnerabilities. The County completed a climate-related risk and vulnerabilities assessment in 2022. It analyzed potential local hazards, who and what will be most exposed, and areas of greater vulnerability to adverse impacts:

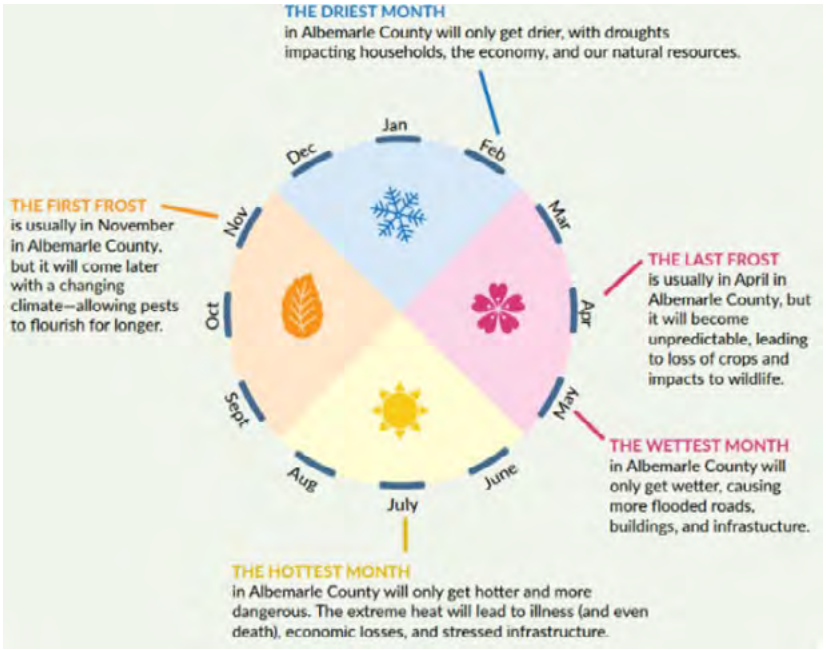
- Temperatures in the county have been rising at an accelerating rate. Since 1920, average temperatures have increased about 0.2 degrees per decade; since 1980, that rate of warming has tripled. The timing of seasonal changes – such as when flowers bloom or mosquitoes are active – has shifted as well. The analysis estimated that there will be five to seven times as many heat advisories (a heat index over 100 degrees) and about a month longer period of mosquito activity by 2050.
- The amount of precipitation that falls in the county as either rain or snow has been increasing at an accelerating rate. Over the last 100 years, total annual precipitation increased at a rate of about 0.48 inches per decade; since 1980, that rate of increase has doubled to over an inch per decade. The increase in total precipitation hides a counterintuitive climate trend – drought is also increasing.
- Every $1 spent on climate resilience and preparedness saves communities an estimated $13 in damages, cleanup costs, and economic impacts. These investments preserve jobs and household incomes, reduce the number of people displaced from their homes, and help local economies rebound faster. There are also multiple community benefits to increasing community resiliency even if a major disaster does not occur. These benefits include enhanced protections for the natural environment, job creation, and improvements to the built environment such as home repair and weatherization, more shade trees, and better access to parks. (Sources: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Allstate, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation)



Source: Resource Practitioner Guide, 2024. Toolkit.climate.gov website



Greenhouse gas emissions by source, 2022 data



Typical annual weather patterns for Albemarle County.

CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL HAZARDS

Climate change already affects Albemarle County. Current impacts include extreme heat (temperatures above 95 degrees), increased precipitation and flooding, and wildfire smoke. For example, the community experiences longer periods between rain but with more intense rain events when rain events occur. These conditions compound the effects of droughts, as abnormally dry ground cannot absorb moisture as effectively, making flooding worse.

While the effects of climate change will be seen everywhere, the impacts and costs will not fall equally on all people. The disruptions and impacts from extreme weather compound existing challenges for community members. For example, a community member who is already struggling to afford their electricity bill may be unable to afford to run their air conditioner throughout the summer as hotter days grow more frequent and extreme.

Albemarle County's Climate Action Plan builds on the County's history of local environmental stewardship and growth management and addresses room for improvement. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to reduce the community's contributions to global climate change while advancing the County's vision of a thriving, vibrant community for every resident. . The County's target is to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the community by 45% from 2008 levels by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.**

The Climate Action Plan identifies goals, strategies, and actions across five sectors:

- Transportation & Land Use
- Buildings
- Renewable Energy Sourcing
- Sustainable Materials Management
- Landscape, Natural Resources & Agriculture

These emissions sectors and related climate action targets show how mitigation is related to all topics in the Comprehensive Plan. For example, the layout of communities has an immense impact on transportation emissions. Sprawl, or spread-out land uses, makes it nearly impossible to walk for day-to-day needs and to serve areas with transit. By contrast, compact and mixed-use neighborhoods make it possible for people to reach their daily needs by foot or by transit, reducing transportation emissions. In addition, mixed-use neighborhoods can also impact emissions from energy usage. Multi-family and mixed-use buildings naturally insulate units with shared walls and realize efficiencies in shared building systems and shared infrastructure, such as streets, parking, and utilities. In the Rural Area, regenerative land use practices can improve soil health and increase the land's ability to trap and store carbon.

Reducing emissions also helps a community's resiliency to extreme weather events. Healthy soil traps more carbon and also allows more water to infiltrate, reducing the severity of downstream flooding. Walkable neighborhoods make it easier for neighbors to support each other in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. By addressing the root causes of climate change – primarily the reliance on fossil fuels, unsustainable land use practices, and emissions from transportation and industrial sectors – the County aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition toward a cleaner, more resilient future. Moreover, while climate change is a problem to be addressed nationally and globally, changes made locally can significantly decrease regional impacts such as the heat island affect. It is critical that the County take action even if decision makers at other levels fail to act.

Alongside the implementation measures in the Climate Action Plan and Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, this chapter of AC44 outlines a variety of actions to bolster community resilience. These actions include developing a Flood Resilience Plan, maintaining the functionality of dam and stormwater infrastructure functions properly, preparing for potential droughts, implementing wildland fire prevention strategies, and using nature-based solutions. Additional recommendations related to renewable energy, community health and well-being will also strengthen the community's sustainability.



Compact, walkable neighborhoods decrease dependency on vehicles for travel, reducing emissions.



Vegetated stream corridors provide flood buffering, which mitigates flood impacts. Shown: Rivanna River near Pantops.

Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Hazard mitigation is any action taken to reduce or eliminate long term risk to people and property from natural hazards. Hazard mitigation planning is a key process used to break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, and localities to develop and regularly update a Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (RHMP). The RHMP is updated every five years. It was last updated in 2023. The RHMP includes actions that each TJPDC locality can take to prepare for natural hazards and mitigate their impacts. For Albemarle County, these actions include implementing the Climate Action Plan and completing and implementing the Climate Resilience Plan. The RHMP is adopted as part of AC44 in the appendices.



Parking lot awning with solar panels in the Riverbend neighborhood.

RENEWABLE ENERGY & SOLAR

Solar energy is a key renewable energy source at all levels of production. Renewable energy utility construction and maintenance creates local jobs in the clean energy sector. Local community renewable energy can increase the electricity-generation capacity of the regional grid, when combined with battery energy storage facilities, and bolster the resilience of the electric grid when demand is high or when storms damage transmission lines.

Solar projects in the Development Areas are typically at a smaller scale than solar projects in the Rural Area and are better able to use existing structures and larger impervious surface areas. For example, Albemarle County has installed solar panels on public buildings and on the roof of Crozet Library. The County prioritizes rooftops and parking lots for solar energy generation. Additionally, the County prioritizes brownfields, landfills, and post-industrial or other open lands over forested lands, grassland, and other ecologically valuable land for utility-scale solar energy generation.

In the Rural Areas, the County recognizes that there is a balance to be struck between the goals of generating clean, renewable energy and protecting natural resource impacts. The County's solar regulations permit by-right solar installations up to 21 acres and allow for larger solar facilities by special use permit. When considering the suitability of larger solar facilities, both goals carry equal weight. Future projects should attempt to maximize both goals.

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	ES 1. *Protect and restore the quality and connectivity of rivers, streams, wetlands, floodplains, and forested riparian buffers, including by implementing the recommendations of the Stream Health Initiative [SHI].*
ACTION	
1.1	Track and report regularly to the Board of Supervisors on the impact of the County's water resource protection and restoration activities to assess the efficacy of requirements and make necessary adjustments. Use existing data sources where available and fill data gaps where needed through GIS analyses, field surveys, and monitoring.
1.2	Develop metrics to inform County staff and the community about the condition of county streams and watersheds over time (including testing for PFAS and identifying potential sources). Use these metrics to help prioritize where to focus County's water resource protection and restoration funds and activities.
1.3	Develop data, tools, and processes to ensure intermittent and perennial waterways and their associated riparian buffer areas are protected by County ordinance and properly identified so as not to be impacted.
1.4	Update the County's standards for restoring stream banks and mitigating permitted impacts to riparian buffers [SHI 2] and update the Zoning Ordinance to permit environmental restoration projects by-right in all zoning districts. [SHI 3]
1.5	In the Rural Area, implement the Land Conservation for Water Quality program [SHI 6] to acquire new voluntary whole-property and riparian conservation easements (donated and/or purchased), and work with willing landowners to amend older conservation easements without strong buffer protections.
1.6	Establish a stream quality assessment program with county landowners to assess stream conditions and restoration needs on private properties. [SHI 12]
1.7	In the Rural Area, implement the Riparian Conservation Assistance Program [SHI 7] to help landowners overcome cost barriers to permanent protection of water quality and habitats along priority riparian areas. Scale financial assistance to landowners' level of need.
1.8	Incentivize habitat restoration projects on private land by pursuing changes to state enabling legislation to permit those projects to qualify for the Open Space category of use-value taxation.

Stream Health Initiative strategy overlap: *Blue text indicates actions with similar language as in the Stream Health Initiative (SHI) strategy number reference noted in parentheses.*

OBJECTIVE	ES 2. *Reduce the amount of unmanaged stormwater and other sources of nutrient and sediment pollution that enter natural waters, stream channels, and riparian areas.*
ACTION	
2.1	Update County ordinances and guidance documents to allow, encourage, or require low-impact development (LID) to minimize the effects of unmanaged stormwater and increase the use of on-site stormwater management. [SHI 11]
2.2	Encourage implementation of low impact development (LID) and green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, green roofs, pervious pavements, and bioswales. [SHI 11]
2.3	Continue to integrate LID and green infrastructure measures in new County facilities and parks. Retrofit LID and green infrastructure into existing County facilities and parks and display interpretive information at these facilities to inform and educate community members and visitors about the benefits of LID and green infrastructure.
2.4	Increase resources for the existing Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program, administered by the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD), to meet demand for technical assistance and funding for measures reducing stormwater impacts (sediment, chemical, and nutrient pollution) and increasing biodiversity on developed land. [SHI 10]
2.5	Through the TJSWCD continues to implement agricultural best management practices for water quality protection. [SHI 8 & 9]
2.6	Investigate establishing a biosolids ordinance that allows for testing and monitoring application of biosolids as allowed by State Code.
OBJECTIVE	**ES 3. *Protect and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater throughout the county.***
ACTION	
3.1	Partner with the Virginia Department of Health to promote responsible management of septic systems through financial assistance and education on pump-out requirements, with a long-term goal of hiring staff for outreach, data collection, community input, administration, and enforcement. [SHI 4]
3.2	Work with local and regional partners and community members to monitor groundwater levels across the county and promote water conservation, particularly during times of drought.
3.3	Provide outreach to community members, including newer residents, landowners, and students, on ways to protect water quality [SHI 13] and biodiversity on privately-owned land, cost-share programs, and stewardship opportunities available in the county. [SHI 14]
3.4	Reduce impacts on groundwater and water supplies from private septic systems by incentivizing connections to the public sanitary sewer system for properties in the Development Areas that are on private septic systems, such as through the Albemarle Septic to Sewer Program.
3.5	Protect and enhance the recharge of groundwater recharge through promoting programs that implement forest protection and re-forestation, such as the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant Program.

OBJECTIVE	ES 4. *Protect and restore critical habitats for biodiversity and ecosystem health – including a network of large and well-connected native habitat blocks, priority areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Mountain Protection Areas, forested habitat corridors, and riparian buffers – and protect and improve dark-sky conditions.*
ACTION	
4.1	Update the Biodiversity Action Plan to: • Focus the revised plan on prioritized actions for protection and restoration of landscape patterns that improve native biodiversity. • Incorporate the most up-to-date information on biodiversity in the county and partner with community science groups, state departments and agencies, and organizations to help gather data. • Develop indicators for tracking the state of biodiversity in the county. Once developed, regularly maintain and update indicators and data. • Provide a more specific map of priority habitat cores, patches, and corridors for protection. • Use available data to document occurrences of rare habitat types and species in the county. • Integrate the Biodiversity Action Plan GIS spatial data into the publicly available County GIS.
4.2	Use conservation easements and other land-conservation tools to: • Protect core forest habitats and important sites (including those areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan), priority biodiversity areas, and the Mountain Protection Areas. • Increase carbon sequestration by protecting, expanding, and improving forest and grassland vegetation areas. • Protect wildlife corridors (including any corridors identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan or the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan) and prevent creation of potential barriers to wildlife movement. • Protect the forest cover on steep slopes. • Prioritize important habitats as avoidance areas for permitted development, utility and energy projects, and transportation improvements in the Rural Area.
4.3	Improve the templates of County and Albemarle County Easement Authority (ACEA)-held easements to address the appropriate management of important habitat areas.
4.4	Use and model best practices on public lands, including: • Develop a management plan for the removal of invasive plants on County public lands. • Protect, increase, and restore habitat areas in County parks and on other County-owned land. • Continue to integrate LID and green infrastructure into new County facilities and parks and retrofit LID and green infrastructure into existing County facilities and parks. Develop and install interpretive devices at LID and green infrastructure locations to inform and educate community members and visitors. • Develop and install interpretive devices at LID and green infrastructure locations to inform and educate community members and visitors.

4.5	Increase County outreach to new and existing landowners on habitat protection and options for land management techniques that support native biodiversity and water quality. Assist landowners with acquiring grants and other financial and informational support to protect core habitats and important sites identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan.
4.6	Collaborate with local partner organizations and property owners on education programs to address invasive plant removal and native plant restoration.
4.7	Revise the County's lighting ordinance requirements to minimize the impacts of lighting on the health of animals, plants, and humans; to provide safe lighting for multimodal transportation options; and to protect and enhance dark skies using best practices such as recommendations from Dark Sky International, the Illuminating Engineering Society, and the DesignLights Consortium LUNA Program. Collaborate with the City of Charlottesville, the University of Virginia, and local authorities where possible to limit the effects of lighting spillover.
4.8	Establish an education program to promote dark sky best practices and awareness of lighting requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. Increase County outreach to existing and new landowners on habitat protection and options for permanent land conservation and land management techniques that protect native biodiversity and water quality.
4.9	Increase County outreach to existing and new landowners on habitat protection and options for permanent land conservation and land management techniques that protect native biodiversity and water quality.
OBJECTIVE	**ES 5.** ***Remove barriers to wildlife movement and improve habitat connectivity.***
ACTION	
5.1.	Identify and map barriers to the safe movement of wildlife along wildlife corridors and to stream-habitat connectivity (including dams and culverts).
5.2.	Require new stream crossings to use bridge or culvert designs that maintain connectivity for aquatic wildlife and organisms.
5.3	Pursue dam removal (in accordance with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Dam Safety Regulations), culvert replacement, fish-passage structures at dams, and other measures to replace barriers with passages viable for fish and other aquatic species that are consistent with flood control and stormwater management best practices.
5.4	Work with relevant state agencies to mitigate wildlife-movement barriers and reconnect interrupted corridors with voluntary private landowner participation. These efforts include collaborating with VDOT to build wildlife crossings, partnering with the Virginia Wildlife Corridors Collaborative to build additional crossings in the county, and collaborating with the Highway Research Council on wildlife impacts, evaluation, and protective measures.

OBJECTIVE	ES 6. *Increase the community's capacity to prepare for and recover from natural and man-made hazards and the impacts of climate change, including excessive heat, drought, flooding, and wildfires.*
ACTION	
6.1.	Pair Comprehensive Plan implementation with implementation of priority recommendations from the County's Climate Action Plan and Climate Resilience Plan (Resilient Together).
6.2	Implement the recommendations of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan within the broader Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.
6.3	Develop a countywide Flood Resilience Plan to assess flood risk and identify and implement projects, activities, and processes to mitigate the most consequential risks.
6.4	Recognizing the large number of Virginia-regulated dams in Albemarle County and the lack of information known about most of these dams, engage in emergency preparedness planning related to public and private dams.
6.5	Provide more education to private owners of dams regarding best management practices for operation and maintenance activities.
6.6	Ensure that public and private stormwater management and flood control infrastructure is properly maintained to protect public safety, property, and the environment.
6.7	Ensure that private stormwater management facilities continue to perform as intended through a program incorporating inspections, owner engagement, and enforcement.
6.8	Explore participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to improve the effectiveness of floodplain management programs and reduce the risk of flood damage.
6.9	Assess the feasibility and costs/benefits of establishing a fire hazard risk overlay.
6.10	Collaborate with local and state partners to implement wildland fire prevention strategies, including community outreach/education, vegetation management, land use planning and development, and emergency preparedness. Refer to best practices, including those from Fire Adapt and FireWise.
6.11	Work with private property owners to establish more dry hydrants across the county.
6.12	Identify and promote potential sustainable and resilient technologies for construction, including fire-resistant materials and design during the legislative review and development review process.

6.13	Use an urban tree canopy analysis to identify priority areas for tree planting and preservation in the Development Areas to decrease urban heat island effects.
6.14	Pursue federal funding opportunities for nature-based solutions to increase community resilience, including through FEMA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and/or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
6.15	Increase community drought resilience by implementing relevant strategies and projects in the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, in collaboration with the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) and the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA).
6.16	Collaborate with ACSA and RWSA to develop equitable water restriction policies to be implemented in the event of a major drought.
OBJECTIVE	**ES 7.** ***Reduce the community's contributions to global climate change by emitting net zero greenhouse gases.***
ACTION	
7.1	As part of the Comprehensive Plan annual report, track and report climate action activities and the County's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory.
7.2	Update County climate-oriented regulations as appropriate.
7.3	Achieve appropriate community-scale climate-smart certifications as appropriate (e.g., Charging Smart, SolSmart).
7.4	Work toward climate action goals as outlined in the Climate Action Plan, to reduce transportation and agricultural emissions and eliminate emissions from waste. Offset remaining transportation emissions by increasing carbon sequestration in protected landscapes.
OBJECTIVE	**ES 8.** ***Reduce per capita energy use while increasing energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy use.***
ACTION	
8.1	Through investments, incentives, and regulation, as well as support for community organizations that serve households with high energy burden, pursue electrification of all fossil fuel appliances.
8.2	Through investments in distributed, community-scale, and utility-scale renewable energy facilities that incorporate best practices for biodiversity, water quality, and equitable access to clean energy, develop local renewable energy generation.

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AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE

GOAL: *Albemarle County will have a connected and accessible network of parks and green ways with both active and passive recreation opportunities to improve quality of life, offer active modes of transportation, enhance climate resiliency, and provide access to nature. Parks, trails, and amenities will be welcoming and inclusive and meet the needs of the growing community.*

Objective 1: Plan for the parks and recreation needs of current and future community members through a planning process that is equitable, inclusive, and responsive to existing and emerging needs.

Objective 2: Increase and accelerate the development of parks, green ways and blueways with an emphasis on parks, and green ways in the Development Areas, to increase the percentage of community members in the Development Areas who are within a quarter-mile of a public park and/or public greenway trail.

Objective 3: Increase access to County parks and trails with an emphasis on inclusion, equity, and universal access, and public safety.

Objective 4: Increase the environmental resilience of County parks and green ways while restoring the health of the natural environment.

Objective 5: Expand and improve the trail networks and blueways in County parks and green ways and increase multimodal connections to parks and greenway trails.

Objective 6: Increase the availability and accessibility of recreation programs, classes, and facilities, including athletic fields.

Objective 7: Explore creative ways to fill funding gaps for parks and green ways infrastructure.



Patricia Anne Byrom Park.



Darden Towe Park.

INTRODUCTION

Albemarle County is known for its natural beauty and sweeping mountain views, with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the north and west, the James River in the south and east, and the rolling Piedmont landscape of forests and farms in between. Community members value outdoor recreation and enjoy spending time in nature. The County's public parks, recreation, and open-space system includes a variety of features and amenities, such as managed parks, greenways, blueways, community centers, nature preserves, and athletic fields. These community assets provide access to nature, support active lifestyles and public health, and preserve the environment. The County's managed parks offer athletic facilities for organized sports, playgrounds, and opportunities to spend time in natural areas. Greenways provide multimodal transportation opportunities, connections to key destinations, and habitat for terrestrial species. Blueways (or water trails) provide access to streams, rivers, and other waterways for boating and paddling along with habitats for aquatic species. Blueways also protect natural areas such as steep slopes and vegetated stream buffers.

Albemarle County's parkland is a major element of the community's 'green systems' that connect important environmental features such as forested hillsides, streams, and riparian corridors. This same green space preserves valuable environmental assets, such as wildlife habitat, tree canopies that sequester carbon and provide shade, and stream buffers that result in reduced erosion and sedimentation and improved water quality. The County's current and future parkland preserves natural landscapes and scenic beauty, elevating both the Development Areas and Rural Area by making them more attractive places to live, work, and visit.



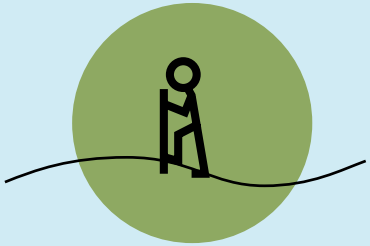
Parks and nature areas like Ivy Creek Natural Area provide opportunities to educate the public about local history and the natural environment.



