



**Planning Commission  
County of Louisa  
Thursday, February 12, 2026  
Louisa County Public Meeting Room  
5:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Forestry Presentation - David Stone

**II. DISCUSSION**

1. Review Growth Management Tools / Draft Ordinance Amendments

**III. OTHER**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

**BY ORDER OF:  
JOHN DISOSWAY, CHAIRMAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
LOUISA COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

# Forestry in Louisa: Change in Population Density

Presented by David Stone, Forester Specialist (retired), Virginia Department of Forestry

Certified Forester, Society of American Foresters

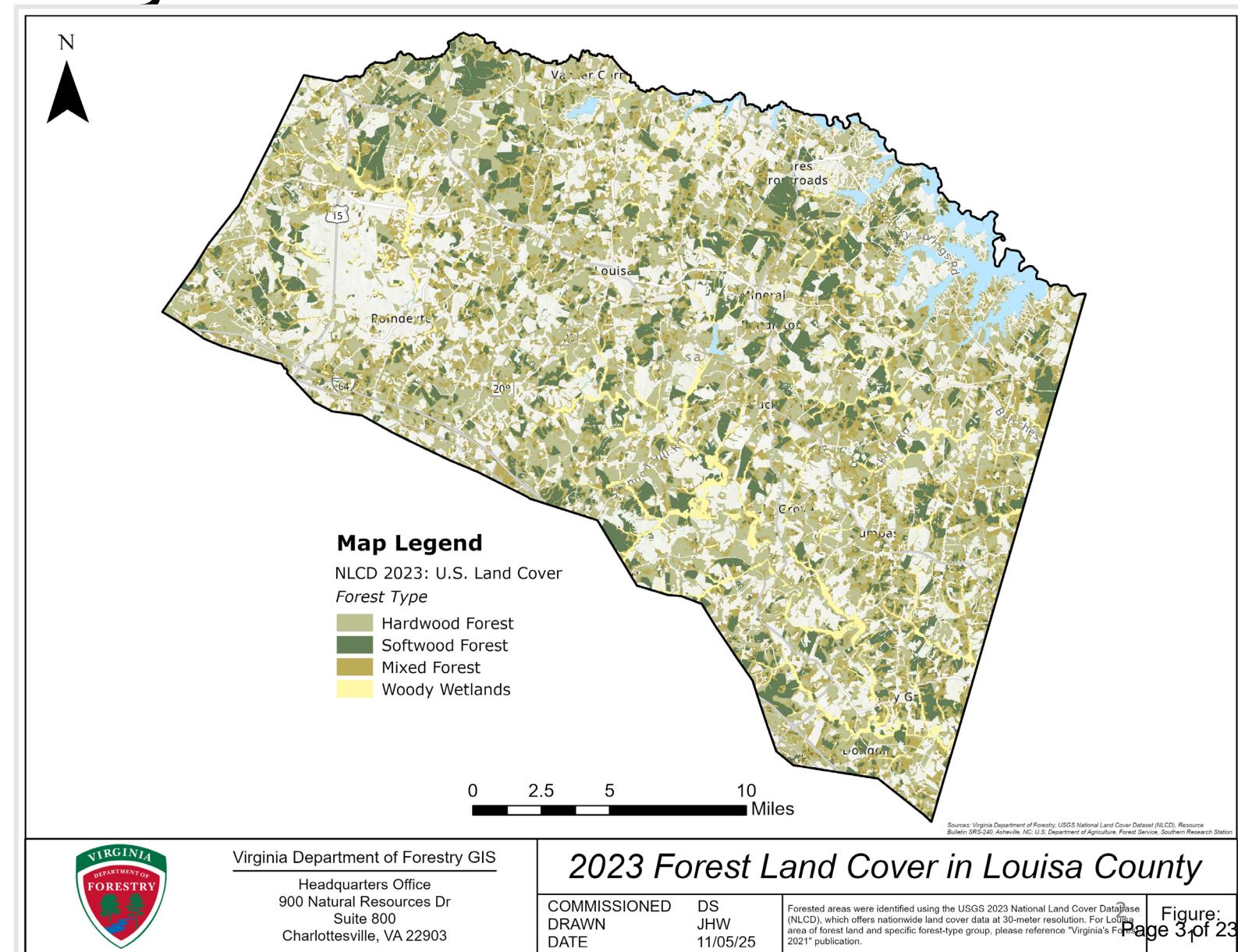
Certified Arborist, International Society of Arboriculture

January 2026

# Louisa County Forest Cover

## Significance of Forests:

- Water Quality and
- Ground Water Recharge
- Air Quality (CO<sub>2</sub> to O<sub>2</sub>)
- Quality of Life, Scenic Vistas (Rural Character)
- Landowner Income and Indirect Economic Impacts
- Less per \$ Country Services for Each \$ Paid in Taxes
- Recreation
- Wildlife



# Louisa County Forest Economic Information

- Direct Economic impact: **\$66,481,955**
  - Primary/secondary manufacturing and production
- Indirect economic impact: **\$20,778,575**
  - Services to Industry, i.e., trucking, supplies, maintenance, construction, etc.
- Induced economic impact: **\$13,823,898**
  - Employee spending
- **Total Economic Impact: \$101,084,428**

