Location Prioritization Status for Activity Center Planning

In spring 2026, the Long-Range Planning Team conducted background research for all major Activity Center clusters across the Development Areas, drawing on existing master plans, recent rezoning activity, area VDOT projects, existing development, property ownership patterns, GIS analysis, online planning resources, and internal discussions.

This effort identified six candidate locations for Activity Center planning. From north to south, they are:

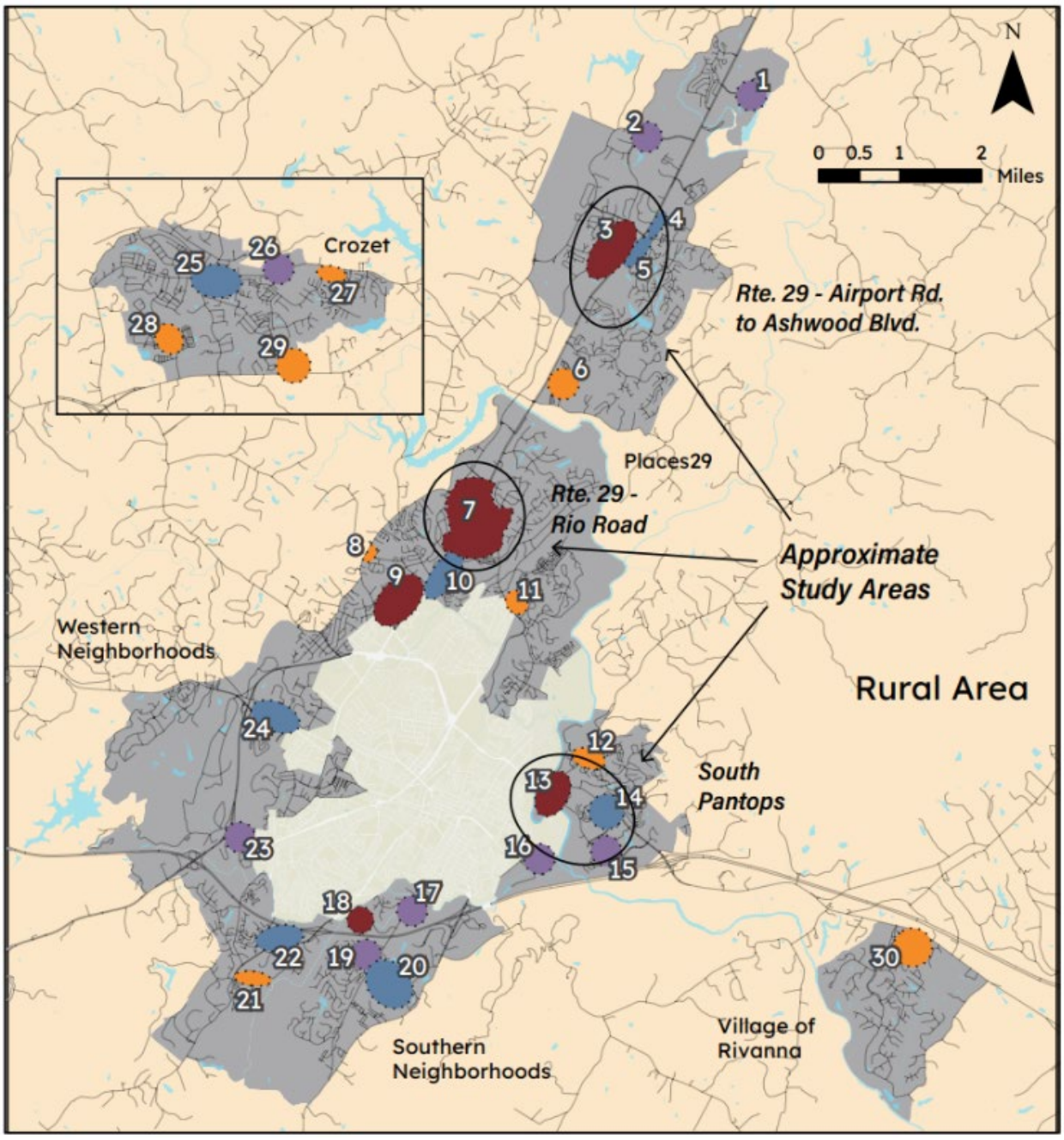
- The U.S. Route 29 area – Airport Road area north to the county line
- The U.S. Route 29 area – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard
- The U.S. Route 29 – Rio Road area
- The U.S. Route 29 area – from Dominion Drive to Hydraulic Road
- South Pantops
- The Southern Neighborhoods

These six locations were evaluated using a three-part scoring framework, with high rankings indicating that an area offers opportunities for Activity Center planning to generate significant community benefits.