Facilities such as this playground at Woodbrook Elementary School provide opportunities for public recreation access.

Albemarle County Parks and Recreation Department Mission

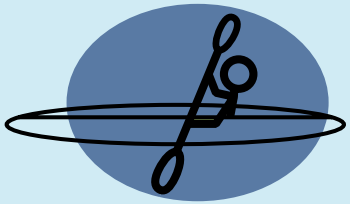
Provide a unique system of parks, trails, and recreational experiences, while being superior stewards of the natural environment.



Greenways

Are linear natural open spaces areas that typically contain public access trails. For example, Old Mills Trail provides approximately 2.5 miles of trail along the Rivanna River.

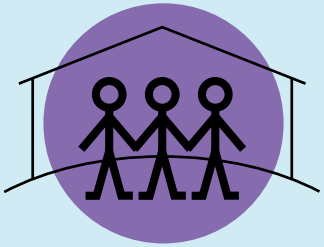




Blueways

Are water trails with river access points, signage, and related amenities for water recreation such as Brook Hill River Park that provides access to an additional 6 miles of Rivanna River.

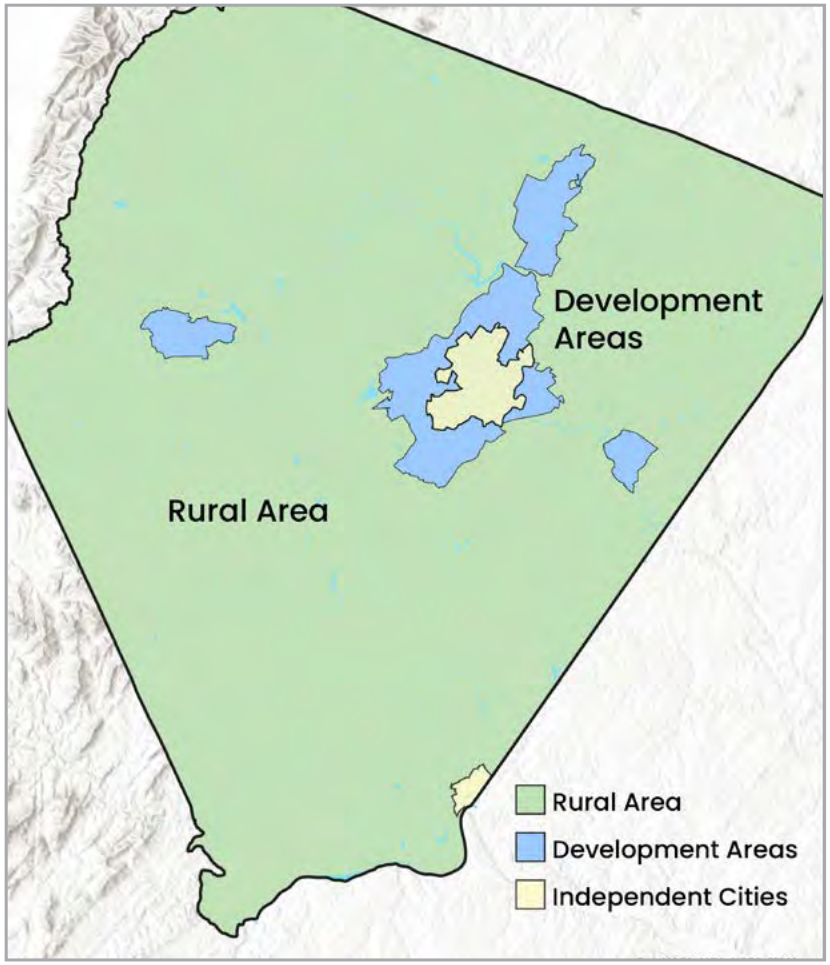




Community Centers

Are buildings and associated outdoor areas offering indoor recreation, classes, and special events.





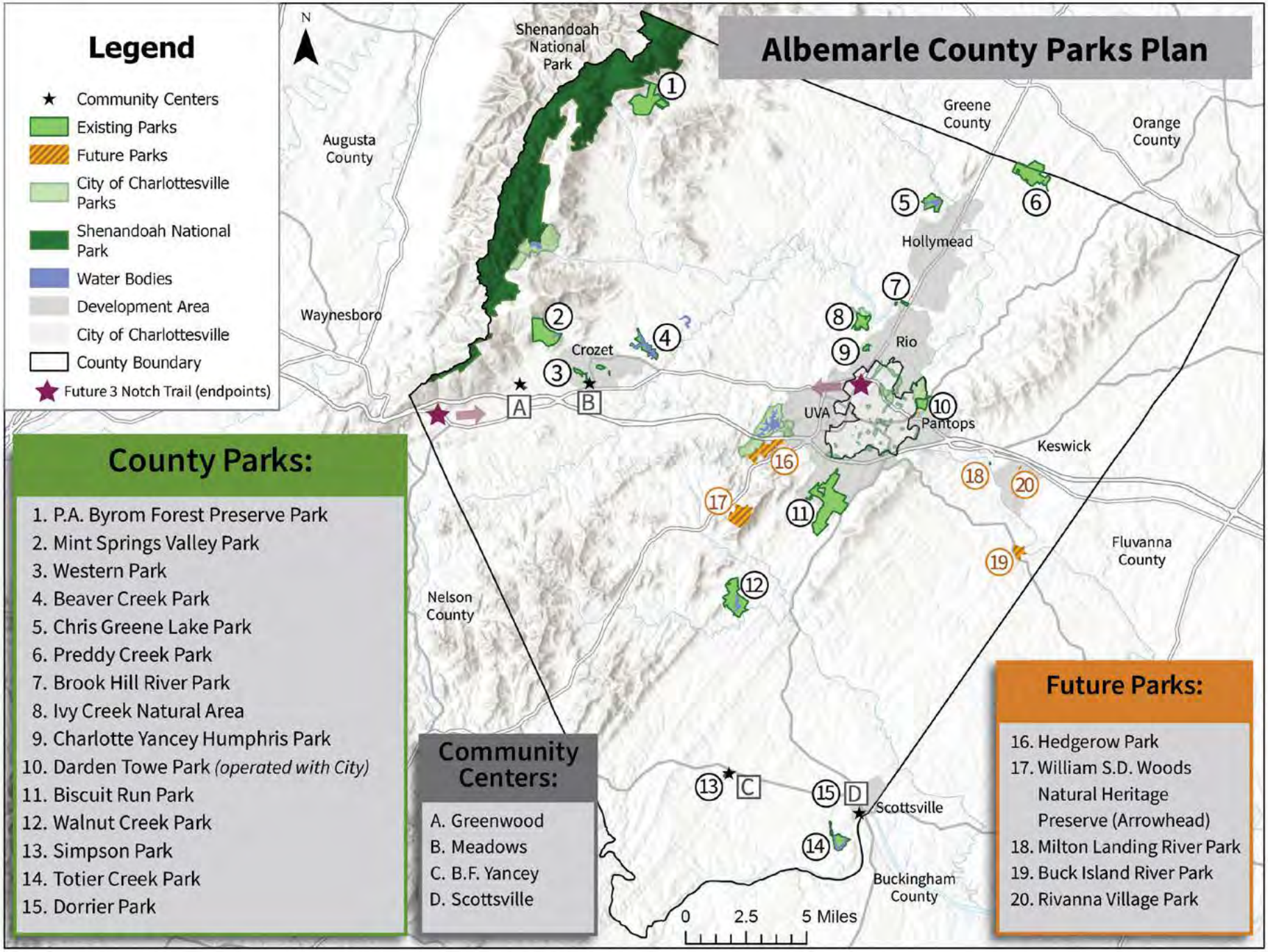
Parks in the Development Areas are typically smaller than the parks in the Rural Area.

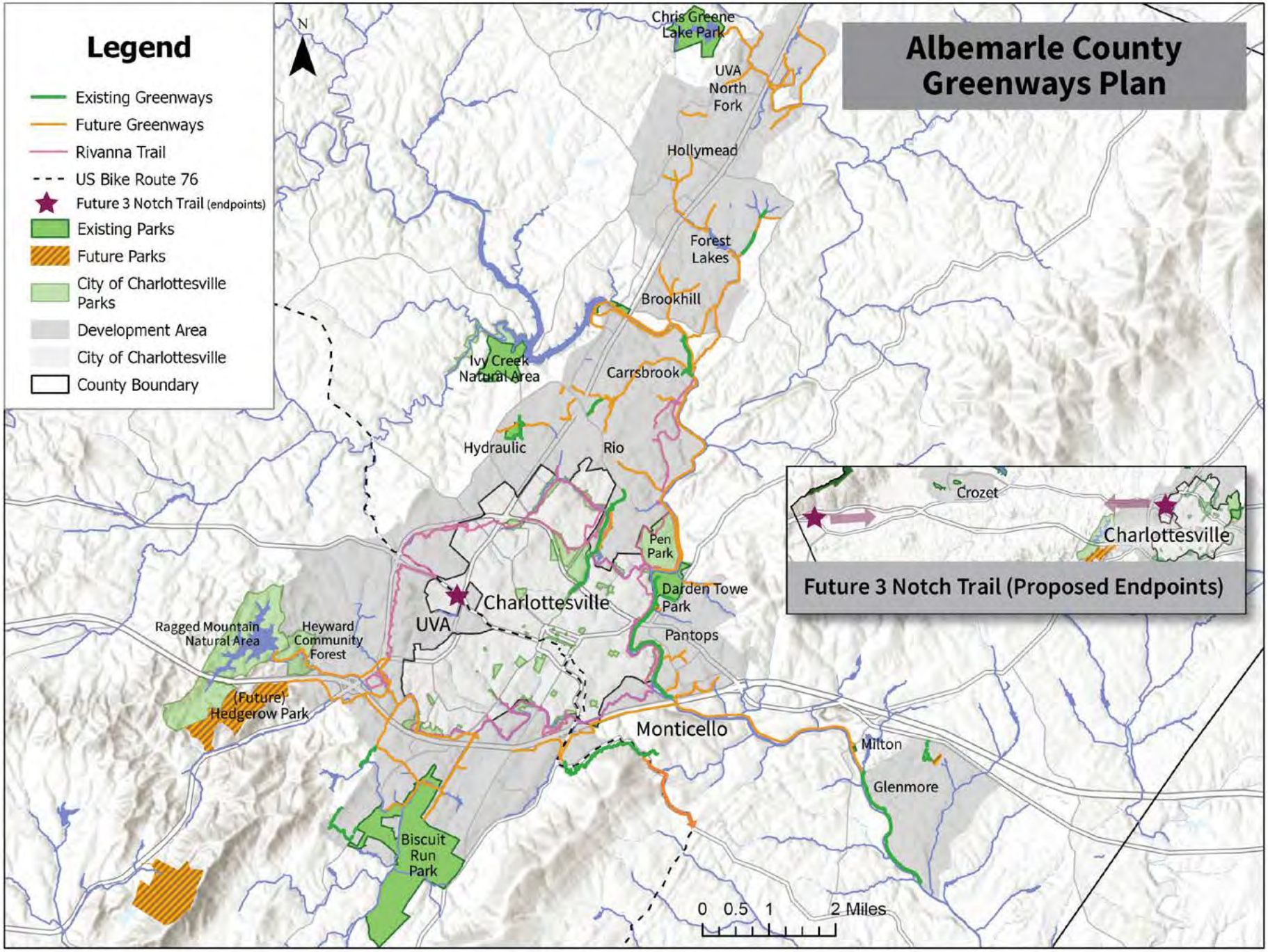
Parks in the Rural Area typically have different amenities and features than parks in the Development Areas. Rural Area parks are primarily intended as recreation opportunities with scenic and natural resources, such as mountains, streams, and forests. These parks are usually geared toward hiking, biking, paddling, fishing, and equestrian uses (where appropriate). In the Development Areas, park sizes tend to be smaller and have amenities such as playgrounds and passive recreation facilities such as benches, pavilions, and walking trails. Parks in the Development Areas should also incorporate walkable connections to nearby neighborhoods. While many of the actions in this chapter apply across the county, some actions are specific to the Development Areas or the Rural Area.

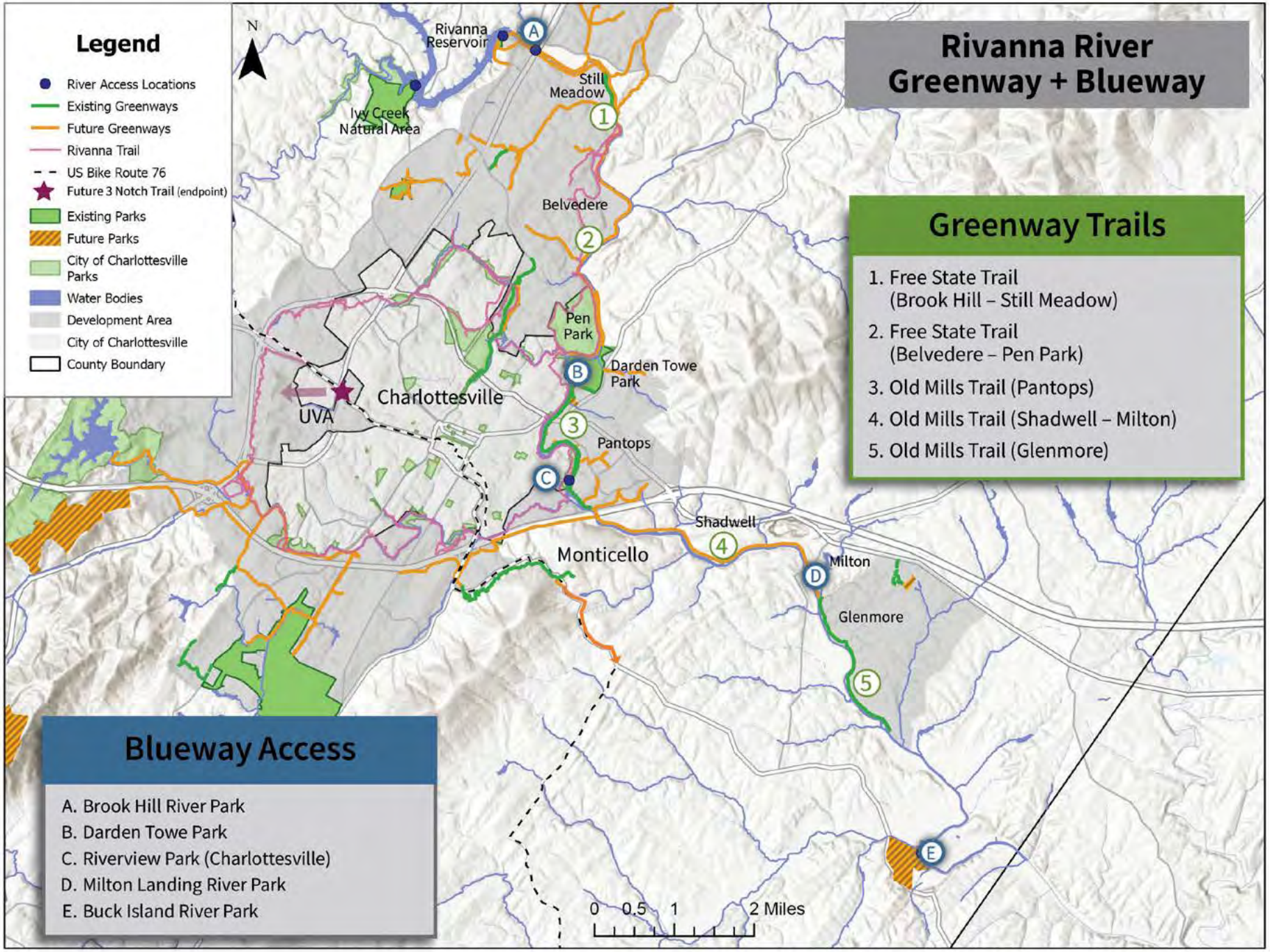
The County's varied park types provide a range of amenities and experiences. Examples include regional parks (such as Darden Towe Park, Mint Springs Valley Park, Walnut Creek Park, Chris Green Lake Park, and Biscuit Run Park), neighborhood parks (such as Charlotte Yancey Humphris Park and Western Park), trail parks (such as Preddy Creek Park and Patricia Ann Byrom Forest Preserve and Park), reservoirs (such as Beaver Creek and Totier Creek), and greenways (such as the Old Mills Trail and the Crozet Connector).

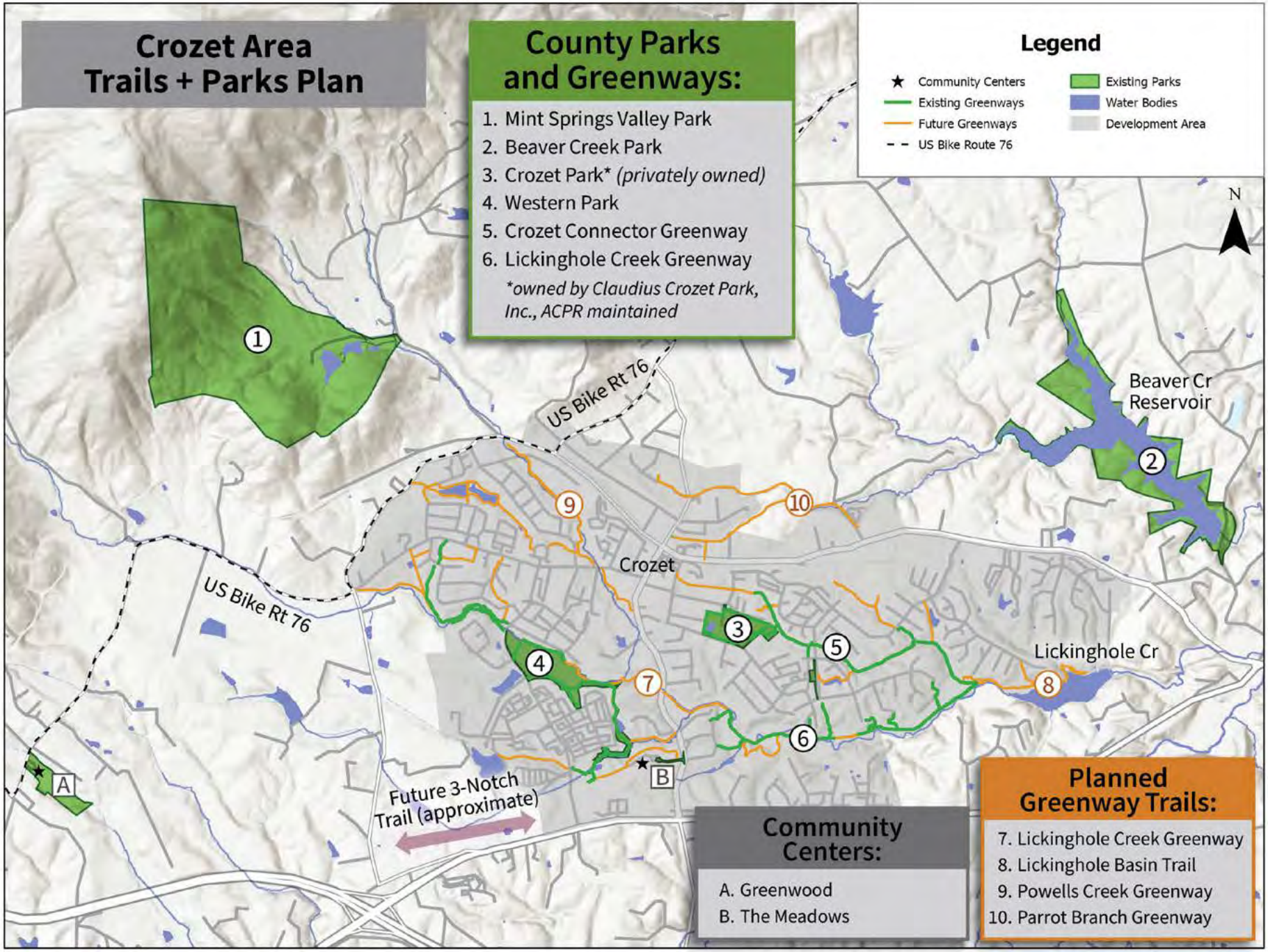


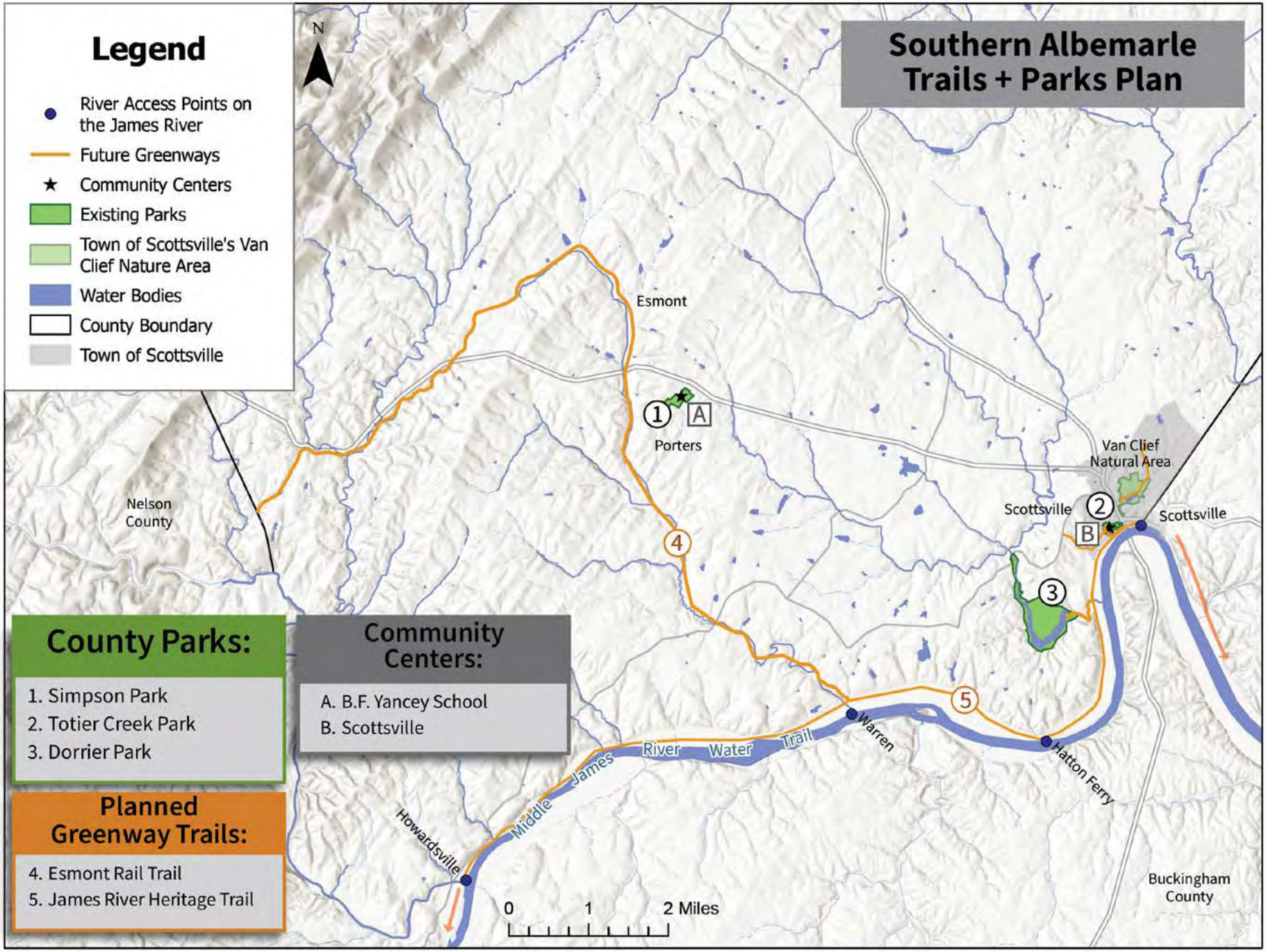
Chris Greene Lake Park.