Base Year 1999

# Change in Percent of Louisa County Forest Lands Over 29 Years

Forests covered 72% of Louisa County's land in 1992  
(Forest Statistics for Virginia 1992, USDA, Forest Service)

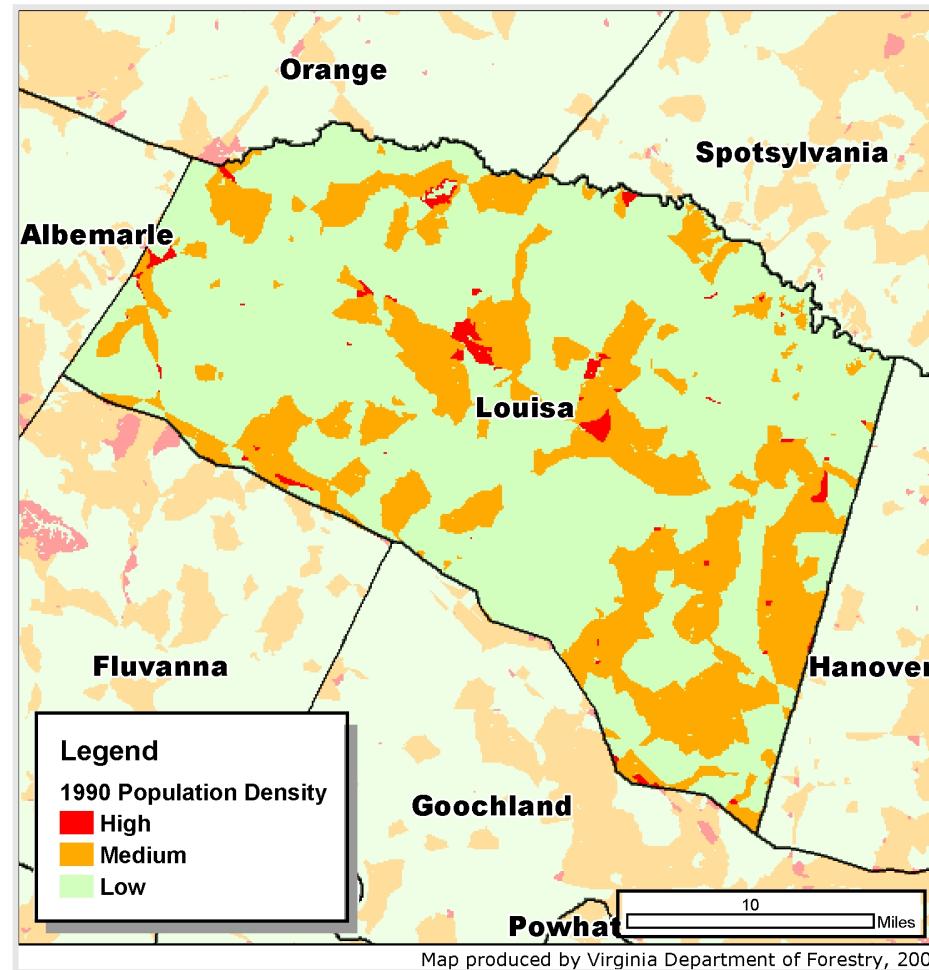
In 2021, forested land accounted for 62% of Louisa County  
Forests  
(Virginia's Forests, 2021, USDA, Forest Service)

Almost all of Louisa's Forest Land is owned by private citizens.