Locations not carried forward into the scoring analysis included the Village of Rivanna, Fontaine Research Park and county areas along Ivy Road, and Crozet. Research indicated that these areas were recently master planned or lacking in development or redevelopment potential and meaningful County leverage points to make an Activity Center Plan productive at this time.

The analysis identified three areas with similar, high-ranking scores, qualifying each as priority candidates for Albemarle's first Activity Center Plan:

- The U.S. Route 29 area – Airport Road area south to Ashwood Boulevard
- The Route 29 – Rio Road area
- South Pantops



General locations shown for the three priority study areas. Study area boundaries will be refined further during the Activity Center planning process.

The U.S. Route 29 Area (Airport Road Area South to Ashwood Boulevard)

This area spans the Route 29 corridor between areas just north of Airport Road and Ashwood Boulevard to the south, anchored by Hollymead Town Center, Charlottesville Albemarle Airport, and the Berkmar Drive corridor to the west and commercial areas to the east. It features significant areas of planned residential development, a County-owned parcel with trail easement potential, undeveloped land in the Rural Area between Route 29 and Berkmar Drive, and an extension to Berkmar Drive that could improve north-south connectivity.

With the Places29 Master Plan more than a decade old, strong private-sector interest from multiple landowners, and major nearby investments underway at North Pointe, North Fork, and Rivanna Futures, the area could be ripe for a fresh planning effort to address land use, multimodal connectivity, affordable housing, and Development Area expansion questions in a coordinated way. The County could consider expanding services and facilities in the area (e.g., a recycling facility, County offices, healthcare facilities, fire and rescue facilities) to serve as a northern hub for new residents and businesses in the area. Additionally, the County could evaluate the potential use of resources from the County's Affordable Housing Investment Fund for a County-led affordable housing effort. Working in this area would not require coordinating with other area localities, which could help speed up the project's timeline.

The major constraints facing an Activity Center planning effort in the area include staying ahead of significant development pressures and growth as well as current market conditions that favor residential projects ahead of commercial, office, and mixed-use projects, which are desired for employment generating uses and tax-base diversification.

The Route 29 – Rio Road Area

This long-underperforming commercial corridor (aging buildings, vast surface parking, declining retail) includes the Albemarle Square Shopping Center, the Fashion Square Mall area, and the Arden II property. The 2018 Rio29 Small Area Plan focused on turning the Route 29-Rio Road intersection into a walkable, mixed-use urban center. It promotes dense, multi-story development, transit, and pedestrian amenities, with updated form-based codes under review in 2026 to guide future design.

Recent development (Home Depot), active development proposals (a Sheetz gas station), areas with redevelopment potential (the Putt-putt property, aging housing such as Mallside Apartments), County leadership support, and strong multimodal potential make this an area where an Activity Center Plan could help the County address multiple priorities. The County could also take the lead in addressing the need for public services and park/recreation/open space facilities in the area, building on the Hillsdale Pocket Park, and serving as a catalyst for renewed private-sector interest.

Constraints facing an Activity Center planning effort in the area include high through-traffic volumes, limited transit resources, uncertain property owner interest/timelines for redevelopment of Albemarle Square, high current and projected future demand for County services (EMS calls, Premier Circle transitional housing, high resident turnover in temporary

housing), and the potential for city-county coordination that could result in a longer project timeline without further relationship building.

South Pantops

This fast-growing, destination-rich corridor along Route 250 east of the Rivanna River includes the underutilized Pantops Shopping Center, major nearby institutional anchors (Sentara/Martha Jefferson Hospital, Peter Jefferson Place), significant undeveloped landholdings (Worrell Development and Sentara parcels flanking South Pantops Drive and State Farm Boulevard), possibilities to coordinate with the City around Free Bridge, and extensive natural and recreational resources along the Rivanna River, including the new Free Bridge Lane pedestrian amenity.

It also poses several challenges: Free Bridge remains a regional traffic bottleneck, making Route 250 difficult and unsafe to cross on foot or bike, State Farm is vacating 41,000 square feet of office space with leases expiring in 2028, and over 95% of residents commute by car. An Activity Center Plan here would focus on the redevelopment and reorientation of Pantops Shopping Center so that it relates to the Rivanna River as well as a focus on the South Pantops Drive-State Farm Boulevard corridor, supporting mixed-use redevelopment, multimodal improvements including a pedestrian/bike bridge across Route 250, city-county coordination around the Rivanna River, considering a new bridge across the Rivanna River, and catalytic engagement with major property owners.

If the City and major property owners are interested in engaging over the longer term, it may work well to designate this Activity Center planning effort for the future and spend the intervening time laying the groundwork for the effort with project partners alongside Activity Center planning efforts for one of the other two areas discussed above.