Albemarle County Parks Plan
Legend
Community Centers
Existing Parks
Future Parks
City of Charlottesville Parks
Shenandoah National Park
Water Bodies
Development Area
City of Charlottesville
County Boundary
Future 3 Notch Trail (endpoints)
N
Shenandoah National Park
Augusta County
Greene County
Orange County
Hollymead
Waynesboro
Crozet
Rio
UVA
Pantops
Keswick
Fluvanna County
Nelson County
Scottsville
Buckingham County
0 2.5 5 Miles
County Parks:
1. P.A. Byrom Forest Preserve Park
2. Mint Springs Valley Park
3. Western Park
4. Beaver Creek Park
5. Chris Greene Lake Park
6. Preddy Creek Park
7. Brook Hill River Park
8. Ivy Creek Natural Area
9. Charlotte Yancey Humphris Park
10. Darden Towe Park (operated with City)
11. Biscuit Run Park
12. Walnut Creek Park
13. Simpson Park
14. Totier Creek Park
15. Dorrier Park
Community Centers:
A. Greenwood
B. Meadows
C. B.F. Yancey
D. Scottsville
Future Parks:
16. Hedgerow Park
17. William S.D. Woods Natural Heritage Preserve (Arrowhead)
18. Milton Landing River Park
19. Buck Island River Park
20. Rivanna Village Park


Albemarle County Greenways Plan
Legend
Existing Greenways
Future Greenways
Rivanna Trail
US Bike Route 76
Future 3 Notch Trail (endpoints)
Existing Parks
Future Parks
City of Charlottesville Parks
Development Area
City of Charlottesville
County Boundary
N
Chris Greene Lake Park
UVA North Fork
Hollymead
Forest Lakes
Brookhill
Carrsbrook
Ivy Creek Natural Area
Hydraulic
Rio
Pen Park
Darden Towe Park
Pantops
Charlottesville
UVA
Ragged Mountain Natural Area
Heyward Community Forest
(Future) Hedgerow Park
Monticello
Milton
Glenmore
Biscuit Run Park
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
Crozet
Charlottesville
Future 3 Notch Trail (Proposed Endpoints)


Legend
River Access Locations
Existing Greenways
Future Greenways
Rivanna Trail
US Bike Route 76
Future 3 Notch Trail (endpoint)
Existing Parks
Future Parks
City of Charlottesville Parks
Water Bodies
Development Area
City of Charlottesville
County Boundary
N
Rivanna River Greenway + Blueway
Rivanna Reservoir
Ivy Creek Natural Area
Still Meadow
Belvedere
Pen Park
Darden Towe Park
Charlottesville
UVA
Pantops
Monticello
Shadwell
Milton
Glenmore
Greenway Trails
1. Free State Trail (Brook Hill – Still Meadow)
2. Free State Trail (Belvedere – Pen Park)
3. Old Mills Trail (Pantops)
4. Old Mills Trail (Shadwell – Milton)
5. Old Mills Trail (Glenmore)
Blueway Access
A. Brook Hill River Park
B. Darden Towe Park
C. Riverview Park (Charlottesville)
D. Milton Landing River Park
E. Buck Island River Park
0 0.5 1 2 Miles


Crozet Area
Trails + Parks Plan
County Parks and Greenways:
1. Mint Springs Valley Park
2. Beaver Creek Park
3. Crozet Park* (privately owned)
4. Western Park
5. Crozet Connector Greenway
6. Lickinghole Creek Greenway
*owned by Claudius Crozet Park, Inc., ACPR maintained
Legend
Community Centers
Existing Greenways
Future Greenways
US Bike Route 76
Existing Parks
Water Bodies
Development Area
N
US Bike Rt 76
US Bike Rt 76
Beaver Cr Reservoir
Crozet
Lickinghole Cr
Future 3-Notch Trail (approximate)
Community Centers:
A. Greenwood
B. The Meadows
Planned Greenway Trails:
7. Lickinghole Creek Greenway
8. Lickinghole Basin Trail
9. Powells Creek Greenway
10. Parrot Branch Greenway

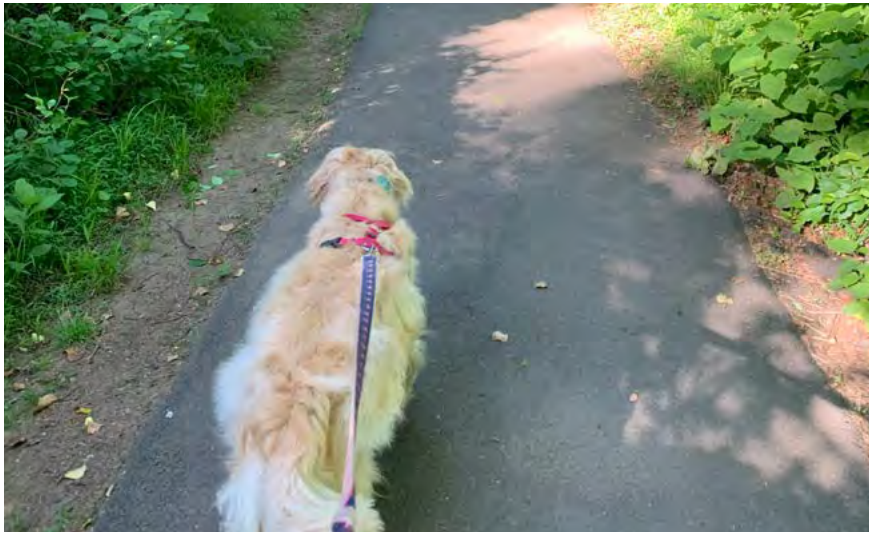

Legend
River Access Points on the James River
Future Greenways
Community Centers
Existing Parks
Town of Scottsville's Van Clief Nature Area
Water Bodies
County Boundary
Town of Scottsville
N
Southern Albemarle Trails + Parks Plan
Esmont
Porters
Nelson County
Van Clief Natural Area
Scottsville
Scottsville
Warren
Hatton Ferry
Howardsville
Buckingham County
James River Water Trail
Middle
0 1 2 Miles
County Parks:
1. Simpson Park
2. Totier Creek Park
3. Dorrier Park
Community Centers:
A. B.F. Yancey School
B. Scottsville
Planned Greenway Trails:
4. Esmont Rail Trail
5. James River Heritage Trail

Parks & Facilities (Existing)	Type	Size	Location*	Eq. Trails	Mtn. Bk. Trails	Accessible by Transit
Beaver Creek Park	Reservoir	183 acres	RA (White Hall District)	N	N	N
B.F. Yancey School Center	Community Center	7 acres	RA (Samuel Miller District)	N	N	N
Biscuit Run Park	Regional Park	1,190 acres	DA & RA (Samuel Miller & Scottsville Districts)	N	Y	N
Brook Hill River Park	River Park	20 acres	DA (Rio District)	N	N	N
P. A. Byrom Forest Preserve/Park	District Park	680 acres	RA (White Hall District)	Y	Y	N
Charlotte Humphris Park	Neighborhood/Trails Park	26 acres	DA (Rio District)	N	N	Y
Chris Greene Lake Park	Regional Park	151 acres	RA (White Hall District)	N	Y	N
Crozet Park	Community Park	25 acres	DA (White Hall District)	N	N	N
Darden Towe Park	Regional Park	114 acres	DA (Rivanna District)	N	N	Y
Dorrier Park	Neighborhood Park	3 acres	Town of Scottsville	N	N	N
Greenwood Community Center	Community Center	18 acres	RA (White Hall District)	N	N	N
Ivy Creek Natural Area	Natural Area/Trails Park	219 acres	RA (Jack Jouett District)	N	N	N
The Meadows	Community Center	1 acre	DA (White Hall District)	N	N	N
Mint Springs Valley Park	Regional Park	634 acres	RA (White Hall District)	N	Y	N
Preddy Creek Trail Park	Trails Park	571 acres	RA (Rivanna District)	Y	Y	N
Scottsville Community Center	Community Center	7 acres	Town of Scottsville	N	N	N
Simpson Park	District Park	14 acres	RA (Samuel Miller District)	N	N	N
Totier Creek Park	Reservoir	209 acres	RA (Scottsville District)	N	N	N
Walnut Creek Park	Regional Park	518 acres	RA (Samuel Miller District)	N	Y	N
Western Park	Neighborhood Park	36 acres	DA (White Hall District)	N	N	N
	Total:	4,626 acres				

** Location noted by Rural Area (RA), Development Areas (DA) and magisterial district.*

Existing Greenway Trails	Length	Location	Notes
Crozet Connector Greenway	1.4 mi.	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails Greenway System; partially complete
Glenmore Trail	2.2 mi.	DA (Scottsville District)	Part of planned Rivanna Greenway + Blueway (currently no public access/use, located in gated community)
Lickinghole Creek Greenway	2 mi.	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails Greenway System; partially complete
Old Mills Trail	2.5 mi.	DA (Rivanna District)	Part of planned Rivanna Greenway + Blueway (to be extended downstream to Milton Landing)
Old Trail Green ways	2.4 mi.	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails Greenway System; Western Park, partially complete
Rivanna Trail (managed by the nonprofit Rivanna Trail Foundation)	21 mi.	DA (Samuel Miller and Rio Districts)	Moores Creek section; Old Ivy section; River North spur
Still Meadow Trail	1.8 mi.	DA (Places 29)	Part of planned Rivanna Greenway + Blueway (future Free State/River North section; limited access)
Total:	33.3 mi.		





Greenway trails accommodate a wide variety of users and often provide access to linear green spaces and nature areas.

Planned Future Greenway Trails	Length	Location	Notes
Biscuit Run Connector Greenway	2 mi.	DA (Scottsville District)	Planned greenway trail connecting Biscuit Run Park with 5th Street Station and Rivanna Trail to N, and Southwood to SW
Crozet Connector Greenway	Est. 2 mi. (TBD)	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails Greenway System (future section: The Square to Lickinghole Creek Basin)
Esmont Rail-Trail	6.3 mi.	RA (Scottsville District and Samuel Miller District)	Potential future trail on CSX properties: Esmont to Boiling Spring or Warren Ferry (Friends of Esmont)
Free State / River North Trail	Est. 4.5 mi. (TBD)	DA (Rio District)	Portion of Rivanna Greenway + Blueway (future section: Brook Hill River Park to Darden Towe Park)
James River Heritage Trail	TBD	RA (Scottsville District and Samuel Miller District)	Local segment from Scottsville to Howardsville (Virginia Outdoors Plan)
Lickinghole Creek Greenway	Est. 3.5 mi. (TBD)	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails/Greenway System (future section: Lickinghole Creek Basin to Western Park)
Meadow Creek Greenway	Est. 3 mi. (TBD)	DA (Rio District)	Between (future) Rio Point Trailhead Park in Places 29 DA and Rivanna Trail in Pen Park along Rivanna River (overlaps portion of Rivanna Trail)
North Fork Rivanna Greenway	Est. 3.5 mi. (TBD)	DA (Rio District)	Greenway trails along N Fork Rivanna River (between Chris Greene Lake Park, UVA N Fork Discovery Center, and North Pointe)
Old Mills Trail (Shadwell-Milton Extension)	4 mi.	DA & RA (Rivanna and Scottsville District)	Portion of Rivanna Greenway + Blueway (future section: Pantops to Milton Landing)
Powell Creek Greenway	Est. 3 mi. (TBD)	DA (Rio District)	Greenway trail between Forest Lakes N and S Fork Rivanna River
Powells Creek Greenway	Est. 2 mi. (TBD)	DA (White Hall District)	Crozet Trails Greenway System (future section to Mint Springs Valley Park; partially on-road)
Ragged Mountains Connector Trail	TBD	DA and RA (Samuel Miller District)	Potential future trail connection(s): Ragged Mountain Reservoir to Heyward Community Forest, and Hedgerow property
Three Notched Trail	TBD	County-wide/TBD (Multiple Magisterial Districts)	Proposed future trail connecting: Charlottesville W to Crozet/ Rockfish Gap and Charlottesville E toward Richmond
Total:	Est. 33.8 mi.		

Future Use Properties*	Size	Location	Notes
Biscuit Run Trailhead Park	8 acres (total)	DA (Samuel Miller District)	Proffered parkland to be dedicated to public use
Buck Island Creek	122 acres	RA (Scottsville District)	Conservation easement restrictions
Dabney's Grove	TBD	DA (Rio District)	Proffered parkland and recreation amenities to be developed privately and dedicated to public use
Hedgerow	340 acres	RA (Samuel Miller District)	Conservation easement restrictions
Milton Landing River Park	20 acres	RA (Scottsville District)	Currently 2 acres; to acquire approximately 18 more acres from The Clifton (SP2021-04)
Powell Ridge Property	27 acres	DA (Rio District)	
Rivanna Village Park	19 acres	DA (Rivanna District)	Proffered parkland and recreation amenities to be developed privately and dedicated to the County for public use
Rio Point Trailhead Park	1 acre	DA (Rio District)	Proffered parkland and recreation amenities to o be developed privately and dedicated to the County for public use
Riverside Village/Free Bridge Lane Park	8 acres	DA (Rivanna District)	Park master plan completed in 2020
William S.D. Woods Nature Preserve at Arrowhead Farm	410 acres	RA (Samuel Miller District)	Deed restrictions
Total:	955 acres		

** Undeveloped properties intended for future parks and recreational uses.*





Parks, trails, community centers, and other recreation facilities provide important gathering spaces, which include community events.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Parks, trails, and community centers provide important public gathering spaces. They are a cost-free opportunity to recreate, to connect with nature, and to gather with family, friends, and other social groups. These gathering spaces create a space for good-natured, informal conversations, to build relationships and empathy for others, and offer opportunities for increased social connection. Maintaining and enhancing equitable public access to these important community-building spaces that do not require admission fees or retail purchases is a community priority. Parkland provides an opportunity to increase multi-cultural and historic awareness. Interpretative signage and other physical and digital media can educate visitors about Albemarle County's cultural heritage, including especially less frequently known histories.

The County's parks and trails system should be welcoming and accessible for all community members and visitors. For example, community input highlighted the need for more facilities and programs for teenagers in the community. Designing parks and amenities for a variety of users and experience ensures that there are a variety of ways to recreate, play, and connect with nature and with one another. Universal access to parks means designing spaces to be usable and inclusive for all, regardless of age, ability, or mobility. Accessibility provides greater opportunities for recreation and social gathering, including for a person using a wheelchair, a parent pushing a stroller, a person using crutches, or a person with arthritis. To support these needs, this chapter recommends improving universal access to parks and trails, including ADA-accessible trails and facilities and improving transit access.

INTEGRATING WITH TRANSPORTATION

To meet the strategic need for improved, expanded access to bicycle and pedestrian connections, parks and greenways planning will integrate closely with multi-modal transportation planning. This collaboration will be necessary to address the existing and growing need to increase the total miles of greenway trails and shared-use paths that provide safe, convenient connections to parks and other strategic destinations. Trails and greenways of all types provide opportunities for recreation and access to nature. Those that are improved to a higher standard, such as a shared use path, can provide important linkages in the multimodal transportation network and offer options to commute to work and school or to run errands. Trail systems can connect community members and visitors to Activity Centers, employment centers, parks, schools, and other key destinations, providing an alternative to driving. To enhance connectivity and meet community demand, recommendations in this chapter include increasing miles of trail, accelerating the funding, development, and delivery of greenways and blueways infrastructure and amenities, and actively coordinating with the public and private sectors on development and transportation projects.

RESTORING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Parks and trails are an opportunity to showcase, protect, and restore the local natural environment, while increasing community resilience and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Mature native forests found in our parklands improve air quality, mitigate urban heat island effects, provide stormwater management functions, and reduce flood impacts. Since parkland is publicly owned and maintained, local public parks are a great opportunity for the County to demonstrate environmentally sustainable practices. These practices may include managing and removing invasive species, using native plants and trees, careful siting of trails, protecting and restoring stream banks, and designating 'no mow zones'. There are also many opportunities for community members to get involved through partnerships and volunteering. Additional recommendations are included in the Environmental Stewardship chapter of this Plan.



Free Bridge Lane Greenway Promenade "Grand Closing" community event to begin a 12-month pilot project for a new auto-free riverfront park space along the Rivanna River at Darden Towe Park.



Creekside Trail along Lickinghole Creek in Crozet.



River corridors and adjacent floodplain areas may also serve as greenway corridors. Shown: Rivanna River, Pantops area.

TOURISM & RECREATION

The natural and scenic beauty of Albemarle County and the surrounding region draws visitors from across the Commonwealth, the country, and abroad. Community members also enjoy the region's parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities for walking, hiking, riding, running, biking, kayaking, canoeing, nature photography, and birdwatching. Residents and visitors also participate in a variety of recreation events such as running and biking races. When people explore the county's mountains and waterways, they also visit local businesses and events with artisans and crafters. The tourism sector has a $1.3 billion economic impact on the regional economy each year, with more than half of direct visitor spending occurring in county lodging, dining, destination, and recreation locations. Recreation is a significant economic driver for tourism, local businesses, and attracting new members of the workforce.

Continued regional collaboration and local investment in the area's recreational amenities are key. Each year, about 1.4 million people visit Shenandoah National Park, which is partially in the County. There are also around 16.7 million visitors annually at the Blue Ridge Parkway, which has an entrance just outside of the county in Nelson County. It is the most visited National Park in the United States.

The Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau (CACVB) Master Plan recommends two focus areas based on a thorough planning process and stakeholder input, which align with the CACVB vision to enhance the region as a top destination and improve residents' quality of life. The focus areas are infrastructure and industry advancement. Infrastructure includes trails and transportation, with collaboration among the County, the City of Charlottesville, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and local businesses. Outdoor recreation is included in the industries to be promoted.



Virginia's Watchable Wildlife Program promotes wildlife viewing opportunities and habitat conservation across the Commonwealth through designated viewing sites, education resources, and partnerships with communities. The program identifies and promotes locations where residents and visitors can observe native wildlife in their natural habitats, supporting conservation education and nature-based tourism. Image credit: Scott Clark

O Floodable Park + Greenway



DESCRIPTION

The County owns a 1-acre stormwater management facility south of Northside Library. The existing facility is an overgrown dry pond that is in need of improvements. The facility should be redesigned as a "floodable park" that can function as both an amenity space and a stormwater treatment facility. Since this area is prone to flooding, it should be designed to accommodate and treat stormwater runoff, but during times of dry weather, the property can serve as a park space. The floodable park should be connected to Library Plaza and to adjacent developments via a greenway trail.

Phase 2 will include the development and construction of the facilities identified in Phase 1.

Timing Future (dependent upon adjacent development)

Cost $2,660,500

Funding Albemarle CIP; Private Development

This project supports the vision for **Conservation**.

PRECEDENTS





Water Square Benthemplein Rotterdam, Netherlands

AREA PLANS

Each of the County's five Area Plans and one Small Area Plan (Rio29) includes more detailed recommendations for parks, trails, open space, and environmental stewardship. Area planning allows for more detailed study of individual Development Areas or neighborhoods within Development Areas. The Area Plans identify implementation projects and actions specific to each study area, such as future parks, new trail connections, and environmental restoration projects. While many projects will be completed by the County, others will be led by developers or as public-private partnerships.

The adjacent example is from the Rio29 Small Area Plan. It shows a future floodable park and greenway concept for County-owned land. This concept could be achieved through a public-private partnership. The County will also conduct more detailed analyses with the future County-wide Parks & Recreation Master Plan and with individual park master plans specific to each county park.



Simpson Park, Esmont area.



Welcome kiosk at Biscuit Run Park, which opened to the public in 2024.