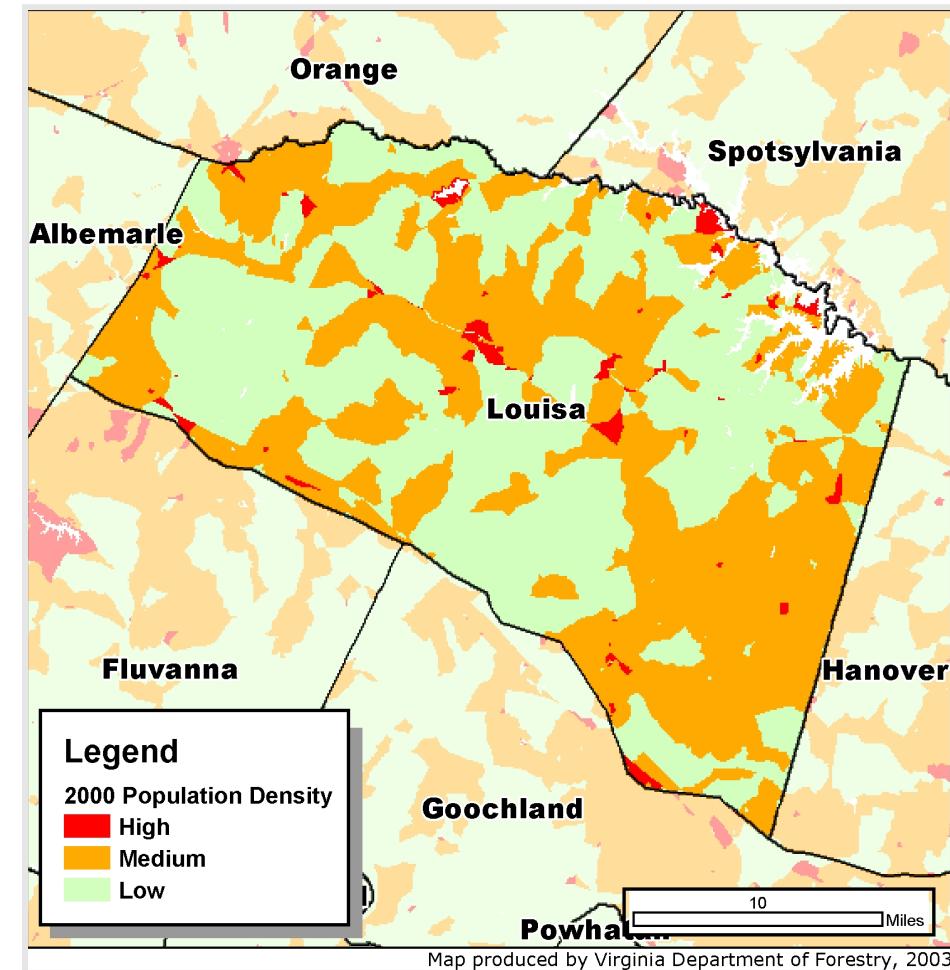
# Change in Population Density



## 1990 Census



## 2000 Census

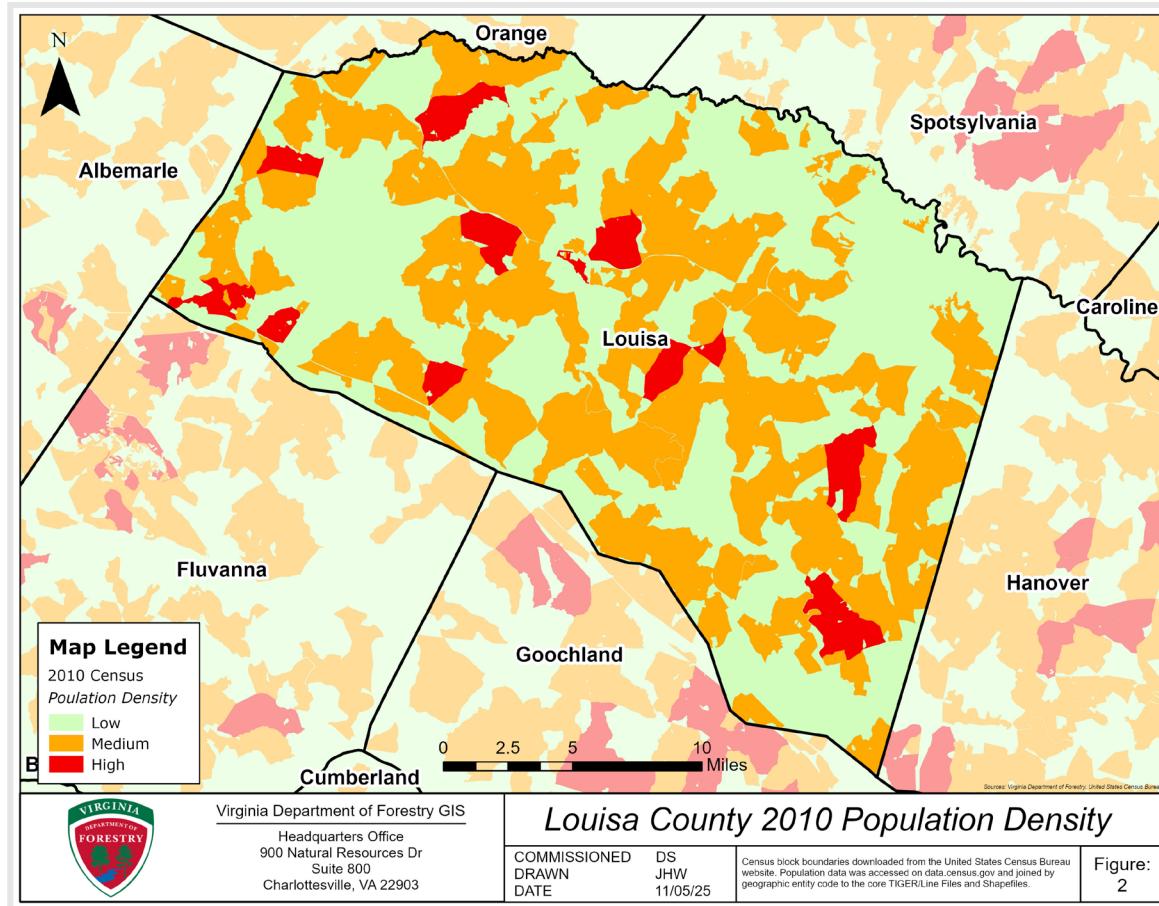




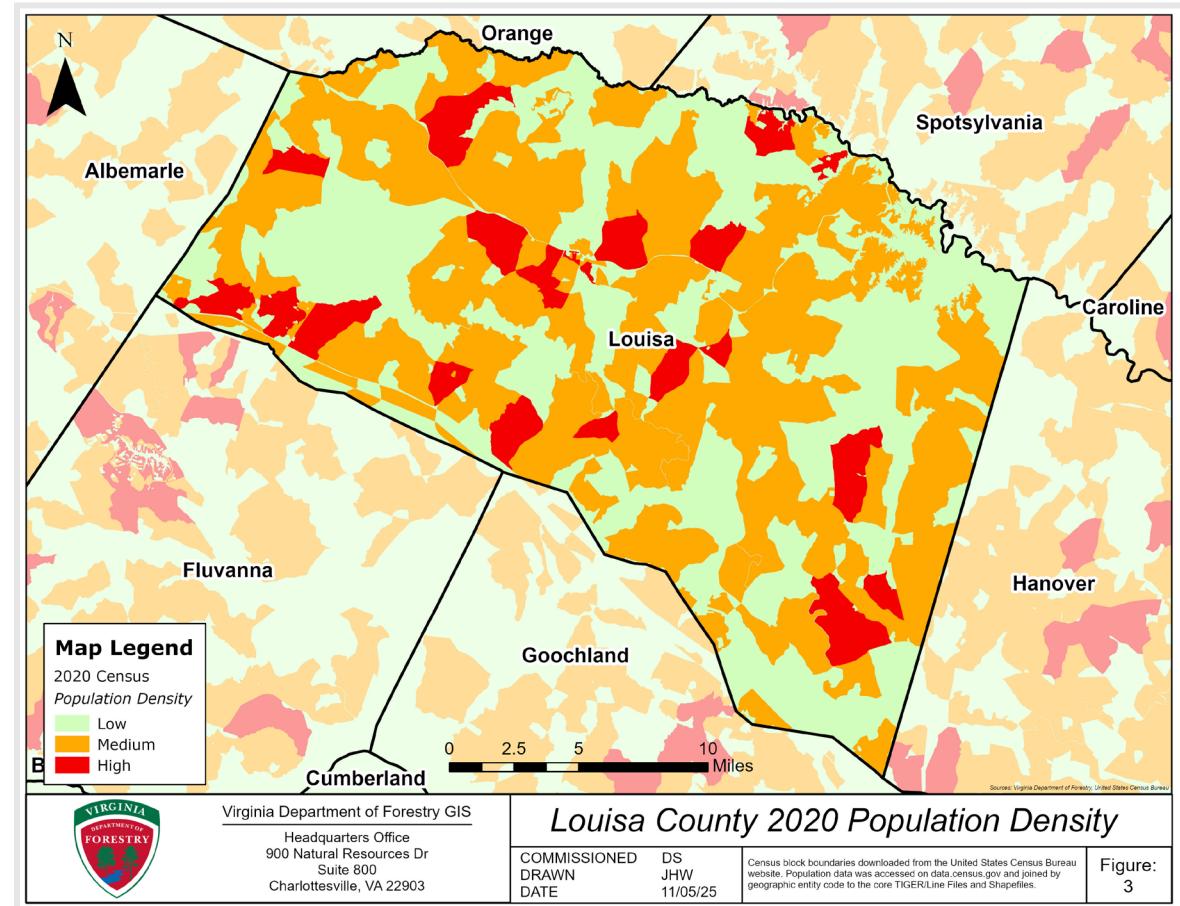
# Change in Population Density

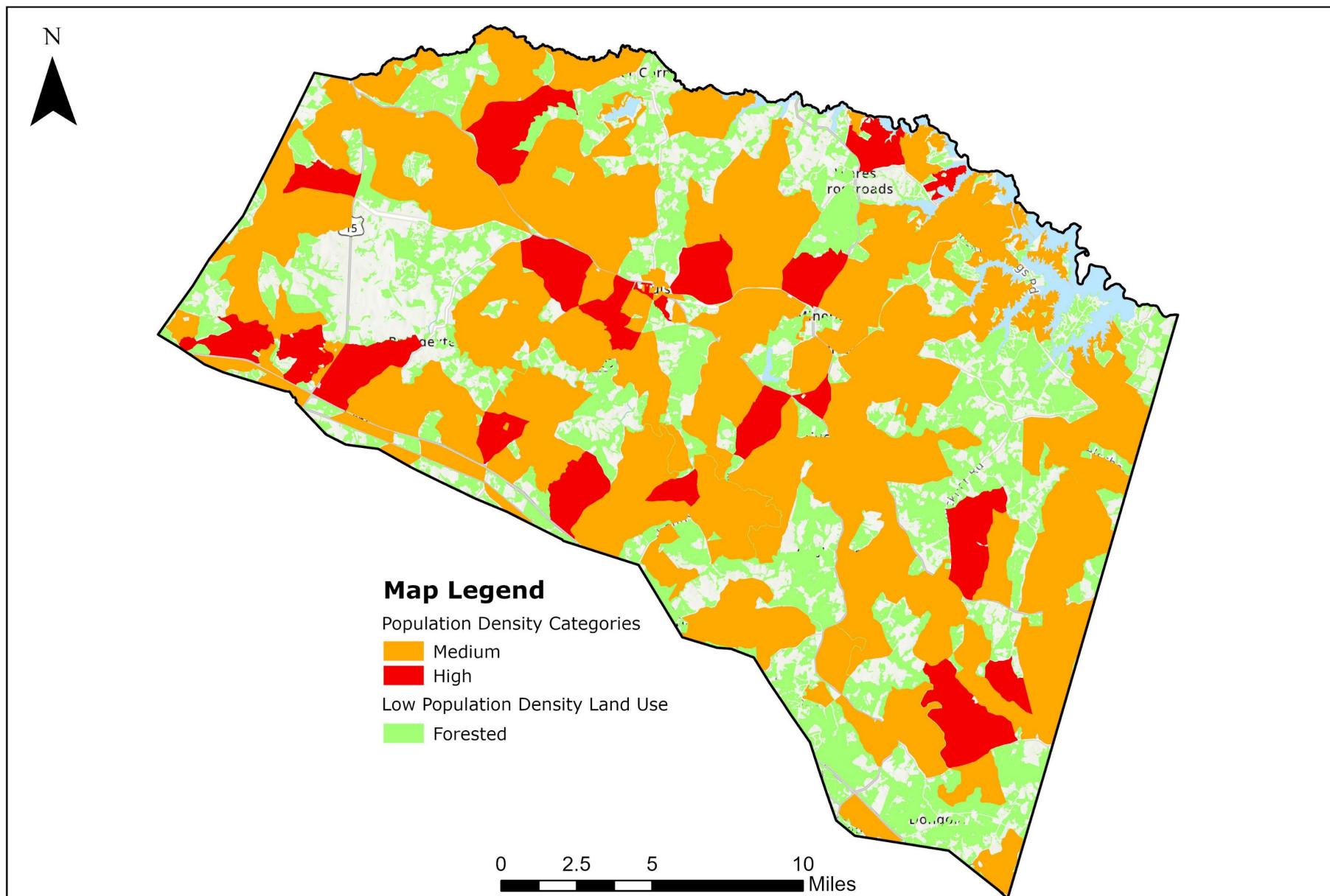


## 2010 Census



## 2020 Census





Virginia Department of Forestry GIS  
 Headquarters Office  
 900 Natural Resources Dr  
 Suite 800  
 Charlottesville, VA 22903

## 2020 Population Density & Forest Lands

COMMISSIONED DRAWN DATE	DS JHW 11/05/25	Census block boundaries downloaded from the United States Census Bureau website. Population data was accessed on data.census.gov and joined by geographic entity code to the core TIGER/Line Files and Shapefiles. Forested areas were identified using the USGS 2023 National Land Cover Database (NLCD), which offers nationwide land cover data at 30-meter resolution.	Figure: 4
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# Some Forestland Conservation Strategies

- Agricultural/Forestal Districts
- Land Use Taxation
- Conservation Easement Programs
- Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs)



**COUNTY OF LOUISA**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** *Fax (540) 967-3486*  
*www.louisacounty.gov*

**STAFF MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Community Development Staff  
**DATE:** February 3, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Residential Growth Management Ordinance (ORD) – Policy Context and Rationale for Ordinance Revisions Outside Designated Growth Areas

**I. Purpose of This Memorandum**

The purpose of this memorandum is to explain the policy context, data foundation, and planning rationale underlying the proposed Residential Growth Management Ordinance (ORD) revisions currently under review. The ordinance amendments are intended to slow the pace of residential growth outside designated Growth Areas, align growth patterns with documented infrastructure capacity, and preserve the rural character of the County, consistent with resident expectations identified through the Comprehensive Plan public engagement process.

**II. Background and Why This Discussion Is Occurring Now**

**A. Existing Growth Pressures and Infrastructure Impacts**

Over the past decade, the County has experienced sustained residential growth, placing increasing pressure on public facilities and services. Documented impacts include:

- **School capacity constraints**, including the use of trailers at multiple schools, recent additions to both an elementary and middle school, and the anticipated need for additional elementary school expansions or a new elementary school.
- **Public safety service demands**, including increased Fire & EMS and Sheriff call volumes and expanded service areas.
- **Animal shelter capacity challenges** associated with population growth.
- **Solid waste and recycling impacts**, including the need to amend landfill permits to increase daily waste handling capacity from approximately 75 tons per day to 200 tons per day based on recent growth and usage trends.

These impacts reflect operational pressures that are occurring in advance of, or independent from, major capital expansion decisions.

**B. Existing Zoning Already Allows Significant Additional Growth**

Recent parcel-level analysis demonstrates that a substantial amount of residential growth is already embedded within existing zoning regulations:

- Approximately 9,347 parcels countywide are currently eligible for residential development by right without any new divisions or rezonings.
- Nearly 73 percent of remaining residential capacity is located outside designated Growth Areas.
- A-1 and A-2 rural zoning districts account for the majority of remaining buildable parcels, with over 70 percent of A-1/A-2 parcels without dwellings located outside Growth Areas.

This analysis indicates that future residential growth is not hypothetical or speculative, but rather already entitled under current zoning.