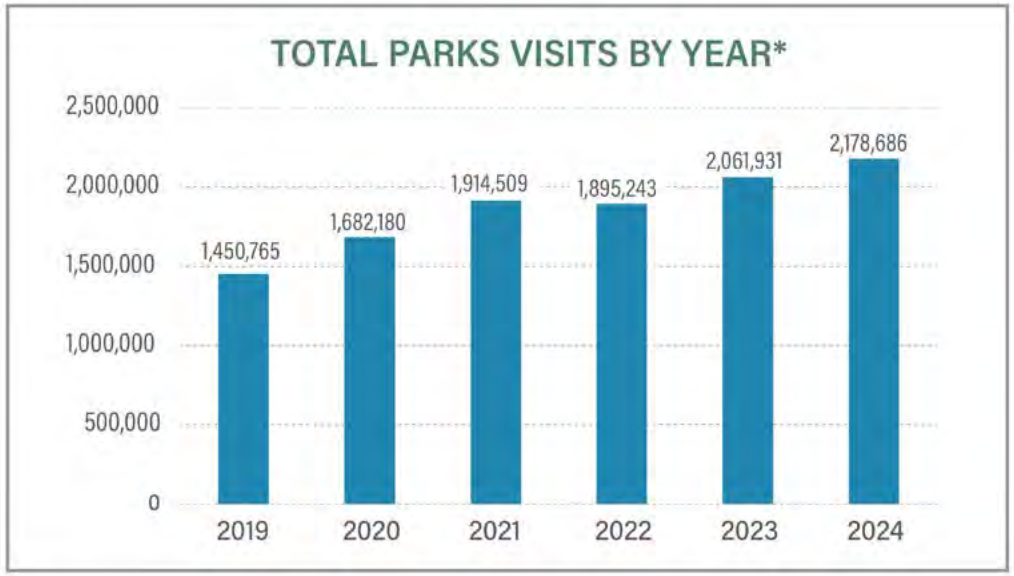
PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

According to the U.S. Census, Albemarle County's population grew 13.6% from 2010 (98,970 people) to 2020 (112,395 people). The county's population is expected to increase further by about 31,000 people by 2044. These trends and projections equate to increasing demand for the County's park facilities and recreational programs, especially in the Development Areas. The growing demand and use are partially reflected through the park visitation data that Albemarle County Parks & Recreation (ACPR) staff have collected at most County parks and facilities.

To meet increasing demand, ACPR is actively planning, designing, and developing additional parks and other recreation amenities in different areas of the county. Land for parks is currently acquired through the County's Capital Improvement Plan, grants, donations, proffers, and the Albemarle County Parks Foundation. Future county parks will be developed and operated for public access and recreational use when funding and other resources are available. Recently, the Board of Supervisors, the community, several County departments, and VDOT worked together to create the Free Bridge Promenade pilot program by coordinating signage, gates, and public outreach to close Free Bridge Lane to vehicular traffic and allowing pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy the area car-free. This project is one innovative way that the County is meeting the growing demand for safe and accessible trails.

The recommendations in this chapter support accelerating the delivery of County parks, greenways, and other recreational experiences to meet these existing and growing needs. Other key priorities are increasing accessibility to parks and trails for all community members, ensuring park planning and maintenance preserves and restores the natural environment, and integrating trails and greenways with multimodal transportation planning.

Currently, residents and visitors use existing boat launches and river access points at levels that exceed existing capacity and infrastructure. Recommended projects include the implementation of planned enhancements and new amenities for the Rivanna River Greenway and Blueway, the expansion of County greenways and blueways along other waterways, and the provision of more recreation opportunities at lakes and reservoirs. Additionally, the 2018 Albemarle County Parks & Recreation Community Needs Assessment and recent community input highlighted the need for more athletic fields, recreation programs, and equestrian trails. ACPR is initiating a Parks and Open Space Master Planning process to update and further clarify needs and interests. Based on recent trends and current demand, future offerings may include more community events each season (such as Trunk or Treat, dances, and movie nights), and maintaining a summer swim program from Memorial Day through Labor Day, seven days a week, at each of the three designated county parks (Walnut Creek Park, Mint Springs Valley Park, and Chris Greene Lake Park).



** Excludes Charlotte Humphris Park, Dorrier Park, Brook Hill River Park, Milton Landing, Crozet Greenway trails, and the Glenmore section of the Rivanna Greenway trail.*



Chris Greene Lake is one of three county parks offering lake swimming areas open to the public during the summer.



Recommended projects include new boat launch areas on the Rivanna River.

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	PR 1. *Plan for the parks and recreation needs of current and future community members through a planning process that is equitable, inclusive, and responsive to existing and emerging needs.*
ACTION	
1.1	Regularly update the countywide Parks and Recreation Inventory and Needs Assessment.
1.2	Develop County Park individual master plans for each park and update existing County Park Master Plans, with an emphasis on older parks such as Mint Springs Valley Park, Walnut Creek Park, Chris Greene Lake Park, Darden Towe Park, Dorrier Park, and Beaver Creek Reservoir.
1.3	Develop a county-wide Parks, Greenways, and Open Space Master Plan with an emphasis on increasing equitable access and responding to existing and emerging recreation needs. Include an analysis to identify communities with lower access to recreation opportunities and open spaces.
1.4	Develop park management templates to address different-sized parks in the system.
1.5.	Continue and increase efforts to lead parks and greenways planning with local and regional partners.
1.6	Develop a Funding Resources Plan for countywide development, expansion, and enhancement of parks, greenways, community centers,and other recreation amenities and destinations, including strategic planning and resourcing for successful grant program participation.
1.7	Provide public art in County parks through the creation and funding of an arts in public places program featuring local artists.
OBJECTIVE	PR 2. *Increase and accelerate the development of parks, greenways and blueways with an emphasis on parks and greenways in the Development Areas, to increase the percentage of community members in the Development Areas who are within a quarter-mile of a public park and/or public greenway trail.*
ACTION	
2.1	Develop and implement a parks and greenways Land Acquisition Policy and Land Acquisition Fund, with an emphasis on providing equitable and safe access to parks and greenways.
2.2	Expand public private partnerships and increase resources that accelerate the implementation of County parks projects through joint efforts with the Albemarle County Parks Foundation and other partners.
2.3	Evaluate and update recreation and open space requirements for new development, zoning, subdivision, site plan, and other change in land use projects to better provide on-site recreation opportunities and to better contribute to and connect with the county-wide parks and recreation system. Establish a standard, streamlined process to allow alternatives to recreation requirements for residential and mixed-use development.

2.4	Provide additional and equitably distributed public parks and trails in the Development Areas, prioritizing areas that improve safe and convenient walking or biking access to parks/open space and higher density residential areas.
2.5	Collaborate with local partners and VDOT to increase options for walking and biking to existing parks that are next to or near the Development Areas, such as Ivy Creek Natural Area and Historic River View Farm and Monticello.
2.6	Collaborate with local partners and the development community to provide outdoor gathering spaces (such as amphitheaters and plazas) that can also host arts and cultural events.
OBJECTIVE	PR 3.*Increase access to County parks and trails with an emphasis on inclusion, equity, and universal access, and public safety.*
ACTION	
3.1	Complete an Accessibility Assessment and Master Plan to identify universal accessibility conditions and needs at County parks, greenways, blueways, and community centers.
3.2	Continue and increase the phased implementation of universal access enhancements and facilities at existing and future County parks, greenways, and community centers in order to improve and expand accessibility, including providing ADA-accessible trail segments and ADA-compliant recreational amenities near trailheads at all County parks and greenway trailheads, where feasible.
3.3	Expand vehicular access and parking options, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, at parks, greenways, and blueways trailheads and access locations. Where solar panels are provided, optimize placement to provide shade and potential for car charging.
3.4	Continue to collaborate with the Albemarle County School District and the Albemarle County Facilities & Environmental Services Department to enhance the role of current and future public schools in the parks and recreation system, including public access, planning and design of new schools, and the connection of public schools to public parks.
3.5	Increase public transportation access to County parks, as outlined inAC44's Transportation Chapter.
3.6	Provide more recreation facilities and services to reach under-served visitors including teens, seniors, and people with special needs.
3.7	Provide publicly accessible restrooms at all County parks, where feasible.
3.8	Increase public safety by installing cameras and kiosks with enhanced communications options for emergency calls, increasing ACPD patrols, and adding parks ambassadors.

OBJECTIVE	PR 4. *Increase the environmental resilience of County parks and greenways while restoring the health of the natural environment.*
ACTION	
4.1	Conduct natural resource inventories and resource management plans for County parks, greenways, blueways, and undeveloped parklands. Update inventories and plans on a regular established schedule.
4.2	Establish Interim Management Plans for undeveloped County parklands addressing environmental features, historic and cultural resources, public access, and environmental stewardship best practices.
4.3	Maintain and update as needed the County's Safer Chemical policy to include current health information.
4.4	Sustain and increase partnership projects and programs with organizations that primarily focus on environmental conservation, sustainability, and resilience.
4.5	Increase the use of environmentally sustainable practices through the planning, development, and management of County parks and greenways, such as environmental planning and sustainable design, using native canopy trees, managing invasive species, conserving and restoring native plant communities, and creating opportunities for nature-focused recreation experiences. Ensure that access is limited in park areas where resource protection is paramount or make those areas available for experiencing only with protective measures in place.
4.6	Continue to implement best practice lake management strategies to reduce harmful algae blooms and improve water quality in county lakes.
4.7	Provide interpretive signage in County parks with information on the natural environment and historic and cultural resources.
4.8	Coordinate volunteer teams and crews to support parks and greenways, including through removal of invasive species and sustainable land management.
4.9	Increase shade at existing County parks and provide shade with future parks, including by planting trees and by providing canopies or covered structures for play equipment and benches.

OBJECTIVE	PR 5. *Expand and improve the trail networks and blueways in County parks and greenways and increase multimodal connections to parks and greenway trails.*
ACTION	
5.1	Construct and maintain sustainable new trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding in appropriate locations, providing a variety of trail options for different trail users.
5.2	Update open space requirements for development to prioritize the usability and accessibility of open and recreational space and to require connections to the existing or planned public open space network of trails and parks.
5.3	Accelerate the development and operation of key destinations for water-oriented recreation to accommodate access and amenities for paddle-craft, fishing, and similar water recreation, including the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, Ragged Mountain Reservoir, the North Fork of the Rivanna River, and the James River.
5.4	Increase and accelerate the funding, development, and operation of the planned Rivanna Greenway + Blueway – an interconnected network of greenway trails, water trails, river parks, and other river access points – between Brook Hill River Park and (future) Buck Island River Park. Initial efforts should focus on initiating and completing the extension of the Old Mills Trail (from Pantops to Milton) and the development of Milton Landing River Park and Brook Hill River Park.
5.5	Improve and expand river access facilities and amenities in coordination with partner agencies such as the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, and the Rivanna Conservation Alliance.
5.6	Continue to sustain volunteer trail maintenance partnerships and service activities to support the efforts of County staff and provide opportunities for community engagement and participation.
5.7	Collaborate with the Economic Development Office and the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote local outdoor recreation tourism and events, including for biking, running, bird watching, and kayaking.
OBJECTIVE	PR 6. *Increase the availability and accessibility of recreation programs, classes, and facilities, including athletic fields.*
ACTION	
6.1	Evaluate field surface and outdoor lighting options that support both environmental stewardship and community use for new and upgraded athletic fields.
6.2	Develop partnerships to provide special events, cultural programs, and educational opportunities in County parks and community centers.
6.3	Expand schedule options for recreation classes, programs, and other activities.
6.4	Evaluate adding options for fitness classes and programs in rural County community centers and community-operated spaces (e.g., the Rosenwald School and Yancey Community Center).

OBJECTIVE	PR 7. *Explore creative ways to fill funding gaps for parks and greenways infrastructure.*
ACTION	
7.1	Work with community cycling and running groups to host races or similar special events with the proceeds dedicated to the expansion and improvement of greenways.
7.2	Create a new policy that allows for voluntary donations from developers directly to Albemarle County to meet greenspace requirements when it is mutually agreed that nearby publicly accessible greenspace improvements would be more beneficial than on-site recreational amenities.
7.3	Collaborate with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to establish one or more Wildlife Management Areas in the County.

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AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

CULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL: *Albemarle County will recognize, celebrate, and promote awareness of its rich and extensive historic, cultural, and scenic resources, and will actively work to identify, preserve, and protect these valuable resources.*



Historic dairy barn at River View Farm, a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in African American heritage, education, agriculture, and architecture.

Objective 1: Develop and maintain an accurate and comprehensive inventory of the historic, cultural, scenic, and rural resources that contribute to Albemarle County's unique sense of place.

Objective 2: Increase programs to educate about the county's unique resources and history and support the efforts of other individuals/organizations doing the same.

Objective 3: Protect the resources that contribute to the county's unique sense of place.

Objective 4: Investigate incentives to preserve and protect the county's character-defining resources, with focus on programs that benefit the public.

Objective 5: Preserve and protect the county's scenic viewsheds, landscapes, and waterways, and the scenic character of the county's roads.

Objective 6: Reduce light pollution to protect and enhance the dark sky while balancing the need for a safe environment.

INTRODUCTION

Albemarle County's rich cultural resources include the broad categories of natural, historic, and scenic resources, and, more specifically, buildings, structures, streetscapes, landscapes, mountains, waterways, archaeological resources, historic and prehistoric sites, views, the dark sky, art, music, and oral traditions.

Cultural resources establish a strong community identity across Albemarle County and help make it the special, unique place that it is. Walkable neighborhoods with historic buildings, farm buildings and agricultural land, grand estates in rolling terrain, and roads and trails meandering along rivers and framing distant mountain views all make the county a place unlike any other. These resources are important because they contribute to quality of life, placemaking, the economy, and climate action. However, there is no protection for many of these resources, and some of the protections that are in place are not as effective as they could be. This leaves the community at risk of losing the features that are essential to its character, quality of life, and a strong economy.

Cultural resources are a primary contributor to the quality of life that the county offers its residents and business owners. Pleasure is found in beautiful things both natural and human-made; people desire to live and work in attractive surroundings. As Harvard professor Heather Eliassen has noted, health and well-being are proven to be enhanced by spending time in green spaces. These environmental conditions can positively impact emotions, mood, and general health, which in turn helps maintain a healthy community.



Historic Birdwood Mansion.



The Rivanna River at Pantops.

What are Cultural Resources?

Cultural Resources include both the tangible and intangible, and the historic, scenic and artistic. They encompass features with significant characteristics, including:

- **Buildings**
- **Structures**
- **Streetscapes**
- **Landscapes**
- **Mountains**
- **Waterways**
- **Archaeological resources**
- **Sites**
- **Views**
- **Artwork**
- **Music**
- **The dark sky**
- **Oral traditions**

"The greenest building is the one that is already built." - Carl Elefante*

** Fellow and past President, American Institute of Architects (AIA)*

Local history and culture are at the core of placemaking – the creation of vibrant and inclusive spaces that enhance quality of life and support the local economy. Building on these core features and sharing the stories of the people, places, and events that define the county's identity, instill a sense of belonging, and strengthen community pride. The Office of Equity and Inclusion administers the Community Read program in partnership with other community organizations. The program selects reading materials that focus on telling a comprehensive history of the community by highlighting groups who have historically been left out. Little Free Library is a nonprofit that builds community, inspires readers, and expands book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led little libraries. The Office of Equity and Inclusion has partnered with the Parks & Recreation Department and the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library to provide reading materials for the Little Free Library boxes located in seven parks across the county. The goals of the program are to invest in inclusive storytelling and to equip and inspire the community to learn how to imagine more inclusive and equitable worlds. Capitalizing on the capacity of the county's cultural resources with creative placemaking projects supports local character and strengthens the local economy.

Tourists are drawn to places with unique character. Tourists visit Albemarle County for an array of reasons, including historic and unique buildings, attractive communities, distinctive architecture, parks and natural areas, rural settings, views, local crafts, events, and food. Every year, these visitors contribute a substantial amount of revenue to the county's economy; in 2023, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, visitors spent over $550 million here. Without the resources that define the county as a unique place, tourism and its economic benefits would likely dwindle.

Cultural resources also support the County's climate action goals. Historic preservation is inherently sustainable. Preserving and reusing historic properties reduces the consumption of building materials and construction waste and consumes less energy than demolition and new construction.

Supporting energy efficient upgrades and the use of climate-resilient technologies may increase the frequency of renovation and adaptive reuse of older buildings in the county. Older developments are also typically accompanied by mature landscapes, including old-growth trees and other natural features that benefit human health, support healthy ecosystems, and contribute to climate resilience. These landscapes support habitat, air and noise filtration, and carbon sequestration, and can help withstand the effects of increased temperatures. Vegetated buffers along waterways also help prevent flood damage, improve water quality, and capture carbon dioxide emissions.

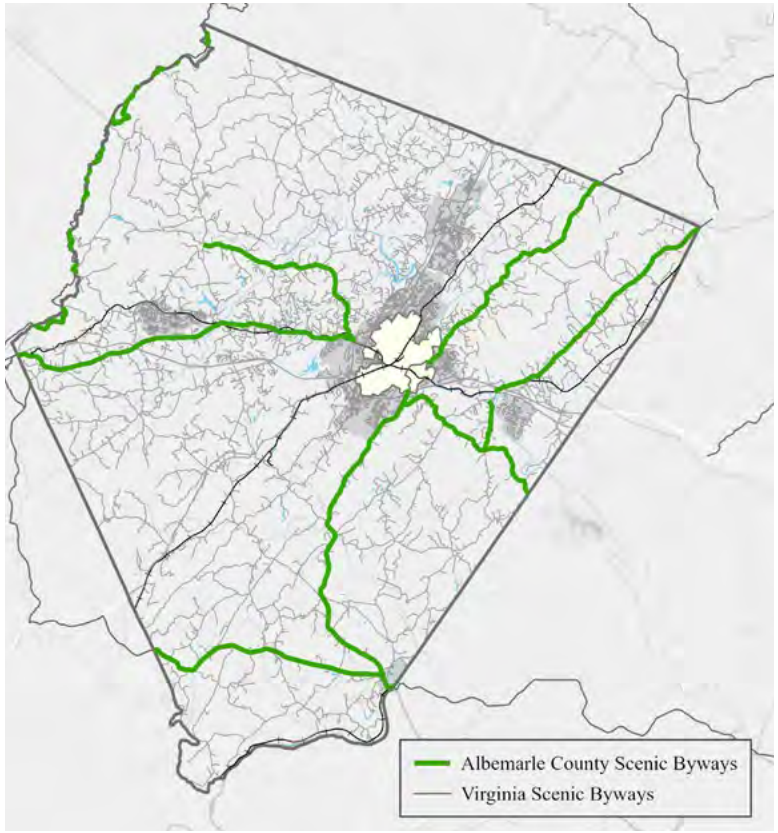
MAJOR FINDINGS & TRENDS

Many of Albemarle County's historic resources are honored with designations in historic registers and memorialized in historical markers.

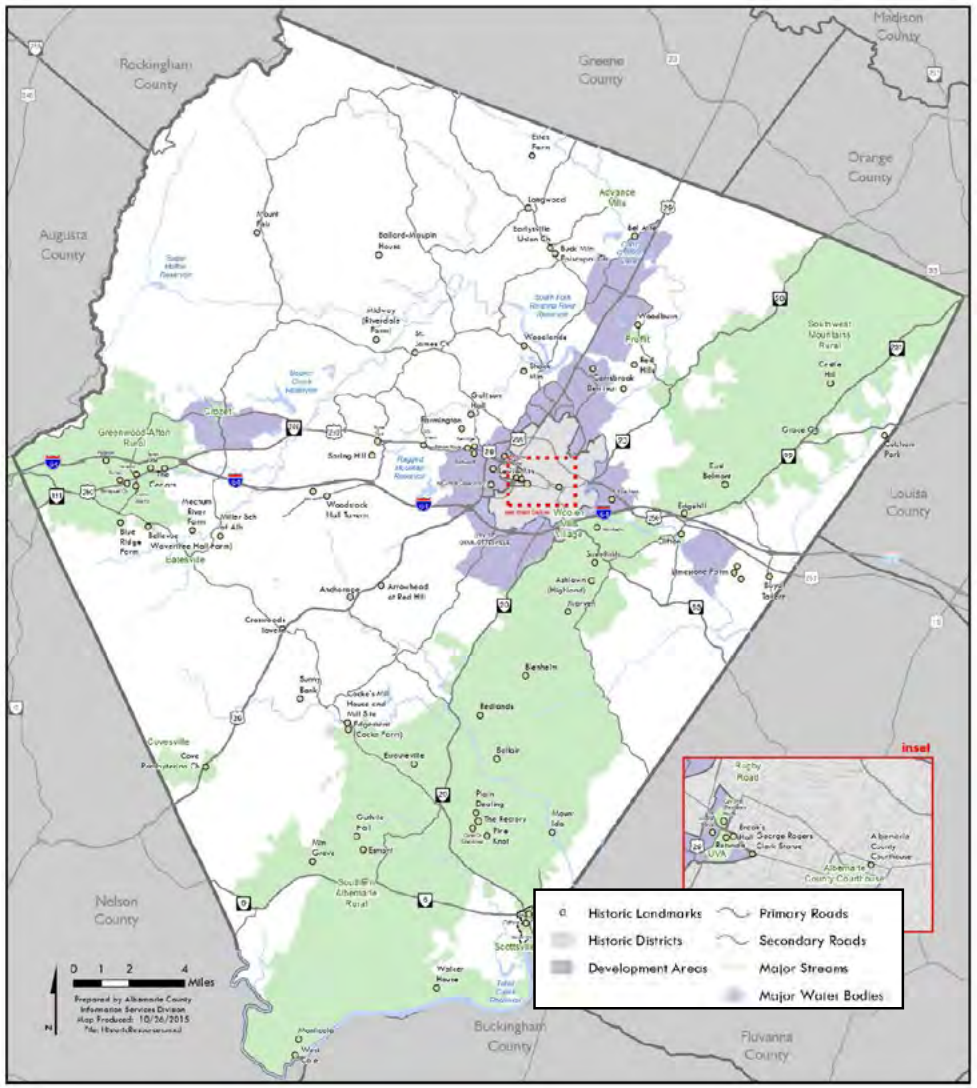
- In total, 22% of the county's land area lies within 13 registered historic districts, primarily in the Rural Area.
- Ninety-three properties are listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), according to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
- In 2019, the County's Historic Preservation Committee worked with the County's Office of Equity and Inclusion to tell a more inclusive history of the county through the installation of new historical markers representing women and people of color. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources approved five new markers. In total, as of 2025, there are 44 historical markers located across the county.
- The county has long been home to diverse African American communities, including the historic farming communities of River View Farm and Union Ridge, the former free Black community of Free State, and post-emancipation settlements such as Proffit, Cartersburg, Freetown in Crozet, and areas around the seven Rosenwald schools in the county. The St. John Rosenwald School was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2018.