### **C. Parcel Creation as a Leading Indicator of Growth**

Staff analysis further indicates that parcel creation, rather than building permit activity alone, is a leading indicator of long-term residential growth. Once parcels are created, residential development typically follows over time, even if construction occurs years later. Importantly:

- Parcel creation establishes permanent future service obligations.
- Parcel creation often occurs years before facilities are expanded or service staffing is increased.
- Existing regulations allow certain land divisions and access arrangements to occur outside comprehensive subdivision review, limiting the County's ability to assess cumulative impacts at the point when growth patterns are established.

As a result, growth-related impacts may be established well before building permits are issued.

### **D. Fiscal Sustainability Considerations**

Preliminary operational cost modeling indicates that:

- The average annual public service cost per dwelling is approximately \$4,762.85.
- The average annual tax revenue per dwelling is approximately \$3,906.57.
- This results in an estimated annual operating gap of \$856.28 per dwelling.

If existing residential capacity were fully built out under current zoning, the County could experience a structural operating deficit approaching \$8 million annually, exclusive of capital costs associated with constructing new schools, fire stations, or other facilities.

When growth occurs in patterns that cost more to serve than they generate in revenue, it creates ongoing pressure on the County's budget. Over time, this can make it more difficult to reduce taxes, maintain stable tax rates, or invest in improvements that enhance the quality of services residents rely on. Instead, more resources must be directed toward maintaining existing service levels as demand increases.

These findings highlight the importance of evaluating how future growth patterns, particularly in rural areas, affect long-term fiscal sustainability and the County's ability to provide high-quality services in a financially responsible manner.

### **III. Relationship to Comprehensive Plan and Community Expectations**

Results from the Comprehensive Plan public survey process indicate that residents place a high priority on:

- Preserving the County's rural character -70%
- Maintaining farms and forestlands – 91%
- Shift development away from rural land – 68%
- Concentrating growth in designated Growth Areas where infrastructure is planned – 77%

The ordinance revisions under consideration are intended to better align zoning and subdivision regulations with these adopted planning goals, particularly outside Growth Areas.

### **IV. Policy Framework for the ORD Revisions**

The Residential Growth Management Ordinance revisions are guided by the following principles:

- Growth should be directed to appropriate locations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Rural areas should prioritize:
  - Agricultural and forestal land preservation,
  - Limited land fragmentation,
  - Predictable and manageable demand on public services.
- Regulations should slow the pace of growth, not prohibit reasonable land use.
- Growth-management tools should operate prospectively and avoid retroactive impacts.
- Tools should be objective, legally defensible, and uniformly applied.
- Growth-management efforts should focus on parcel creation and configuration, recognizing that parcel creation establishes long-term development rights and service obligations.

### **V. Overview of ORD Components and Their Purpose**

The ORD implements the policy framework above through a series of coordinated zoning and subdivision amendments. Key components include:

#### **A. Private Lane Restrictions**

- Eliminate the use of private lanes as a means of access for newly created lots.
- Purpose:
  - Reduce incremental development without comprehensive review,
  - Address long-term maintenance and emergency access concerns,
  - Prevent dispersed rural development patterns facilitated by private access systems.

## **B. Division and Subdivision Definition Alignment**

- Treat most land divisions as subdivisions subject to subdivision review standards.
- Retain limited exceptions for bona fide family and estate divisions that meet clearly defined criteria.
- Purpose:
  - Ensure consistent review of land divisions,
  - Reduce administrative circumvention,
  - Align regulatory review with actual infrastructure and service impacts.

## **C. Family Subdivision Reforms**

- Extend ownership and retention periods associated with family subdivisions.
- Purpose:
  - Preserve the original intent of family-based transfers,
  - Reduce long-term fragmentation that functions as de facto subdivision.

## **D. Road Frontage Adjustments in Rural Districts**

- Increase minimum frontage requirements for newly created lots in A-1 and A-2 zoning districts outside Growth Areas.
- Purpose:
  - Slow lot creation,
  - Improve emergency access,
  - Preserve traditional rural road patterns.

## **E. Minimum Lot Size and Homestead Framework**

- Establish larger minimum lot sizes for new parcels outside Growth Areas.
- Define a “homestead” threshold for by-right residential development on larger parcels.
- Purpose:
  - Encourage large, contiguous parcels,
  - Support agricultural homesteads,
  - Slow dispersed rural residential development.

## **VI. Relationship to Rural Character Preservation**

Collectively, the ORD revisions address growth patterns, not population outcomes. The amendments are intended to:

- Reduce land fragmentation,
- Preserve agricultural and forestal lands,
- Limit suburban-style development in rural areas,
- Protect scenic roadways and open landscapes,
- Slow the pace of change to better match infrastructure capacity and community expectations.

Importantly, the proposed changes do not prohibit growth, but instead shape where, how, and how quickly growth occurs.

## **VII. Next Steps**

Staff seek feedback on:

- Which ordinance components merit further refinement,
- Appropriate thresholds (e.g., frontage, acreage, ownership duration),
- Whether A-1 and A-2 zoning districts should be treated differently,
- The desired balance between by-right development and CUP/Rezoning review.

Following staff and Board input, refined ordinance language and a formal presentation can be developed for Planning Commission and Board consideration.

# **GROWTH MANAGEMENT DRAFT ORDINANCE REVISIONS**

02.04.2026

## **Private Lanes**

### **1. Sec. 86-13 – Definitions**

**Term: *Private lane***

**Current:**

***Private lane.***

An access way for residential use serving less than three lots which is within a 50-foot deeded right-of-way or easement and built to the design standards in subsection 86-567(11). Private lanes are restricted as to the hours of access by the public or by those who may use it and are maintained by the property owners association or by the lot or parcel owners who are afforded access to their lots or parcels by such private lanes.

**Proposed Amendment:**

***Private lane.***

An access way for residential use serving less than three lots which is within a 50-foot deeded right-of-way or easement and built to the design standards in subsection 86-567(11). Private lanes are restricted as to the hours of access by the public or by those who may use it and are maintained by the property owner's association or by the lot or parcel owners who are afforded access to their lots or parcels by such private lanes.

**Private lanes shall not be permitted to serve any new lot created by subdivision, division, or other land division approved after the effective date of this ordinance, except as otherwise expressly allowed by this chapter.**

### **2. Sec. 86-567 – Lot Requirements / Access**

**Subsection addressing private lanes**

**Current**

**(11) *Private lanes.***

*Private lanes.* Lots accessed by roads in subdivisions of less than three lots can be accessed by private lanes which do not meet VDOT subdivision street standards and are approved by the agent. Lots in subdivisions of less than three lots must have the minimum frontage requirements on a deeded access way or easement which is owned by the property owners association or developer or by the lot or parcel owners who are afforded access to their lots or parcels by such private lanes of such subdivision. A maximum of two separate private lanes shall be permitted in a subdivision. All plats describing lots served by private lanes shall include language found in

subsections [86-587](#)(10) g.1—3. Subdivision roads serving less than three lots shall be approved by the zoning administrator and shall meet the following minimum standards:

**Proposed Amendment:**

**(11) Private lanes.**

Private lanes, where permitted, shall be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with the standards set forth in this section.

**Private lanes shall not be designed and installed as a means of access for any lot after the (effective date of this ordinance).**

## **Divisions**

### **1. Sec. 86-13 – Definitions**

**Term: *Division, parcel***

**Current:**

*Division, parcel.* To divide a parent parcel into no more than two additional parts for the purpose of transfer of ownership or building development. Lots shall be divided from parent tracts, or the residue parcel that remains after a prior one-lot division, so long as such residue parcel has five or more acres or a minimum of 300 feet of existing state road frontage. For clarity, it is the specific intent of this provision to allow a maximum of three total lots, including the residual parcel, to be created from any parent parcel by division, if any. Divisions are not subject to the provisions set forth in the subdivision ordinance except for subsection [86-567\(11\)](#), private lanes. However, similar to the requirements of [section 86-587](#), a lot created by division shall be required to include provisions for the dedication of right-of-way when the property is adjacent to a state road that is less than 50 feet in width; provided that, this requirement does not apply to a residual portion of the parent tract that is five or more acres or has a minimum of 300 feet of existing state road frontage.

### **Proposed Amendment**

**Division, parcel.**

To divide a parent parcel into no more than two additional parts for the purpose of transfer of ownership or building development.

Divisions are not subject to the provisions set forth in the subdivision ordinance, **except for applicable access and frontage requirements.**

**Lots created by division shall front on a public street and shall not rely on private lanes for access.**

**Effective (date of adoption), wherever the term “division” is used throughout this ordinance, shall mean “subdivision” and meet all requirements for subdivisions outlined in the regulations.**

**\*\*Related code sections that address or reference divisions of property will also be drafted for inclusion in a final amendment.\*\***

## **Family Subdivision**

### **1. Section 86-13 Definitions**

#### **Current**

*Family subdivision.* Pursuant to Code of Virginia, §§ 15.2-2244(C) and 15.2-2244.2, means splitting any tract, parcel or lot of land, within the agricultural (A-1), agricultural (A-2), residential limited (R-1), or residential general (R-2) zoning districts, into two or more parts for the purpose of sale or gift to a member of the immediate family of the property owner or the beneficiary of a trust that owns the property, subject to the requirements of [section 86-531](#) of this Code. See "immediate family" definition.

#### **Proposed**

*Family subdivision.* Pursuant to Code of Virginia, §§ 15.2-2244(C), 15.2-2244.1 and 15.2-2244.2, means splitting any tract, parcel or lot of land, within the agricultural (A-1), agricultural (A-2), residential limited (R-1), or residential general (R-2) zoning districts, into two or more parts for the purpose of sale or gift to a member of the immediate family of the property owner or the beneficiary of a trust that owns the property, subject to the requirements of [section 86-531](#) of this Code. See "immediate family" definition.

### **2. Sec. 86-531(a)(4) – Retention Period**

#### **Family Subdivisions (Standard Ownership)**

#### **Current Code**

(4) Each such division shall remain in the name of the qualified family member for a minimum of **five (5) years** from the date of recordation, unless the lot is the subject of an involuntary transfer such as foreclosure, death, divorce, judicial sale, condemnation or bankruptcy.