Cultural Resources support Albemarle County's Strategic Plan Goals

1. *Strategic Goal # 2: Resilient, Equitable & Engaged Community*
2. *Strategic Goal #3: Infrastructure & Placemaking*
3. *Strategic Goal #4: Quality of Life*
4. *Strategic Goal #5: Education & Learning*



Map showing the state and national Scenic Byways in the county.



Albemarle County properties listed in the state and national registers of historic places.

The scenic value of several of Albemarle's roads are recognized with local and state designations.

- There are four National Scenic Byways (roads with intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities) and 10 Virginia Byways (roads with high aesthetic or cultural value, leading to or in an area of historic, natural, or recreational significance) in the county, according to the Federal Highway Administration.
- The County has designated 17 roads as Entrance Corridors.
- There are four designated Virginia Scenic Rivers in the county – the Moormans, Rivanna, Rockfish, and James rivers. The Mechums River was identified in the 2024 Virginia Outdoors Plan as a possible additional designation and the Board of Supervisors recently voted to request that the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) consider the Hardware River for designation.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Albemarle County has several historic districts and many individual properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia State Register. It is important to remember that these federal and state registers are honorary listings that carry no regulatory power. The registers do not protect historic buildings or prevent demolition of the important historic resources that are listed. However, they can provide eligibility for incentives. The strongest protections for historic resources are typically enacted at the local level. However, the County currently has no regulations in place to protect historic resources.

In addition to the individually designated resources and resources in designated historic districts, thousands of the county's other cultural resources have been surveyed. However, the quality and depth of these surveys vary greatly; many of the surveys are outdated. Almost 75% of the surveys of county resources in the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' database are at least 15 years old, and about half of those resources are over 20 years old. Furthermore, the inventory of historic resources has not been inclusive. Many early surveys focused on high-style buildings and overlooked the more modest buildings that were associated with most community members. Other surveys failed to acknowledge non-architectural resources and the important connections between buildings, their sites, and surroundings. Cemeteries are another resource type that has not been surveyed systematically. Given the sensitive nature of these resources, identification and mapping are essential. Adopting criteria for assessing the significance of cultural resources that more accurately represent the county's full history could address these issues.

Historic District Designation Types Compared

	National Register of Historic Resources	Virginia Landmark Register	Local Historic Districts
Essential Character	Honorific/Educational	Honorific/Educational	Regulatory: Local Overlay Zoning
Restrictions	None, provided that no Federal license, permit, or funding is involved.	None	▪ Some; restrictions can vary
Controlling Authority	▪ National Parks Service (NPS)/Keeper of the Register ▪ State Review Board	▪ Virginia Department of Historic Resources ▪ Historic Resources Board	▪ Code of Virginia/ 15.2-2306. Preservation of historical sites and architectural areas ▪ Local elected officials ▪ Local Preservation Commission
Criteria for Designation	Established by federal law and NPS regulations	Established by Code of Virginia and DHR regulations	Established by ordinance of local government
Benefits	▪ Encourages preservation of the district ▪ National recognition; prestige ▪ Eligible for plaque ▪ Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation may apply. ▪ Opportunity to comment on federally-funded projects and their effect on the property	▪ Encourage preservation of the district ▪ Statewide recognition; prestige ▪ Eligible for plaque ▪ Opens doors to state rehab tax credits ▪ Ensures consideration in state planning process	▪ Maintains character of district ▪ Protects investment ▪ Local recognition; prestige ▪ Plaques may be offered ▪ Could be linked to local tax abatements ▪ Ensures consideration in local planning process
Right of Owners	Requires consent of majority of property owners	Requires consent of majority of property owners	▪ Public hearing(s) prior to designation ▪ Owner may appeal Preservation Commission decisions to the BOS
Effect on Property Values	▪ Some evidence that designation maintains property values. ▪ No evidence that designation decreases property values	▪ Some evidence that designation maintains property values. ▪ No evidence that designation decreases property values	▪ Some evidence that designation maintains property values. ▪ No evidence that designation decreases property values

Table comparing historic district designation types. (Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

Historic Resource Surveys

This process identifies and gathers information on a community's historic resources. It includes fieldwork – on-the-ground search and recording of the physical features of historic resources – and the preceding research and planning required to undertake that fieldwork. The process also includes systematic organization of survey data.

Surveys are undertaken to identify the historic resources that are important to a community and that contribute to the community's special character. This data inform land use and other community planning decisions.

The County does not have a systematic survey or update process in place. Without a reliable catalog of existing resources, responsible management of the county's cultural resources is substantially constrained. A reliable catalog supports proactive – rather than reactive – action. This deficiency could be addressed with the establishment of a program that systematically identifies cultural resources of all types and includes a regular update process. A Historic Resources Survey Plan that assesses existing surveys, un-surveyed resources, and the need for updates, and considers the phasing of survey work could help manage the work and contribute to prioritization efforts.

With no protection in place and a general lack of incentives, the preservation of historic resources that establish community character remains sporadic and uncertain. Losses include historic residences, farm structures, and public buildings. In addition to the loss of the resource itself, this leads to a gradual loss of rural character and degradation of the urban environment. These impacts could be reduced by establishing new programs to protect the resources.

New programs could be educational, regulatory, or incentive-based. Educational programs could foster a better understanding of the county's resources, the available honors and protections, the role of preservation in the community, the roles and relationships of public/private partners in historic preservation, and the fact that historic districts need not freeze a community in time. A well-informed public would be better able to participate in identification, protection, and prioritization activities. Programs could include dedicated ongoing funding of local historical markers (with which the County's Historic Preservation Committee and the County's Office of Equity and Inclusion have demonstrated recent success), and the creation of an Endangered Places List (which could draw attention to threatened resources and generate support for preservation activities), among others.

Certified Local Governments in Virginia

Abington (Town)	Manassas (City)
Alexandria (City)	Martinsville (City)
Arlington County	Norfolk (City)
Blacksburg (Town)	Petersburg (City)
Cape Charles (Town)	Prince William County
Charlottesville (City)	Pulaski (Town)
Clarke County	Richmond (City)
Culpeper (Town)	Roaknoke (City)
Danville (City)	Smithfield (City)
Fairfax (City)	Spotsylvania County
Fredericksburg (City)	Stafford County
Hanover County	Staunton (City)
Herndon (Town)	Stephens City (Town)
King William County	Suffolk (City)
Leesburg (Town)	Virginia Beach (City)
Lexington (Town)	Warrenton (Town)
Loudoun County	Williamsburg (City)
Lynchburg (City)	Winchester (City)

Regulatory programs could include local historic district overlay, demolition, or deconstruction ordinances. Other jurisdictions in the region successfully leverage these types of tools to protect their historic resources. For example, Loudoun County uses local historic district overlays to successfully protect a 10,000-acre (15.6-square-mile) rural historic district, the character-defining roadside features of rural roads, and the distinctive character and charm of multiple villages. Adoption of a local historic district ordinance would qualify Albemarle County for the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, the benefits of which include the opportunity to apply for matching grants (for surveys, educational programs, rehabilitation of publicly owned buildings, and other work) and full access to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' cultural resource database.



The dedication of the River View Farm historical marker.

Benefits of Certified Local Government (CLG) Designation

- Promotes community-wide preservation.
- Can apply for matching grants under the CLG grant program.
- Automatic consideration for cost-share program funding when CLG funding is unavailable.
- Receives technical assistance from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service.
- Gains full access to the Department's GIS-based database (V-CRIS).
- Is eligible for stipends to selected preservation conferences and workshops.

What is Deconstruction?

It is the process of systematically dismantling a structure in an environmentally, economically, and socially responsible manner, aiming to maximize the recovery of materials for reuse and recycling. (Source: Delta Institute Deconstruction and Salvage Go Guide)



Images before and after the renovation of Findowrie, a historic farmhouse in the Southwest Mountains National Register Rural Historic District.

SCENIC RESOURCES

Though historic resources have not been the focus of County programming or funding, the County has an established record of protecting some of its scenic resources. Protected scenic resources are largely the result of the County's Growth Management Policy, which seeks to preserve the Rural Area for agriculture, forestry, and natural resource conservation. The preservation of agricultural and forestry lands, described more fully in AC44's Rural Area Land Use Chapter, preservation of natural resources, as articulated in AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter, and preservation of historic resources in their settings are effective types of scenic protection. Preservation of scenic resources can also occur indirectly through natural resource protection or voluntary measures, such as conservation easements.

Streams and rivers are additional valuable resources that contribute significantly to the scenic quality of Albemarle County, and some protection is provided by the State and the County.

- The Virginia Scenic Rivers designation recognizes the importance of designated scenic rivers and encourages their protection. It does not impose land-use limitations along the river but does require General Assembly approval of structures that impede the natural flow of the river. Designations like this can bring awareness to these resources and build support for their protection. Designated state scenic rivers in the county include parts of the Moorman's River and the Rivanna River and sections of the James River and Rockfish River along the County's boundaries. The 2024 Virginia Outdoors Plan identified a fifth river, the Mechums River, as having potential for designation. In 2025, the Board of Supervisors voted to request that DCR study the Hardware River for designation.
- The County's Scenic Streams Overlay District helps conserve elements of scenic beauty along waterways by restricting construction, grading, and excessive cutting of trees within 65 feet of designated streams. The Moormans River is currently the only waterway in the county protected by the Scenic Streams Overlay District.



Kayakers paddling on the Rivanna River.

Virginia Scenic Rivers in Albemarle County

Designated

- Moormans River (from Charlottesville (Sugar Hollow) Reservoir to the junction with the Mechums River)
- Rivanna River (from the South Fork Reservoir Dam to the confluence of the James River)
- Rockfish River (from the Nelson County line to the James River)
- James River (entire length)

Potential

- Mechums River
- Hardware River

Scenic Roads in Albemarle County

National Scenic Byways are roads with intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and/or scenic qualities. The features contributing to the distinctive characteristics of the corridor's intrinsic quality are recognized throughout the region and are considered regionally significant.

- Skyline Drive
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground, including portions of:
- Route 20 (Stony Point Road/Scottsville Road)
- Route 231 (Gordonsville Road)
- Route 22 (Louisa Road)
- Route 53 (Thomas Jefferson Parkway)
- Route 729 (Milton Road)
- Route 250 (Richmond Road)

Virginia Byways are roads with high aesthetic or cultural value, leading to or within areas of historical, natural, or recreational significance. In the county, Virginia Byways include portions of:

- Route 614 (Garth Road)
- Route 250 (Ivy Road/Rockfish Gap Turnpike)
- Route 151 (Critzers Shop Road)
- Route 6 (Irish Road)
- Route 20 (Stony Point Road)
- Route 53 (Thomas Jefferson Parkway)
- Route 800 (Schuyler Road)
- Routes 601/676/614 (Old Garth Road and Garth Road)
- Route 240 (Crozet Avenue)
- Route 810 (Crozet Avenue/White Hall Road/Browns Gap Turnpike)

Potential Virginia Byways

- Route 626 (James River Byway)
- Route 692/712 (Plank Road)
- Route 614 (Sugar Hollow Road) west of Whitehall

The County also has an established record of protecting the visual quality of its roadways. Virginia Byways and State Scenic Highways in the rural areas, together with County-designated Entrance Corridors in urban and rural areas, recognize this visual character. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation designates All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways. National Scenic Byways are roads with intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities. In the County, National Scenic Byways include Skyline Drive and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground. Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board designates Virginia Byways – roads with high aesthetic or cultural value, leading to or lying within an area of historic, natural, or recreational significance. They are meant to promote tourism and public appreciation of natural and historical resources. The county has 10 Virginia Byways.



Designated byways are often recognized for scenic or historic qualities.

The Entrance Corridor overlay helps elevate visual character and preserve scenic resources by applying design guidelines to the review of development proposals, to ensure that new construction is compatible with the county's important resources. The Entrance Corridor overlay replaced County scenic highway designations on Route 250 West, Route 20 South, Route 6, and Route 151 in 1990, but it did not maintain the increased setback requirements of the scenic overlay. Recent work of the Albemarle County Architectural Review Board (ARB) has highlighted the value of the scenic designation. The ARB and County staff are completing addenda to the Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines that identify the individual characters of the various corridors. This first step toward a long-needed guidelines update has shown that while architecture is primary in some corridors, landscape and scenic qualities are the primary character-defining features of others. Revising design guidelines to acknowledge the scenic component of these corridors could provide for more consistent treatment throughout the county and support the retention of historic landscapes and rural character.

Scenic views and dark skies are two additional scenic resources that have been particularly challenging for the County to protect. Mountains, rolling farmland, forests, streams, winding roads, and historic buildings combine to create and showcase scenic views across the county. Views that include the Blue Ridge Mountains situate the viewer in the larger geographic context. Views of historic buildings, forests and agriculture inform community members and visitors about the County's history and economics. Changes in the natural and built environments can negatively impact these views. Although it is not practical to preserve all scenic views, establishing a policy and related programs to identify and prioritize the most important publicly accessible views would help maintain county character and tourism revenue.



Scenic views are a treasured feature of the county's rural character.



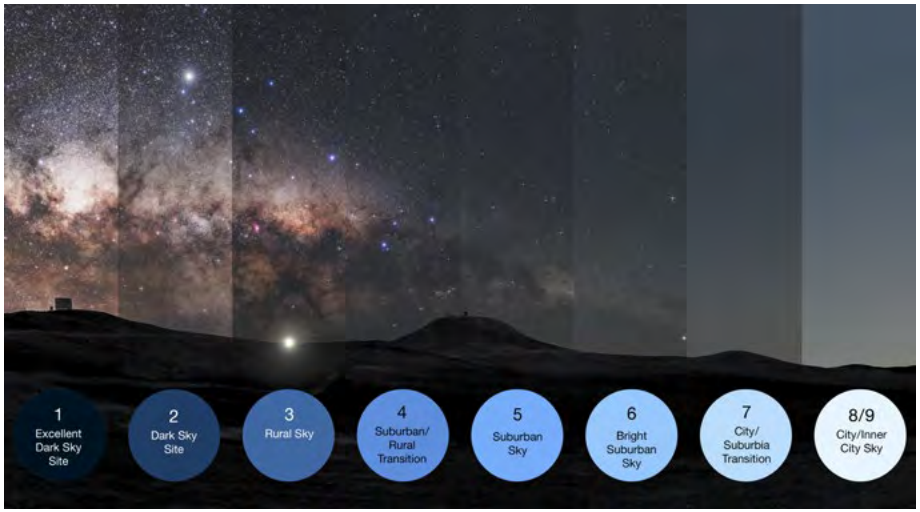
Strawberry crop in the western part of the county.

Impacts of Poor-Quality Lighting

- Reduced visibility from glare
- False sense of safety from over-illuminated spaces
- Wasted energy from over-illumination
- Reduced views of the night sky
- Disruption to the health of people, plants, and animals

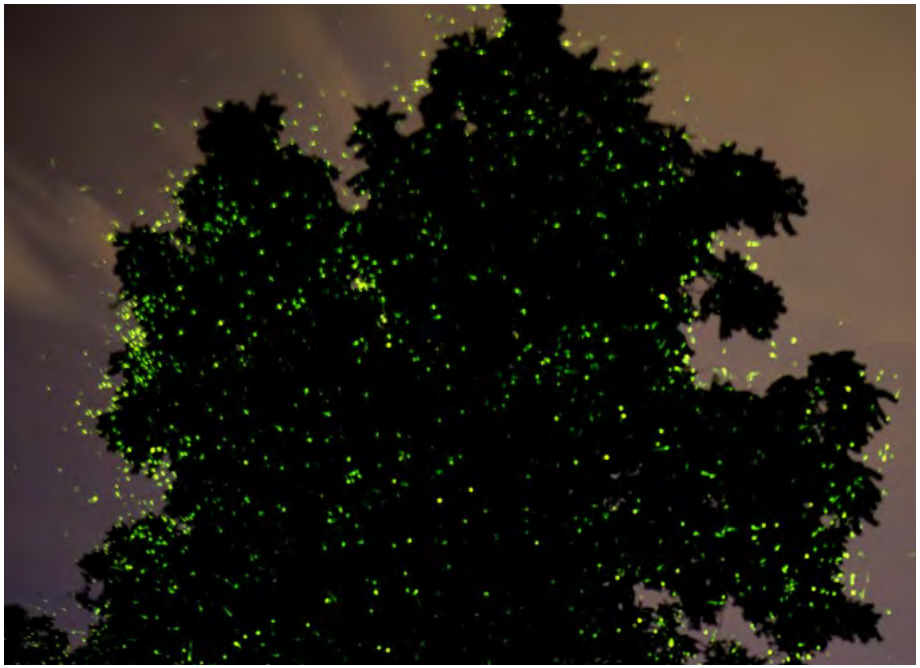
Benefits of Improved Lighting

- Enhanced safety by eliminating glare
- Less wasted energy
- More consistent lighting at appropriate levels
- Reduced glare and light trespass
- Improved health of people, plants, and animals



The Bortle scale measures the brightness of the nighttime sky. Image credit: Horálek, M. Wallner - European Southern Observatory (ESO)

Historically, the night sky has been a source of beauty and value to people and cultures around the world. The County adopted a lighting ordinance in 1998 that remedies some problems with outdoor lighting. That ordinance was updated in 2001 (to address waiver provisions) and 2017 (to address LED lamps). An additional phase of review addressing glare, lighting measurement, pole height, overall lighting levels, education, and non-conforming lights was planned; that work awaits the availability of resources. That update is still needed and should be expanded to align regulations with technology updates, and to clearly show how safety and protection of the dark sky will be balanced in the county. AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter provides more information.



Fireflies at dusk (composite image). Photo credit: Scott Clark

ARTS AND EVENTS

Contemporary arts and cultural events also play an important role in community character and community identity. Arts and cultural events, venues, and installations enliven a community and instill civic pride. They highlight talent, encourage innovation and lifelong learning, attract new residents and visitors, and generate tourism and employment opportunities. Events can bring together diverse and underrepresented groups. County arts and culture are celebrated in many local and regional events, including, but not limited to, the Loop de'Ville Festival, Rivanna Riverfest, the VeryAsian VA Celebration, the Juneteenth Celebration, the Virginia Festival of the Book, the Virginia Film Festival, the Maupintown Film Festival, Batesville Apple Butter Weekend, the Grace Farm Tour, and the Crozet Arts and Crafts Festival. These events, and many others, are opportunities for residents to celebrate and discover local culture and history, while encouraging local spending and supporting tourism. The local visitors bureau promotes these events and highlights the county's history and beauty on its website.

There are many opportunities to take tours and visit local and regional historic sites, museums, and galleries that provide interactive ways to engage with local history, art, and culture. These include attractions such as Monticello and the University of Virginia's Historic District, jointly designated as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), James Monroe's Highland, the Kluge-Ruhe Museum of Indigenous Australian Art, the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, the Scottsville Museum, and Ivy Creek Natural Area. Along with these more formal destinations, many community members are resources in themselves, documenting and passing down local history and sharing their stories through speaker engagements and other events. Though popular in many communities for their artistic, tourism, and educational benefits, the County has not yet instituted an ongoing art in public places program but could benefit from one.



Flow River Arts Festival - Darden Towe Park.



Monticello property walking trail.

Popular Local Financial Incentives for Historic Preservation

- Revolving funds
- Local tax deductions
- Local tax credits
- Local tax abatements for rehabilitation
- Special assessments for property taxes
- Sales tax relief
- Tax levies
- Property tax exemptions



Historic water tower, Birdwood Mansion property.

THE CHALLENGE

Maintaining community character is critical in a county where the built and natural environments contribute so significantly to quality of life and the local economy. The inherent challenge in preserving community character is in balancing regulations with property owners' desires, incentives with expenditures, and private investment with the public good. As the social, economic, and development pressures of the county change over time, keeping open the possibility of considering future regulations and incentives to protect important resources is key. The wealth of resources within the county's boundaries makes regulating the full slate of those resources impractical. However, studying how the resources are distributed and how layers of resources interact can set the stage for establishing priorities – priority resources, priority zones, or other priority interests. When determined appropriate, new programs and regulations could focus on those priorities and existing programs and regulations could be updated accordingly. This study could be accomplished most efficiently if undertaken in line with the creation of the Rural Area Land Use Plan (see Action 1.1 in the Rural Area Land Use Chapter) and by collaborating with local organizations that have related interests.

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	CR1. *Develop and maintain an accurate and comprehensive inventory of the historic, cultural, scenic, and rural resources that contribute to Albemarle County's unique sense of place.*
ACTION	
1.1	Establish and maintain a comprehensive inventory of county resources, including but not limited to those recognized by other registers, such as the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. Establish a system for updating outdated surveys, completing new inventories, and prioritizing the work.
1.2	Develop and maintain an inventory of the county's cemeteries, including but not limited to abandoned, neglected, private and commercial, and historic Black/African American cemeteries, to assist in identifying development impacts and for general education purposes.
1.3	Identify, document and monitor resources that are threatened by potential demolition, neglect or redevelopment.
1.4	When identifying the county's significant resources, consider an inclusive range of resources that accurately represent the county's full history. For example, identify under-represented communities, including, but not limited, to the Monacan Nation, and work with their representatives to identify and recognize sites in the county that are significant to them.
OBJECTIVE	CR 2. *Increase education about the county's unique resources and history and support the efforts of other individuals/ organizations doing the same.*
ACTION	
2.1	Regularly engage a broad cross-section of diverse community members to understand topics of interest related to the county's history and resources. Provide education on identified topics.
2.2	Increase awareness of the county's resources, emphasizing the benefits of preserving the resources, through a variety of methods including but not limited to historical markers, endangered places lists, digital and social media, tours, lectures, exhibits, and online recordings of events.
2.3	Encourage property owners to apply to new and established programs that bestow honorary designations on important resources in the county.
2.4	Educate the community about new and established preservation programs and regulations, and the cultural, financial, and environmental benefits of those programs.
2.5	Partner with community groups, including religious institutions, civic and arts/cultural organizations, schools, and businesses to increase awareness and engagement in education, ownership, management, and recognition of the county's significant resources.
2.6	Partner with stakeholders in the arts and culture community to develop events and marketing to increase awareness of, and participation in, contemporary art, culture, and subculture.

2.7	Create tools to help owners of historic and culturally significant places connect with experts, including, but not limited to, the University of Virginia and the City of Charlottesville, that provide rehabilitation and preservation services.
2.8	Establish a placemaking program, including, but not limited to, an art in public places program, that acknowledges the unique history and character of the county and its neighborhoods.
OBJECTIVE	**CR 3.** ***Protect the resources that contribute to the county's unique sense of place.***
ACTION	
3.1	Investigate a variety of legal tools for historic preservation so that a graduated range of protections can be considered, including, but not limited to, a historic district ordinance and a demolition ordinance, stronger code enforcement tools for demolition of protected historic resources, and scenic overlays.
3.2	Investigate and consider establishing requirements to protect significant archaeological resources, including proactive measures to prevent disturbance and potential destruction, and controls to ensure that archaeological sites and subsurface materials are properly identified, evaluated, and mitigated prior to development.
OBJECTIVE	**CR 4.** ***Investigate incentives to preserve and protect the county's character-defining resources, with focus on programs that benefit the public.***
ACTION	
4.1	Evaluate and consider adopting various incentives to encourage retention, renovation, preservation, and adaptive reuse of historic resources, and land and scenic conservation. Pursue state and federal grants and promote tax credits for historic preservation projects.
4.2	Promote sustainable design in the renovation and adaptive reuse of historic resources, including energy-efficient upgrades and the salvage/ reuse of building materials.
4.3	Update the Historic Preservation Plan and the Priority Recommendations List to direct future work of the County's Historic Preservation Committee.
4.4	Assemble and make available to property owners an information guide to facilitate the restoration and reuse of existing structures, prioritizing historic structures.
4.5	Create technical assistance programs to increase understanding and give guidance on how to protect resources from various threats, including natural disasters, neglect, and other risks.
4.6	Collaborate with local, state, and national agencies on preservation efforts, programs, policies, and opportunities.

4.7	Investigate joining the Certified Local Government program through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to take advantage of available technical and financial benefits.
4.8	Identify partnerships and funding sources for the identification, protection, and preservation of abandoned and neglected cemeteries, especially historic Black/African American cemeteries.
4.9	Emphasize greater protection of historic resources in the County's conservation easement programs and identify high-value areas for protection.
OBJECTIVE	CR 5. *Preserve and protect the county's scenic viewsheds, landscapes and waterways, and the scenic character of the county's roads.*
ACTION	
5.1	Evaluate and consider establishing programs and policies for preserving and prioritizing the county's scenic resources, including viewsheds and potential designation of additional scenic waterways in the County's Scenic Streams Overlay District.
5.2	Collaborate with community members and groups on voluntary programs and efforts to preserve and restore scenic resources.
5.3	Evaluate and consider establishing a local scenic highway overlay with design standards and/or other protections to help maintain the rural and scenic character of the county and its roads, both within and outside the Entrance Corridor overlay.
5.4	Enhance the appearance of county roads by establishing programs to reduce litter, to maintain landscaping and native vegetation, to reduce invasive species, and eliminate non-permitted signs.
5.5	Monitor changing state and federal road classifications. Evaluate whether new arterial highways should be designated as Entrance Corridors.
5.6	Revise Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines to provide better direction to applicants on how to apply the guidelines to development proposals and to promote native vegetation and integration of vegetation in building design. Engage local communities to inform guidelines updates.
5.7	Update the Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines to provide direction on climate resilience, renewable energy sources, and sustainable building materials.
5.8	Expand opportunities for streamlined and more efficient review of Architectural Review Board applications.
5.9	Complete a Cultural Resource Overlay Study to establish protection priorities.

OBJECTIVE	CR 6. *Reduce light pollution to protect and enhance the dark sky while balancing the need for a safe environment.*
ACTION	
6.1	Build a partnership with the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, and consider the expertise of community partners, to update the outdoor lighting ordinance to address previously planned Phase 2 amendments and to address new technologies and trends.
6.2	Lead the protection of dark skies by designing and implementing lighting for County facilities that is energy efficient and dark sky friendly, and follows the principles of responsible outdoor lighting.
6.3	Create a community education program to discourage excess outdoor illumination and promote dark sky friendly light fixtures.

AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE



GOAL: *Public services and facilities will be provided in a responsible, equitable, and cost-effective manner to meet community needs and provide for a healthy, safe, and resilient community. Facilities and services will support the principles and policies of the County and the Comprehensive Plan, such as the growth management and land use policies, climate action plan, housing plan, and the Board's Strategic Plan. Community members will have access to healthcare and healthy foods as well as opportunities to exercise and enjoy nature.*



Electric vehicle charging station at the Albemarle County Office Building on McIntire Road.

Objective 1: Provide access to public facilities, infrastructure, and services in a responsible, equitable, and cost-effective manner to serve existing and future community needs.

Objective 2: Provide public water and sewer to the Development Areas and County consistent with the Growth Management Policy.

Objective 3: Provide high-quality, modern, accessible, and community-oriented library services and facilities to promote accessibility for all community members.

Objective 4: Provide Albemarle County Public Schools facilities for a high-quality, equitable, and inclusive educational system for students.

Objective 5: Provide high quality and responsive emergency services (police, fire-rescue, Regional Emergency Communications Center) that adapt to changing community needs and emerging best practices.

Objective 6: In partnership with service providers, achieve universal affordable and adequate broadband access.

Objective 7: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from local government and school facilities.

Objective 8: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reductions to the waste stream, increasing recycling, and composting.

Objective 9: Coordinate with providers to ensure adequate and reliable communications, electric, and other private utilities services to all residents to meet existing and future needs, with utilities that are resilient to impacts of climate change and are consistent with relevant County policies (e.g., growth management, wireless).

Objective 10: Improve urban stormwater management, drainage, and flood control.

Objective 11: Increase equitable access to services, programs, and activities that benefit community health and well-being.

Objective 12: Improve and expand the ability of individuals and households to obtain a healthy and affordable local food system to meet their dietary needs and maintain healthy and active lifestyles.

INTRODUCTION

Community facilities, including buildings, utilities, and services, are essential to quality of life, public health, safety, and well-being in Albemarle County. Their location, design, and operation play a critical role in supporting growth management, land use planning, environmental protection, climate action, and equitable access to resources.

AC44 outlines expectations for service provision in alignment with its Goals and Objectives. While equal service levels across the county may not be feasible, ongoing evaluation ensures that delivery is equitable and responsive to changing needs, particularly with the emergence of services such as broadband.

Major public facilities are scheduled and prioritized through the County's Capital Improvements Program (CIP). A capital project is a planned expense for a facility or physical item requiring a minimum expenditure of $20,000 typically having a useful life span of 10 years or more.



Mountain View Elementary School.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

Four primary locations provide essential Albemarle County governmental services. Most general government offices are located in the County Office Building on McIntire Road or the County Office Building on Fifth Street. Court Square, a facility shared by the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, provides judicial services. It is next to the intersection of Jefferson Street and Park Street in Charlottesville. The School Division administration operates in the County Office Building on McIntire Road and the Albemarle High School campus.

While maintaining a central location for government offices provides for more efficient operation, AC44 considers options for decentralizing certain services, potentially adding mobile or satellite facilities to improve access and reduce travel burdens.



The Albemarle County Office Building, located on McIntire Drive.

PUBLIC WATER & SEWER

The provision of water and sewer services is a key tool for implementing the County's Growth Management Policy. Water and sewer are provided to the designated Development Areas but may, in certain circumstances, be extended beyond the Development Areas to address health and safety issues where extension of public service is needed to address an issue. The Board of Supervisors approves the service areas where public water and sewer can be provided. Public water and sewer services are provided by two authorities: the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority and the Albemarle County Service Authority.

Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA)

The RWSA is a public body created jointly by the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County in 1972. It serves as a single political entity authorized to plan for, acquire, finance, construct, operate, and maintain facilities for providing raw water plus the interception, treatment, and disposal of wastewater. RWSA funds its operations and capital project costs through fees and charges to its two customers, the City of Charlottesville and the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA). The City and ACSA charge retail rates to their customers to reflect their service costs as well as RWSA's costs.

The RWSA operates four systems – the Urban Water System (includes the Observatory, North and South Water Treatment Plants), the Crozet Water System, the Scottsville Water System, and the Red Hill Water System. RWSA provides sewage collection and treatment services to the Urban Area, Crozet, Scottsville, the Village of Rivanna (Glenmore), and Stone Robinson Elementary School.



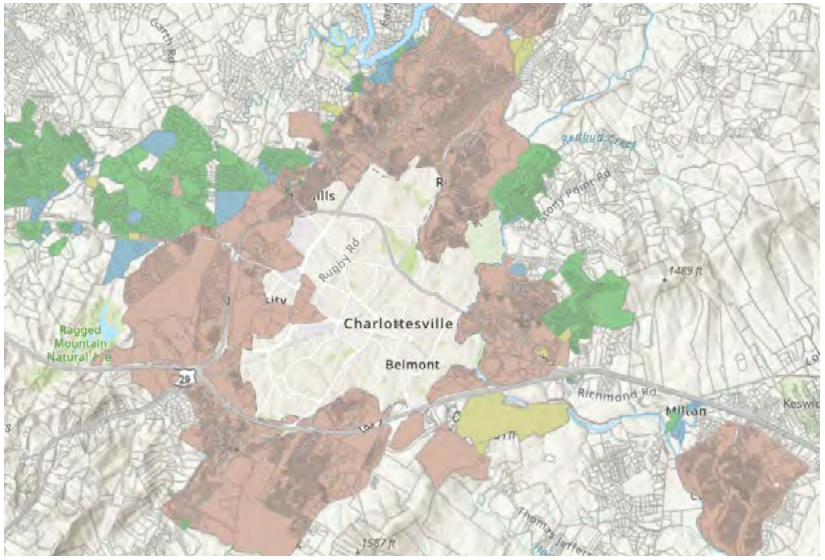
Water storage tower on Woodburn Road.

Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA)

The ACSA was created in 1964 to provide Albemarle County with retail water and wastewater services to defined service areas, known as the ACSA Jurisdictional Area. The Board of Supervisors approves jurisdictional area boundaries. The ACSA is responsible for constructing and maintaining the distribution and collection lines within the jurisdictional areas, as well as determining whether proposed developments can be adequately served by the existing system. The ACSA ensures the availability of domestic water, wastewater conveyance capacity, and fire suppression capabilities in relation to development proposals.



The South Rivanna Water Treatment Plant (RWSA).



The ACSA jurisdictional area for public water and sewer provision primarily corresponds with the County's Development Area boundaries.

Private Central Systems

Central water or sewer systems typically serve three or more users and are owned by the property owners it serves, with some systems managed by a licensed operator. There are approximately 46 privately owned/managed systems serving residential developments and businesses, as tracked by the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water. Most are in the Rural Areas and are older systems dating back to the 1970s and earlier. County policies have discouraged the use of private central systems for new developments since the 1980s.

The long-term operation and maintenance of these private systems are becoming increasingly problematic. Repair and renovation/replacement of the systems can be costly and difficult to finance and finding licensed operators willing to manage smaller systems is also difficult. There is increasing concern about possible health and safety issues and environmental impacts, including groundwater pollution, from poor operation and maintenance of private systems. Extension of public service to many of these locations is not viable. This situation merits further evaluation to determine the full scope of the issue and to identify potential next steps.

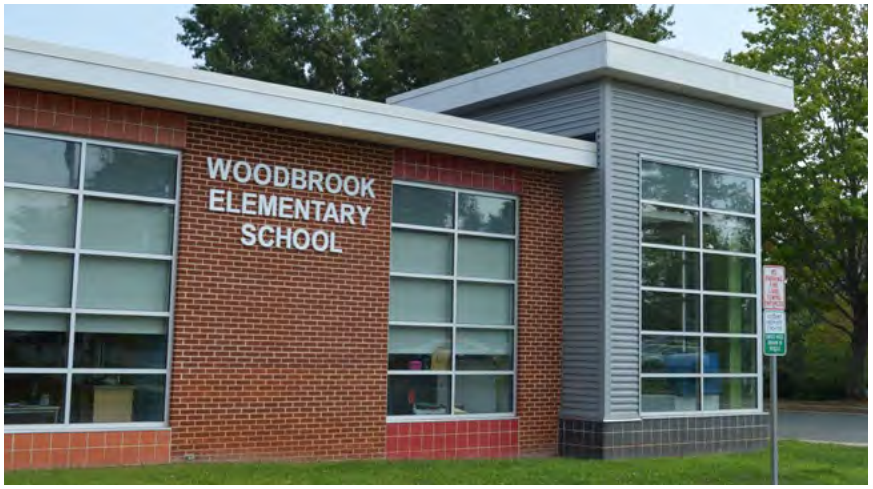
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are 28 public school facilities in Albemarle County: 15 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, one charter school, and four specialty centers and programs. A new elementary school and new high school specialty center are under construction as of the adoption of AC44. Plans are underway for an additional elementary school to be in operation by 2029. There are also four properties set aside for potential future school sites through the development approval process in the Hollymead and 5th Street Extended areas. Total enrollment across the entire school district is over 14,000. Campus master plans such as the Lambs Lane Campus Master Plan should be used to plan facility amenities (e.g., sidewalks, trail connections).

AC44 recommends locating new schools in, or adjacent to, the Development Areas, but also recognizes that schools can be constructed in the Rural Area when physical constraints, service considerations, or lack of available land in the Development Areas necessitate it. About half of the County's schools are in the Rural Area, and Rural Area schools are expected to be maintained, upgraded, and continue to serve Rural Area residents.

Recommendations in this chapter and in the Land Use Chapter and Transportation Chapter promote safe routes for walking and biking to school. Recreation areas/facilities at schools also function as county parks and are available for public use outside of school hours.





High-quality public schools are an important aspect of a thriving community. Upper image: Crozet Elementary School. Lower image: Woodbrook Elementary School.





Seminole Trail Station is one of 14 fire-rescue stations operated by the County.

FIRE-RESCUE

The County operates 14 fire-rescue stations and responds to over 19,000 incidents per year. The fire-rescue stations provide fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, and technical rescue response. Both volunteer and paid career personnel staff these facilities. A County Public Safety Operations Center located in the former Fashion Square Mall provides additional office space, storage, and vehicle maintenance for fire-rescue and police. The County and City provide mutual aid services to one another.

T here is an existing training facility for fire-rescue near Piedmont Virginia Community College. However, expanded training needs remain a priority. Training facility needs include classrooms and practical training areas (e.g., burn buildings, areas to practice driving large vehicles, and technical rescue operations). There are opportunities to collaborate with the Albemarle County Police Department to construct shared spaces within a new facility.

After conducting a comprehensive service analysis called Standards of Cover, the Board of Supervisors adopted service objectives for fire and rescue in 2019. Response time is the primary measurement/standard for service. Different average response times are established for the Development Areas and Rural Area due in part to the variations in frequency of calls and greater distances covered when servicing the much larger Rural Area. Other service standards established focus on the level of staffing per station and measures for volume of service per station. Currently, public safety response times are reviewed every three to five years.

POLICE

The Albemarle County Police Department is responsible for law enforcement duties in the county. The department operates out of the County Office Building on Fifth Street. It uses a “geographical policing” model that divides the county into two patrol districts. Officers are assigned to specific sub-areas within each district, allowing officers to foster and strengthen relationships within each district’s communities and allows for improved response times to calls and increased problem-solving capabilities.

Future needs for the department include new and expanded training facilities and additional small office spaces in rural communities or other strategic locations that support meeting response time standards.



Regional Emergency Communications Center (ECC)

The ECC, located on Ivy Road, dispatches all emergency calls to County fire rescue stations, and the region’s police departments (County, City of Charlottesville, University of Virginia). All emergency and non-emergency calls in the County, the City, and the University of Virginia are received and processed by staff at the ECC . Coordinated regional emergency communications ensure that emergency response can be handled as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Satellite offices such as the recently established Albemarle Public Safety Operations Center on Fashion Square Drive help support the needs of County police, fire, and emergency services.



Northside Library, located on Rio Road West.



Broadband uses a variety of technologies, including cable fiber and wireless transmission. Access to high-speed broadband is increasingly important for teleworking and online learning.

LIBRARIES

Library services are provided regionally through the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library (JMRL), which includes the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson. There are three libraries in Albemarle County, two libraries in the City of Charlottesville, and three libraries in surrounding localities. The County's libraries are Northside Library, Crozet Library, and Scottsville Library. Along with connecting people with books and other information, libraries provide access to digital collections, physical spaces for community gatherings and events, and programming to support literacy and learning for all ages.

BROADBAND

Broadband is an essential service. It provides access to high-capacity data transmission for services such as teleworking, online learning, telemedicine, e-commerce, and virtual meetings. In the past few years, there has been significant progress in broadband accessibility and affordability at the state and local levels.

Since 2017, the County has committed over $20 million in local, state, and federal funding toward public broadband expansion, all in the hopes of achieving universal broadband access by 2026. The County's Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office continues to work with residents and providers to maintain and expand broadband access and improve quality of service where necessary.

WIRELESS SERVICE

Wireless service is the transfer of cellular communications and access to the internet, typically with antennae installed at strategic locations to provide coverage of an area. The Zoning Ordinance for wireless facilities was amended substantially in 2025 to balance the provision of service while minimizing visual impact. The use of existing structures is encouraged, and the regulations establish avoidance areas to protect significant cultural and environmental resources consistent with AC44's Goals and Objectives. The County has approved many applications for new facilities. However, many facilities have not been built, and service may be poor or non-existent in parts of the County's Rural Area. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including terrain, limited customer base, difficulty in finding suitable sites for new facilities, or failure of the industry to invest in infrastructure.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid waste management is the collection and disposal of municipal solid waste from homes, businesses, and industries and includes construction debris, brush, food, and yard waste. Most municipal solid waste in the county is collected by private haulers and then taken to transfer stations , a facility for trash aggregation, before transfer to a landfill outside the county. There is no landfill in the county currently accepting municipal solid waste. The Ivy Landfill was closed in 2001; operations to monitor legacy landfill cells at the site for compliance with environmental regulations are ongoing.

RSWA operates a waste transfer station at the Ivy Solid Waste & Recycling Center on Dick Woods Road. Municipal solid waste, vegetative waste, clean fill, recycling, and periodic special collections are accepted at the station. County residents also have access to several recycling and convenience centers operated by the RWSA, including the McIntire Recycling Center in Charlottesville and the Southern Albemarle Convenience Center in Keene. A new Northern Convenience Center will be constructed on Rio Mills Road in 2027. Convenience centers accept bagged waste and recyclables but do not accept commercial hauler municipal solid waste or construction waste.

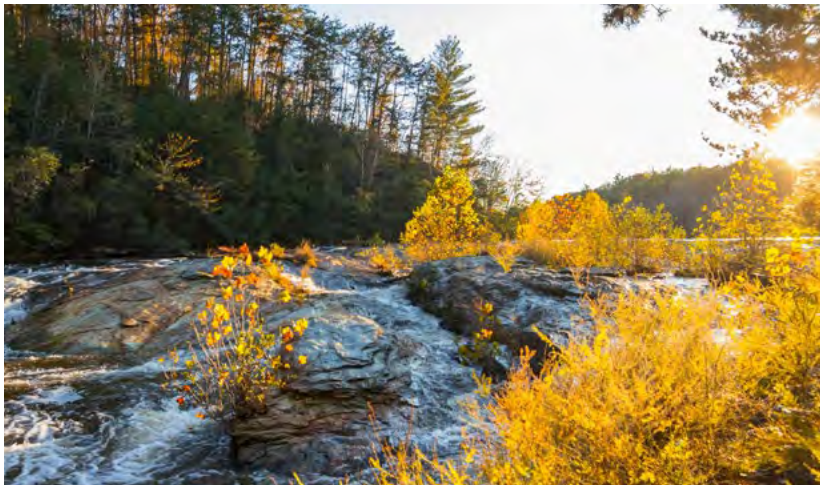


Recycling bins at the Ivy Solid Waste & Recycling Center.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT & STREAM RESTORATION



Stormwater management facility in Crozet.



Totier Creek in the southern part of the county.

The County ensures that required stormwater facilities for private and public developments are properly functioning to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff and reduce downstream flooding. Stormwater facilities are required by law to minimize the development's negative impacts downstream. The County periodically inspects facilities and conveys any maintenance or repair needs to the owner. The County also owns and maintains 12 regional stormwater facilities in the Development Areas. There are 89 stormwater facilities owned and managed by the County (Facilities & Environmental Services, Schools, and Parks & Recreation).

The County also addresses stream restoration. Some streams in the county experience serious erosion and sedimentation, harming the habitat and health of aquatic organisms and in some cases putting infrastructure at risk. To date, County restoration projects are installed in Crozet (Powell's Creek), near Woodbrook, at Biscuit Run Park, at Four Seasons, near Pen Park, and at Branchlands. The Stream Health Initiative adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2021 outlines 14 proposals targeting improvements to streams.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

By creating stronger social connections, public health, environmental, and economic baselines for the community, the County will be better able to prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant events that impact the community, including natural disasters and extreme weather events. The County can build on the area's many existing assets, including neighborhood groups, local businesses, nonprofits, schools and other public facilities, and informal mutual aid networks among community members.