#### **Proposed Amendment**

(4) Each such division shall remain in the name of the qualified family member for a minimum of **fifteen (15) years** from the date of recordation, unless the lot is the subject of an involuntary transfer such as foreclosure, death, divorce, judicial sale, condemnation or bankruptcy.

### **3. Sec. 86-531(a) – Ownership Requirement Prior to Eligibility**

#### **New Requirement**

#### **Current**

**No minimum ownership period is required** prior to approval of a family subdivision.

#### **Proposed Amendment**

**Minimum ownership requirement.**

A family subdivision shall be permitted only where the parent parcel has been owned by the applicant for a continuous period of **fifteen (15) years** prior to submission of a family subdivision application.

Ownership shall be demonstrated by deed records. Periods of ownership by a trust established for estate-planning purposes shall be considered continuous ownership.

Item	Current Code	Proposed
Ownership before subdivision	None	15 years
Retention after recordation	5 years	15 years
Trust subdivisions	15 years	No change
Exceptions	Involuntary transfers	No change

## **Road Frontage Requirements – A-1 and A-2 Districts**

### **1. Sec. 86-139 (A-1) and Sec. 86-157 (A-2)**

#### **Frontage; minimum lot width**

##### **Current Code (Applies Countywide to Both A-1 and A-2)**

Only two lots with a minimum of 200 feet of road frontage shall be allowed on existing state roads or federal highways per parent parcel.

Otherwise, the minimum lot frontage on existing state roads or federal highways shall be 300 feet.

#### **Proposed Amendment**

*(Applies Only to A-1 and A-2 Outside Designated Growth Areas)*

Only two lots with a minimum of **450 feet** of road frontage shall be allowed on existing state roads or federal highways per parent parcel **when located outside designated Growth Areas**.

Otherwise, the minimum lot frontage on existing state roads or federal highways shall be **550 feet** **when located outside designated Growth Areas**.

Lots located within designated Growth Areas shall continue to be subject to the frontage requirements otherwise applicable to the zoning district.

## **Homestead Definition**

### **Sec. 86-13 – Definitions**

#### **1. Homestead (New)**

##### **Homestead.**

A parcel of land consisting of ten (10) acres or greater, containing or intended to contain one single-family detached dwelling as the principal use.

Agricultural or horticultural activities that are incidental and accessory to the residential use and that support the residency are permitted by right on a homestead, even if such activities are not otherwise expressly listed as permitted uses in the applicable zoning district.

Such agricultural or horticultural activities shall be non-commercial in nature, shall be conducted solely for household use or support of the residence, and shall not include commercial agricultural production, processing, or retail sales, except where such uses are otherwise permitted by this chapter.

*(Will be applicable only to A-1 and A-2 Outside Designated Growth Areas)*

## **Subdivision**

### **8. Sec. 86-13 – Definitions**

#### **Subdivision (*Amended*)**

##### **Current Code**

###### **Subdivision.**

*Subdivision.* Splitting any tract, parcel or lot of land into two or more parts, other than a division of a parent parcel or a family subdivision, for the purpose of transfer of ownership or building development. Consistent with this definition, any new road constructed to serve more than two lots shall be constructed to VDOT standards for subdivision roads. The residue tract after subdividing is not counted as a lot for the purposes of this definition. Subdivided parcels may not be further subdivided or divided unless the remaining division rights are noted on a recorded plat or in conformance with existing ordinances.

##### **Proposed Amendment**

###### **Subdivision.**

**The division of a parcel of land into two or more lots or parcels, whether by deed, plat, lease, or other means, for the purpose of sale, transfer, or development.**

**Except as expressly provided herein, all divisions of land shall be treated as subdivisions and shall be subject to the subdivision requirements of this chapter.**

**The following divisions shall not be considered subdivisions, provided that all applicable criteria are met:**

- 1. Family subdivisions, as defined and regulated by this chapter; and**
- 2. Estate divisions made in connection with the settlement of an estate or court order.**

**Any land division that does not fully qualify for one of the above exceptions shall be deemed a subdivision**

## **Minimum Lot Size – A-1 and A-2 Outside Designated Growth Areas**

### **1. 86-137 (A-1) and 86-155 (A-2)**

#### **Minimum Lot Area**

##### **Current Code**

###### **Minimum lot size.**

Except where a larger minimum lot size is required by the regulations of the applicable zoning district, lots created by subdivision, division, or family subdivision shall contain a minimum area of one and one-half (1.5) acres and shall otherwise comply with the applicable requirements of this chapter.

##### **Proposed Amendment**

###### **Minimum lot size for A-1 and A-2 Outside Designated Growth Areas.**

**Within the A-1 and A-2 zoning districts and located outside designated Growth Areas, lots created by subdivision, division, or other land division approved after the effective date of this ordinance shall contain a minimum area of ten (10) acres, except:**

- 1. Lots created for public purposes, including but not limited to public rights-of-way or public utilities; or**
- 2. Lots created through bona fide family or estate divisions that comply with all applicable requirements of this chapter, shall be a minimum of 1.5 acres.**