In response to the challenges and impacts of climate change, the County has established two major County planning and implementation efforts – the County's adopted Climate Action Plan (2020) and the in-progress Resilient Together project. The Climate Action Plan focuses on climate mitigation strategies, including greenhouse gas reduction. AC44's Environmental Stewardship Chapter provides more information on these mitigation efforts. The Resilient Together project includes recommendations for resilience to natural hazards and the effects of climate change and improving health outcomes in the community, including through local food systems.





Access to healthy foods, nature, and exercise opportunities are important aspects of maintaining community health.

Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (RHMP) + Community Hubs

The Community Resilience Hub recommendations support the implementation of the RHMP, including the following mitigation and community RHMP action for the County: During the Comprehensive Plan update, consider loosening restrictions on the types of County improvements in the Rural Area to accommodate community support facilities improvements in Rural Areas to accommodate community support facilities.

Examples of services and programs that could be provided at Community Resilience Hubs include:

- *Community gardens*
- *Community programs and classes*
- *Health services*
- *Wi-Fi and device charging stations*
- *Warming/cooling stations*
- *Libraries*
- *Food pantries*
- *Recreation such as walking paths, trails, and sports facilities*
- *Renewable energy sources (e.g., solar panels)*
- *Emergency shelter and associated uses (e.g., emergency alerts and kits)*

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE HUBS

Community Resilience Hubs offer many ways to support the health and well-being of nearby residents and may be in either urban or rural communities. These hubs are typically community facilities (e.g., schools or community centers) that are upgraded to support community members before, during, and after a local emergency, such as a flood or extended power outage. They can also include privately owned buildings that can serve as gathering places and information resource hubs. As shown in the graphic below, resilience hubs can be designed as engagement centers, relief stations, and/or emergency shelters.

Community Resilience Hubs typically work best in places that community members are already using and where they feel comfortable going. This could look like a country store or community center in the Rural Area, or a school or library in the Development Areas. Improvements such as the addition of solar panels, weatherization, or the creation of a resilience hub program manager, increase the physical and social resilience of facilities, enhance current and future programming, and support existing community networks.



The three tiers of Community Resilience Hubs. Source: climatecrew.org

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

A strong local food system provides multiple benefits for the community. These benefits include reduced food waste (and therefore reduced greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste), sustainable agricultural practices that increase soil health, farmers markets and other locations that sell locally and regionally grown food (which also reduces emissions from transporting food long distances), and affordable and healthy options for community members. For example, Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry in the county that serves the broader region, provides food that is unsuitable to hand out at grocery pickups to pig farmers, so that the food does not go to waste. The organization collects and distributes food from the Blue Ridge Area Foodbank, local groceries, farmers, orchards, food distributors, food drives, donations, and purchases from wholesale vendors. Loaves and Fishes also provides recipes and cooking classes to share healthy and nutritious ways to use ingredients.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as the lack of consistent access for sufficient food to lead an active and healthy life. In Albemarle County, according to the most recent 2022 Map the Meal Gap Report by Feeding America, about 9.7% of county residents were experiencing food insecurity, slightly lower than the statewide 11.1% rate. Feeding America estimates only about half of those food insecure residents qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, meaning they make 130% or less of the federal poverty line, which was $32,630 for a family of four. However, that means many food-insecure community members do not qualify for SNAP benefits but also struggle to afford food, housing, transportation, and other necessities. This underscores the need for food pantries and other assistance, including through Loaves and Fishes and the Blue Ridge Area Foodbank.

Albemarle County has more than 850 farms in the Rural Area and ranks second in Virginia for the sale of fruits, nuts, and tree berries. From a land use and zoning perspective, the County can increase access to locally grown food by allowing farmers markets and community gardens in more locations and allowing urban agriculture where community members can grow their own food at home. The County can also continue to collaborate with and support local organizations such as Loaves and Fishes and Blue Ridge Area Foodbank that provide food directly to community members.





Upper image: No Cost Farm Stand event at Yancey Community Center, sponsored by Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital. Lower image: Loaves and Fishes food pantry.

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE	CF 1. *Provide public facilities, infrastructure, and services in a responsible, equitable, and cost-effective manner to serve existing and future community needs.*
ACTION	
1.1	Locate new community facilities primarily in the Development Areas. Public safety and emergency related facilities and services (and Community Resilience Hubs) may be located in the Rural Area to meet response times/service standards.
1.2	Collaborate with community partners to provide essential services (such as health care, emergency services, and tax/permit payment drop-off options) to rural communities in an innovative and cost-effective manner, such as through satellite offices, or by using existing community facilities for multiple purposes, mobile services, and temporary or pop-up offices.
1.3	Identify sites for public facilities in growing/developing areas of the county and pursue acquisition in advance of development pressures.
1.4	Pursue expansion and/or reuse of existing facilities, buildings and sites as a first option to address service needs. Evaluate the potential of providing multiple services/facilities on sites/buildings. When new public facilities are needed incorporate community spaces and safety/emergency functions, including meeting rooms, outreach space, resiliency hub, and emergency hub capabilities.
1.5	Collaborate with stakeholders (RWSA, ACSA, energy and communication companies, others) to develop a "Dig Once" policy that limits road and sidewalk disruption when utility infrastructure is being constructed and serviced.
1.6	Increase the use of environmentally sustainable materials and best practices through the planning, procurement, construction, management, and decommissioning of community facilities [the full life cycle of community facilities].
1.7	Increase the use of environmentally sustainable management and maintenance practices on County property, including community facilities and parks and greenways. Maintain native landscape demonstration sites around County office buildings and facilities and provide educational signage. Maintain and update as needed the County's Safer Chemical policy to include current health information.
1.8	Use nature-based solutions for stormwater management.

OBJECTIVE	CF 2. *Provide access to public water and sewer to the Development Areas and county consistent with the Growth Management Policy.*
ACTION	
2.1	Use the Development Areas boundaries to guide the ACSA Jurisdictional Area (ACSAJA) for the provision of public water and sewer. Changes to the ACSAJA boundaries outside of the Development Areas should only be considered when: (1) the area to be included is adjacent to and can be served by existing lines; (2) public health is in danger/at risk; and (3) on-site private water/septic utilities for are cost prohibitive or not technically viable.
2.2	Development in the Rural Area is to be served by private well and septic systems (or equivalent systems).
2.3	Use of private central systems is discouraged. Allow private central water or sewer systems only when existing public water and sewer services are not available to solve a public health/safety issue for existing Rural Area residents.
2.4	Study the current condition and long-term viability of existing private central water and sewer systems. Identify impacts from their continued use and mitigation options to address impacts.
2.5	Prohibit access to the Crozet Sewer Interceptor between the boundary of the Crozet Development Area and the Urban Service Area boundary.
2.6	Encourage and incentivize connecting properties served by well and/or septic to public water and/or sewer in the Development Areas. Prioritize residents who need financial assistance for incentives. Continue implementing the County's Septic to Sewer program and incentivize participation in the program as needed.
2.7	Collaborate with ACSA and RWSA on water and sewer master planning and project implementation, including but not limited to, those efforts identified in the following plans: • The Urban Finished Water Master Plan • The Northern Area Utilities Master Plan • The Moores Creek Advanced Water Resource Recovery Facility (AWRRF) Master Plan • The Crozet Drinking Water Infrastructure Plan • The Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan (Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Model Report) • The Community Water Supply Plan • The ACSA Capital Improvements Program • The RWSA Capital Improvements Program
2.8	Continue the RWSA Board of Directors current policy that biosolids produced by the RWSA should not be applied to land, such as fertilizer for agriculture.

OBJECTIVE	CF 3. *Provide high-quality, modern, accessible, and community-oriented library services and facilities to promote accessibility for all community members.*
ACTION	
3.1	Maintain and enhance existing County-owned and co-owned libraries to address service demands. Provide resources for the renovations of the Main Library (Market Street), in line with the approved County budget.
3.2	Pursue methods to enhance library services for all County residents through innovative and cost-effective opportunities (such as digital services, bookmobile and/or kiosk sites to serve rural residents).
3.3	Provide a safe and comfortable environment in and around each library site through installation of safety improvements. (such as lighting, sidewalks/bike lanes, or transit services).
3.4	Support JMRL in its efforts to pursue state and federal government initiatives for public library services (e.g., legislation, state aid, grants.
3.5	Collaborate with JMRL to identify the need for improved or new facilities and services in the Development Areas, the Rural Area, and the Town of Scottsville.
OBJECTIVE	CF 4. *Provide Albemarle County Public Schools facilities for a high quality, equitable, and inclusive educational system for students.*
ACTION	
4.1	Locate new schools in the Development Areas, or adjacent/close to the Development Areas. New schools may be located in the Rural Area when either physical constraints, lack of currently available land area in the Development Areas, or other service considerations and needs cannot be served by locations in the Development Areas.
4.2	Maintain and upgrade existing schools to serve rural residents and provide spaces for community gathering/meetings.
4.3	Provide a safe and comfortable environment in and around each school site to serve schools and “after school” community use such as lighting, sidewalks/bike lanes, school bus and/or transit service.
4.4	Recognize and encourage the multi-purpose function of schools/school sites and community centers/meeting spaces, and public recreation areas after school hours (and potential use as resiliency hubs/temporary emergency shelters). Select and develop school sites/site designs that best provide support for these functions to the community, while recognizing the primacy of the education function of the facility.

OBJECTIVE	CF 5. *Provide high-quality and responsive emergency services (police, fire-rescue, ECC) that adapt to changing community needs and emerging best practices.*
ACTION	
5.1	Provide facilities necessary to implement the service standards and geographic policing model for Albemarle County Police Department (ACPD) service provision, such as satellite offices, indoor vehicle storage, fueling stations, and other office and storage spaces.
5.2	Provide facilities necessary to meet Albemarle County Fire Rescue (ACFR)'s service standards defined in the Standards of Cover (SOC) and ACFR Community Risk Assessment (CRA).
5.3	Establish tailored public safety training facilities for ACFR and ACPD, encompassing classrooms and practical training areas and specialized facilities (burn buildings and towers for fire and aerial training, spaces for tactical operation, driving training, hazardous material handling, and other technical rescue operations).
5.4	Explore the potential for regional partnerships for emergency services training facilities, offering collaborative training opportunities with neighboring jurisdictions.
5.5	Continue to provide resources to the Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle Emergency Communications Center (CUAECC) that provides and coordinates public safety radio communications, emergency (911) answering services, and emergency public information and warning systems across the region.
5.6	Ensure adequate access to critical public safety facilities to allow efficient emergency response and recovery operations.
5.7	Transition the fire rescue fleet configuration and response model to include the use of smaller emergency response vehicles, when feasible to better accommodate urban street designs without compromising response capabilities. The feasibility assessment should analyze factors such as turning radius, length, functionality, safety, serviceability, cost of ownership, and any other necessary criteria.
OBJECTIVE	CF 6. *In partnership with service providers, achieve universal affordable and adequate broadband access.*
ACTION	
6.1	The Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office will continue to ensure available access and improvements in quality of service. Monitor and provide oversight of publicly funded broadband expansion projects to achieve universal broadband access. Pursue funding for digital inclusion programs, either directly or in partnership with community partners. Work with the regional digital equity coalition to update and implement the regional digital equity plan.
6.2	Develop a program to encourage broadband provider partners to prepare infrastructure for enhanced levels of service where potential land use and service capacity are discordant.
6.3	Maintain and update a fiber asset inventory to identify broadband service capacity across the county; this information should be used to publicly identify locations with sufficient capacity for enhanced levels of service.

OBJECTIVE	CF 7. *Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from local government and school facilities.*
ACTION	
7.1	Maximize the use of existing buildings and properties, including through maintenance, expansion, adaptive reuse, and innovative measures to use interior building space efficiently.
7.2	Use energy-efficient and sustainable designs with new and upgraded public facilities, such as green building standards, rooftop solar, geothermal energy, and electric vehicle charging stations, where feasible.
7.3	Increase the use of solar energy at solid waste facilities to power operations.
OBJECTIVE	CF 8. *Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reductions to the waste stream, increasing recycling, and composting.*
ACTION	
8.1	Adopt and implement a zero-waste framework for County operations.
8.2	Require allocation of space for compost and recycling bins in site design for multifamily residential and commercial development.
8.3	Increase recycling in government operations through procurement of all paper products containing 100% post-consumer content.
8.4	Establish benchmarks and adopt metrics to reach climate action goals on waste reduction and diversion of useful materials and organic waste from landfill. Gather metrics and baselines for per capita solid waste generation and diversion and measuring waste stream components (e.g., construction and demolition, recyclable materials, and compostable materials).
8.5	Collaborate with RSWA to develop community educational programs on safe disposal of household hazardous waste, recycling options, organizations with maintenance, repair, or reuse programs, and the waste hierarchy.
8.6	Collaborate with RSWA to establish a pay-as-you-throw policy for landfill waste and hauler requirements. Support low-cost waste and no cost recycling services to encourage proper waste disposal and reduction of recyclable materials in the waste stream.
8.7	Collaborate with RSWA and private service providers to expand public and private services to collect and process recyclable resources and hazardous materials from the waste stream.
8.8	Institute compost collection and/or organic waste collection receptacles at convenience centers.
8.9	Partner with agencies and nonprofits to develop incentives to recycle construction and demolition material.

OBJECTIVE	CF 9. *Coordinate with providers to ensure adequate and reliable communications, electric, and other private utilities services to all residents to meet existing and future needs, with utilities that are resilient to impacts of climate change and are consistent with relevant County policies (e.g. growth management, wireless).*
ACTION	
9.1	Collaborate with utility providers to locate utilities and facilities to be resilient to natural disasters/weather events and to minimize impacts on the natural environment. Encourage the maintenance/clearing of trees surrounding power lines/easements, the under-grounding of existing power lines, and locating utilities to increase grid resilience and reduce damaged utilities from wind/trees. Priority should be given to areas with repeated outages.
9.2	Provide wireless service to all public facilities, public parks, and community resiliency hub locations. Engage with service providers to provide distributed antenna systems, small cell antennas or other technical solutions.
9.3	Reduce the use of natural gas in County facilities to zero consistent with the County's climate action goals.
9.4	Encourage use of existing corridors for expansions of electrical and other utility transmission facilities rather than establishing new corridors.
OBJECTIVE	CF 10. *Improve urban stormwater management, drainage, and flood control.*
ACTION	
10.1	Incorporate elements into urban stormwater management, drainage, and flood control infrastructure with community and ecological co-benefits, such as recreation opportunities, urban heat mitigation, and pollinator habitats.
10.2	Evaluate flood risk in urban areas and identify possible mitigation.
10.3	Implement projects and initiatives to address the most significant flood risks identified in the urban area flood risk evaluation.
OBJECTIVE	CF 11. *Increase equitable access to services, programs, and activities that benefit community health and well-being.*
ACTION	
11.1	Collaborate with community partners to increase equitable access to healthcare such that the life expectancy gap between any two census tracts is less than five years. Explore the use of innovative and flexible services in the Rural Area such as mobile healthcare services and services in Community Resilience Hubs.
11.2	Identify existing community facilities, clubs/community centers, or privately owned buildings that could serve as Community Resilience Hubs.

11.3	Establish new Community Resilience Hubs or upgrade existing buildings to be used as hubs. Collaborate with local organizations and partners (including BRHD) to prioritize locations by analyzing community health indicators and vulnerability to climate and environmental risks.
11.4	Connect rural businesses and organizations with grant opportunities for resilience upgrades (such as energy-efficiency or back-up generators) to create small-scale resilience hubs.
11.5	Collaborate with local partners to provide community resources and programs, information-sharing, emergency shelters and preparedness toolkits, food access, job training, and other programs at Community Resilience Hubs.
11.6	Champion and leverage grassroots initiatives driven by community members for environmental stewardship, community activities, resilience, or small business support.
11.7	Coordinate with transit partners (including Jaunt and CAT) to connect community members with healthcare facilities and health related services.
OBJECTIVE	CF 12.*Improve and expand the ability of individuals and households to obtain a healthy and affordable local food system to meet their dietary needs and maintain healthy and active lifestyles.*
ACTION	
12.1	Update the Zoning Ordinance to allow farmers markets, produce stands, urban agriculture, community gardens, and related opportunities in more locations.
12.2	Identify opportunities to allow and encourage community gardens in public parks, at schools, on publicly owned land, and as part of Community Resilience Hubs.
12.3	Collaborate with and support community partners, such as Loaves and Fishes, Blue Ridge Area Food bank, Cultivate Charlottesville, and the Blue Ridge Health District (BRHD), to increase affordable food access, using community health indicators to prioritize areas of high need.
12.4	Partner with community partners/organizations to increase the use of composting and share information on how to reduce food waste.
12.5	Continue to participate in the Virginia Department of Education's Virginia Farm to School program and explore more options for expanding public school student's access to affordable, local, healthy food options.

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AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

IMPLEMENTATION

The County has prepared the AC44 Comprehensive Plan update with expectations for a bright future. AC44's Goals, Objectives, and Actions provide the roadmap for realizing the community's shared 20-year vision and bringing Albemarle County's Mission, Vision, and Values to life. County programs and the activities of county residents and businesses all contribute to the AC44's success. With the successful implementation of AC44, county residents will continue to experience and enjoy the community's rural heritage, scenic beauty, and natural and historic resources, and live, work, and play in attractive and vibrant communities resulting from a strong economy and an excellent educational system.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

AC44 is implemented by private property owners and businesses through voluntary actions and regulations and by the County through the implementation of the Board of Supervisors' policies and budgets. Each topic chapter outlines strategies using various tools that are currently available to the County.

VOLUNTARY MEASURES

Community members play a key role in implementation by making conscious choices about where they live, which businesses they support, and how they manage their land. Everyday habits – such as recycling, conserving water, carpooling, and reducing energy use – affect the environment. Such habits are increasingly important as the community works together to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Supporting local businesses strengthens the county's economy, while placing rural land in conservation easements ensures its preservation for future generations.

Developers also contribute by following County policies, engaging in review processes, voluntarily offering proffers to address development impacts, and aligning development proposals with AC44's Goals. Additionally, non-profit organizations and agencies partner with the County to advance shared objectives, such as affordable housing initiatives, by combining funding and resources.



High-quality public education is an important aspect of an attractive and vibrant community. Photo: Woodbrook Elementary



Clean and abundant water is a natural resource that requires protection and conservation by the community.



Zoning Ordinance overlay protection areas include flood hazard areas and steep slopes.



Subdivision Ordinance regulations include requirements for parcel layout and street setbacks.

REGULATORY MEASURES

While voluntary efforts support AC44, some goals require regulatory measures. Many regulations are developed by the state and federal government, such as building codes and floodplain protections. Other regulations are adopted locally, such as the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Code; the Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide local regulations.

The Zoning Ordinance

Zoning regulations, first adopted in Albemarle County in 1969, help ensure land uses are properly located, that residential density aligns with infrastructure capacity, and that development protects public health, safety, and welfare. These rules govern land use and the overall site layout and design.

Overlay Districts further guide development. Current Overlay Districts include the Airport, Entrance Corridor, Form-Based Code, and Flood Hazard Overlay Districts. Historic and Mountain Protection Districts have been discussed in the past. With AC44 and the introduction of Activity Centers, a new overlay district is contemplated.

Over the past 40 or so years, the initial Zoning Ordinance has been modified without a structural update. Best planning practice includes updating the Zoning Ordinance to reflect Comprehensive Plan guidance. To implement this alignment, the County has initiated the Zoning Modernization project, to be completed after the adoption of AC44.

The Subdivision Ordinance

The Subdivision Ordinance defines development parameters and results in parcels for construction. Albemarle County adopted its first subdivision ordinance in 1949. Subdividing – splitting land into multiple parcels – is regulated to align development with the Comprehensive Plan. In Development Areas, streets and blocks are designed to support anticipated uses, while zoning dictates lot size. Subdivision regulations shape parcel layout, utility access, drainage, and sidewalks. In the County's Rural Area, regulations ensure property access, sewage disposal, adequate water supply, and stormwater management.

Water Protection Ordinance + Erosion & Sediment Control Regulations

The County complies with state regulations related to stormwater runoff and erosion and sediment control. Runoff control and stormwater management are intended to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and county water resources. The Environmental Stewardship Chapter provides more information on water protection.

CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF COUNTY POLICIES

Consistent application of County policies over time is important to the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan. The AC44's policies serve to guide the Board of Supervisors' decision-making while reinforcing messaging to residents and developers that the vision for the County is an expected reality rather than a lofty thought. Consistent application of County policies is critical to achieving the County's Vision; these policy elements are highlighted below.

Infrastructure & Public Service Delivery: Development Areas

The County's Growth Management Policy includes a commitment to fund and provide public infrastructure and services such as public water, sewers, and streets in the Development Areas. This commitment also extends to service delivery – the provision of fire rescue, police protection, school bus service, and other governmental services and functions. Public Infrastructure and services are delivered most efficiently within the denser Development Areas.

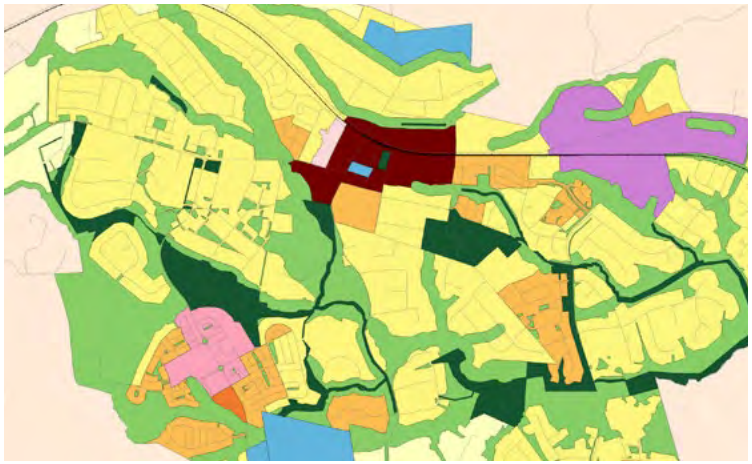
While the provision of public services and infrastructure will continue to vary between the geographically larger Rural Area and the Development Areas, AC44 also includes many recommendations related to providing more equitable services in the Rural Area. This includes partnerships with community organizations and public agencies such as the Blue Ridge Health District. The focus on services in the Rural Area is essential health and safety services, such as fire rescue and police protection. Throughout the AC44 engagement process, there was significant community interest in building on existing successful rural community organizations, businesses, and community centers such as the Yancey Community Center.



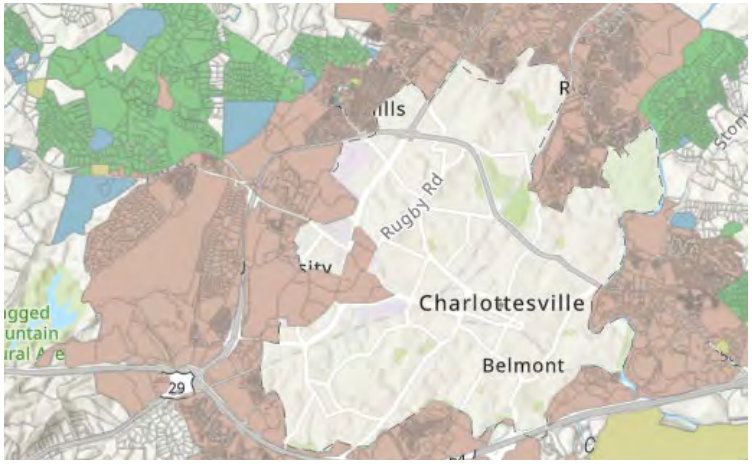
The County's Growth Management Policy guides the provision of public water and sewer service.



Stormwater management regulations provide requirements to treat runoff areas and capture sedimentation. Shown: Stormwater management facility in Crozet.



Future land use map, Crozet area.



Public water and sewer jurisdictional areas primarily correspond with the boundaries of the Development Areas.

Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) Jurisdictional Area

One of the primary growth management tools in Albemarle County is the provision of public water and sewer services. The County remains committed to supplying public water and sewer services in the Development Areas while restricting the expansion of those services beyond the boundaries of the Development Areas. Delineation and application of this service area, the 'jurisdictional area' boundaries are significant in directing growth to the Development Areas. Strict adherence to public water and sewer extension policies strengthens Comprehensive Plan implementation through the efficient use of infrastructure and optimal land use patterns. The Community Facilities & Infrastructure Chapter provides more information.

LEGISLATIVE DECISIONS

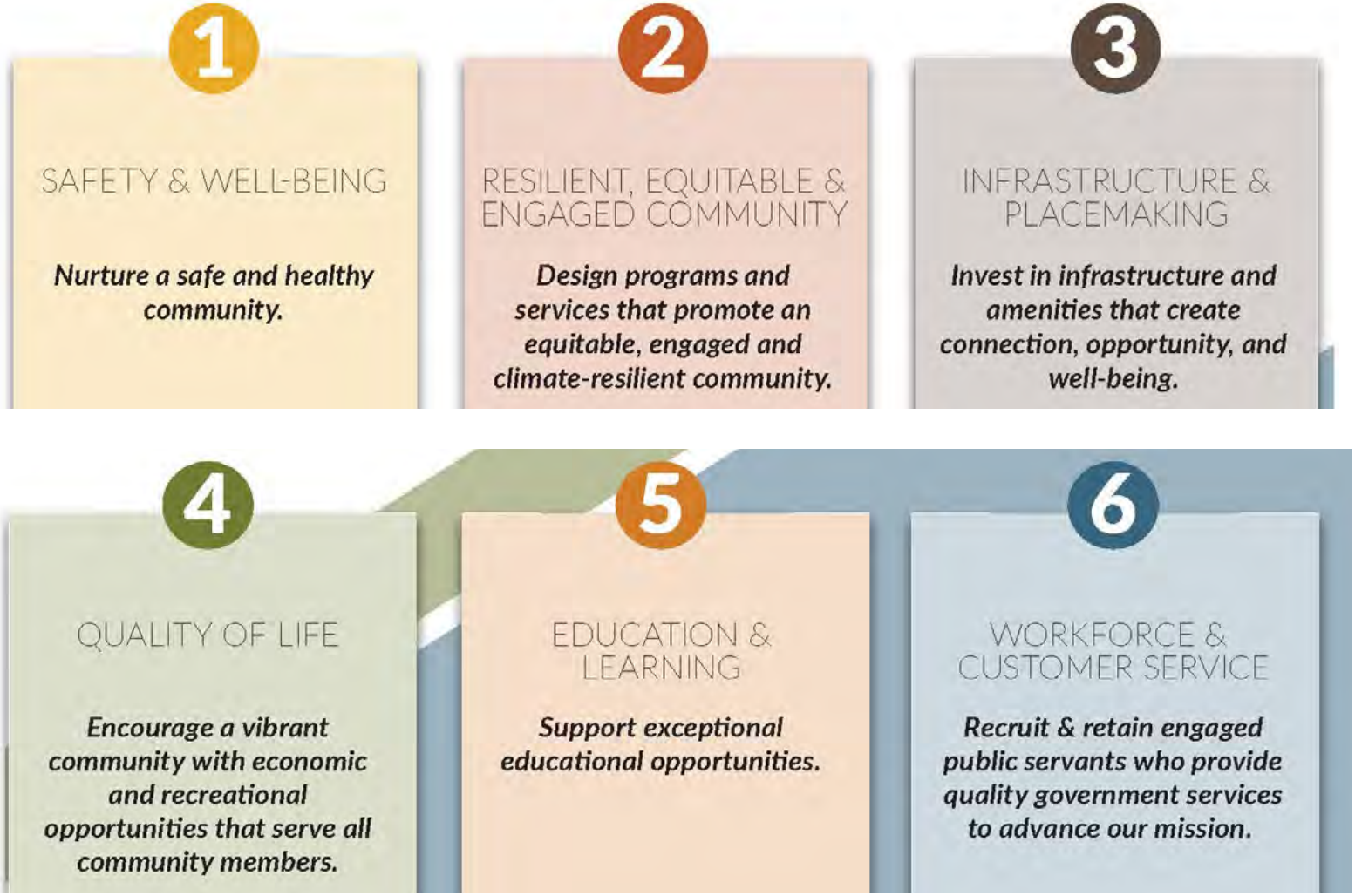
Legislative decisions, such as rezonings and special use permit approvals, are guided by AC44, including the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), and are to be consistent with the County plans included in AC44's appendices. These decisions and the adoption of new regulations such as the modified Zoning Ordinance are effective tools for implementing AC44. A new Development Areas Report will provide an at-a-glance look at development using a numerical scoring system to measure how submitted proposals meet AC44's Goals (see Part II – the Growth Management Policy). Vetting project applications that are consistent with AC44 sends a strong message to encourage potential applications in keeping with the Board of Supervisor's policies.

PARTNERSHIPS

The County's work is collaborative and supported by an array of partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations and agencies addressing areas of mutual interest. The County's partners include the City of Charlottesville, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, the Blue Ridge Health District, and the University of Virginia.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE COUNTY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Periodically, the Board of Supervisors revises the County's Strategic Plan's Goals and Objectives to align with changing County priorities. The Strategic Plan encompasses a five-year timeframe and is evaluated annually during the budgeting process. Using the Actions in the Strategic Plan and AC44 as a guide, County staff can develop detailed proposals for projects, initiatives, and work plans to be included within the annual budget and will deliver on the Goals and Objectives in the Strategic Plan and AC44. The Board's current plan runs through fiscal year 2028 and directs work on the six goals listed below.



The County's Strategic Plan goals align with AC44 priorities.

FUNDING

Many County programs require funding – for staff, for construction, and for maintenance. Revenues for County programs come from property taxes, other local taxes, permits and fees, fines, and charges for services as well as funding from the state and federal government. The County's annual budget is developed by staff and presented by the County Executive and then evaluated, revised, and approved by the Board of Supervisors as informed by public hearings with the community. It provides information on expenditures for providing and maintaining services needed to run County programs. With diminishing financial support from the state and federal governments, more local revenue is needed to retain the high level of service desired by county residents.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Through the CIP, the County determines the scheduling and prioritization of large-scale infrastructure construction and replacement projects. The first CIP was adopted in 1978. The CIP ties directly back to the Comprehensive Plan: AC44 provides the basis for CIP requests and review criteria for capital expenditures. This program is critical to the success of implementing AC44. A capital project typically requires a minimum expenditure of $20,000 and has a minimum useful life of 10 years. County departments and affiliated agencies initiate their capital project requests, which span a five-year period of the CIP. The CIP is guided by strategic and financial planning processes, including AC44, which in turn informs the Board of Supervisors' adopted Strategic Plan's Goals and Objectives.

State & Federal Funds

Although state and federal financial support for localities has declined over recent years, both still provide funding opportunities. Government agencies assist the County's work related to AC44's Goals through various grant programs. For example, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds programs for low-income households to access housing, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation supports stream restoration and urban parks, and VDOT funds transportation improvements. Continued reliance on these grants is crucial, though funding is expected to vary over time.



The CIP directs funding for capital expenditures, including public facilities such as libraries and schools.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

AC44 recommends an extensive and interrelated series of Actions to achieve the County's Vision. Central to this effort are the 'Big Moves' — strategic groupings of key initiatives organized by common themes and spanning multiple policy areas while involving collaboration across multiple County departments and external partners. The Big Moves build on existing policies, ongoing initiatives, and insights gathered through community engagement during the AC44 process. Using the Big Moves for high-level prioritization, the County can strategically focus on Actions that offer the greatest potential to advance AC44's Goals.

To determine the priority of actions within each Big Move, several factors should be considered: the sequence of implementation, projected timelines, available funding, and alignment with the Goals and Objectives of the County's Strategic Plan. Final prioritization will occur after the adoption of AC44, in coordination with the CIP, annual budgeting, Strategic Plan updates, and departmental work plans. This integrated approach ensures that the County can effectively align its operations, investments, and delivery of essential services.

AC44 BIG MOVES:

1. **Align regulations to support AC44 implementation.**
2. **Increase affordable housing access and options.**
3. **Invest resources in compact and connected Development Areas with an emphasis on Activity Centers.**
4. **Drive innovation and expand economic opportunity.**
5. **Support development of agriculture and forestry uses in the Rural Area while preserving rural character and conserving environmentally sensitive resources.**
6. **Mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change.**
7. **Strengthen social connection and community well-being.**



AC44's Guiding Principles



The County's Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations guide patterns of growth.



1. Align regulations to support AC44 implementation.

Description: The County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Code, and other development-related policies should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect AC44's Goals, support desired patterns of growth, and respond to evolving needs. Outdated, inconsistent, or overly complex regulations can create barriers to investment, lead to unpredictable outcomes, and undermine public confidence in the planning process. Modernizing these regulations will help align standards with current practices, clarify procedures, and improve coordination across departments.

Updates should ensure that regulations meet the needs and Goals defined in AC44, while removing unnecessary complexity, and are easy to understand and use – for County staff, applicants, decision-makers, and the broader community. These efforts include creating more user-friendly documents, consolidating and reorganizing content for better navigation, and incorporating visual aids and digital tools where appropriate. A more transparent and accessible regulatory framework will reduce delays, increase consistency in decision-making, and make it easier for all participants to engage in the development process.

Related Guiding Principle: **Welcoming and Equitable**

Related Chapters: RALU, DALU, ES, PR, TE, CFI, HSG, TRANSP

Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks & Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities & Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRANSP - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources

2. Increase affordable housing access and options.

Description: Ensure that people of all incomes, ages, and household types can find safe, stable, and affordable housing in the County by increasing the supply of diverse housing choices and preserving existing affordable homes. As housing costs rise and the region grows, it is critical to protect long-term affordability, prevent displacement, and meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households, essential workers, seniors, and others with limited housing choices.

This priority calls for a multi-pronged approach that includes updating zoning and land use regulations to allow a broader range of housing types – such as duplexes, small-scale multi-family, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units – and enabling greater density in locations with access to jobs, transit, schools, and services. Streamlining development review, offering incentives for affordable housing, and removing regulatory barriers are essential to accelerating the production of both income-restricted and naturally occurring affordable units.

Equally important is preserving the existing stock of affordable housing, which often serves as the most cost-effective and immediate way to maintain housing access. This includes identifying at-risk properties, supporting rehabilitation and weatherization programs, promoting tools such as community land trusts and housing trust funds, and working with nonprofit and mission-driven developers to acquire and protect affordable units. Anti-displacement strategies and tenant protections should be used to help residents stay in their homes and neighborhoods.

By combining preservation, production, and policy reform, the County can create a more inclusive and sustainable housing system that supports long-term community stability, economic opportunity, and quality of life for all residents.

Related Guiding Principle: **Welcoming and Equitable**

Related Chapters: TE, HOU, TRANSP



Offering a variety of housing types and price points is important for housing affordability and supply.



Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks & Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities & Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRANSP - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources



Activity centers offer compact and walkable areas that support a variety of uses.



3. Invest resources in compact and connected Development Areas with an emphasis on Activity Centers.

Description: Encourage smart, fair, and long-lasting growth by focusing on new public and private investments to create urban places that are compact, walkable, and inviting. These places also take advantage of the existing infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and public services and allow for redevelopment of older commercial areas that are typically over-parked. They support a variety of housing types and increase access to nearby jobs. With daily needs located closer together, people can walk, bike, or take shorter car trips, saving time and reducing traffic. This approach uses resources wisely, protects the environment, and improves residents' overall quality of life by limiting inefficient growth.

Related Guiding Principle: **Connected and Accessible**

Related Chapters: DALU, PR, TRANSP

Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks & Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities & Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRANSP - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources

4. Drive innovation and expand economic opportunity.

Description: Providing the best environment for diverse economic activity requires the implementation of long-term and short-term strategies. With its 20-year vision, AC44 provides a strong foundation for long-term economic vibrancy. The County's Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) has a shorter time horizon of five years. Together, AC44 and the EDSP complement each other and work together to expand economic opportunities. AC44 can maximize the benefits of public participation in the local economy by integrating and advancing the EDSP alongside other County priorities.

The importance of AC44's long-term role in economic diversity starts with establishing a strong land use foundation. Land use policies such as zoning regulations, infrastructure planning, and development strategies directly influence the types of businesses, industries, and housing that can exist in each area. When land is used in a way that supports mixed-use development, accessible transportation, and varied housing options, it fosters a broader range of economic activities and employment opportunities. By thoughtfully managing land use, communities can encourage innovation, attract diverse industries, and build more equitable and adaptable local economies. The EDSP recognizes the value of these long-term efforts and includes its own shorter-term goals and strategies related to regulatory review, support for affordable housing, and placemaking.

Access to diverse economic opportunities is an essential component to a high quality of life. Together, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and EDSP ensures both greater opportunity and expanded access to the local economy.

Related Guiding Principle: **Thriving and Prosperous**

Related Chapters: TE



Employment Districts provide spaces for businesses to operate. Shown: North Fork Research Park.



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Agricultural areas produce food and contribute to the county's rural character.



5. Support development of agriculture and forestry uses in the Rural Area while preserving rural character and conserving environmentally sensitive resources.

Description: The County is dedicated to supporting agriculture and forestry as key land uses in the Rural Area in alignment with the Growth Management Policy. These working lands are essential not only for producing food, but also for preserving the county's rural character, cultural heritage, and environmental health.

This focus on developing the county's agricultural, recreational, and forestal uses may mean that some portions of the Rural Area will experience more intensive non-residential land uses and associated increased impacts, such as traffic. In planning for these changes, it is critical to balance this development with the need to protect the rural character of the Rural Areas. Moreover, the priority focus is protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, forests, wildlife corridors, and watersheds.

Related Guiding Principle: **Green and Resilient**

Related Chapters: RALU, TE

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6. Mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Description: The County has an opportunity to protect public health, safety, and quality of life by proactively preparing for the impacts of climate change and reducing local greenhouse gas emissions. Through proactive planning, community-wide action, and long-term investment, the region will strengthen its ability to withstand climate-related shocks while contributing to a sustainable future. More frequent heatwaves and wildfires, stronger storms, and drought and flooding events demand that the County adapt critical infrastructure and emergency systems to safeguard lives, especially those most at risk. Upfront investments in resilience and energy efficiency reduce future costs related to disaster recovery, infrastructure failure, and health care impacts from pollution and heat. Additionally, making these investments before a disaster is generally more cost effective and helps the community bounce back quicker. Healthy natural systems such as wetlands, forests, and urban tree canopies are good investments because they absorb carbon, manage stormwater, and reduce urban heat, offering low-cost, high-impact climate protection. This priority embraces a dual mission: to mitigate the drivers of climate change by reducing emissions and resource use, while also preparing for its unavoidable impacts through informed land use, infrastructure upgrades, and equitable community investment.

Related Guiding Principle: **Green and Resilient**

Related Chapters: DALU, ES, CFI



Wetland and forests aid climate mitigation by absorbing carbon and reducing local heat impacts.



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Parks and trails provide outdoor spaces for gathering and social interaction.



7. Strengthen social connection and community well-being.

Description: As more people experience social isolation, the County has an opportunity to invest in social connection. Fostering genuine connection among community members is fundamental to building a resilient, inclusive, and thriving community. Social connection is a deliberate outcome embedded in the County's land use, transportation, and development strategies. AC44 prioritizes environments where residents can come together, share experiences, and build a sense of belonging. By investing in public parks, trails, Activity Centers, resilience hubs, schools, and cultural facilities, the County can provide inclusive spaces that support social engagement across generations, backgrounds, and interests. By prioritizing multimodal transportation options, the County can get more people to these spaces. This priority aims to reduce social isolation, uplift local identity, and empower people to co-create the community they envision.

Related Guiding Principle: **Welcoming and Equitable**

Related Chapters: DALU, RALU, ES, PR, CFI, HSG, TRANSP

Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks & Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities & Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRA - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources

TRACKING & REPORTING

Ongoing evaluation and monitoring are central to its AC44's successful implementation. Metrics are data that provide insight into county-wide trends and patterns. These metrics provide a broader view of how conditions in the community are trending over time. Metrics may or may not be tied to specific programs, departments, or Big Moves. They can reflect changes in housing affordability, transportation access, environmental quality, economic vitality, and equity. By tracking these metrics, the Board of Supervisors can assess whether policies and investments are moving the community in the desired direction and modify future planning decisions as needed.

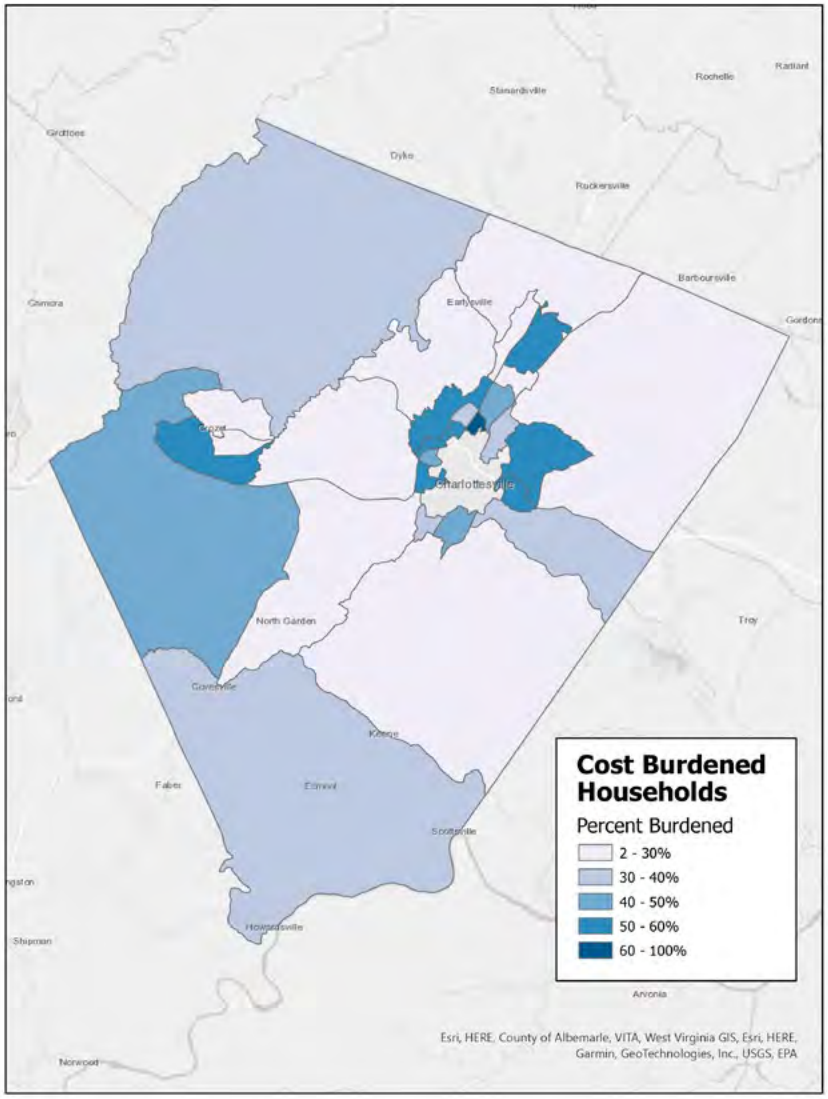
Examples of metrics to be monitored include:

- Population growth
- Development capacity
- Number of affordable housing units (preserved and new)
- Number of cost-burdened households
- Number of fatal or severe injury crashes
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Greenhouse gas emissions

An Annual Report with updated metrics will be provided to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission for review. In addition to reporting trends and patterns, the report will include progress updates on AC44 Actions.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

In addition to a County-initiated review of the Comprehensive Plan, including the five-year review called for by the Code of Virginia, Comprehensive Plan Amendments are currently initiated by County staff or the Board of Supervisors. To offer options to property owners, the County may look at revising the process to include property owner-initiated amendments to AC44.



Tracking cost-burdened households provides a measurement for quality of life, community wellbeing, and implementation of AC44 priorities (2022 data shown).