



AGENDA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE CITIZENS WORKING GROUP REGULAR MEETING

April 15, 2025

6:30 PM CALL TO ORDER (Village Building - Conference Room)

1. Call to Order
2. Review of Minutes from April 8, 2025, CWG Meeting
3. Continued Discussion: Housing and Residential (See Attached Discussion Items Memo)
4. Discussion: Final Report Contents, “Wrap Up” Meeting, and report/presentation to the Board of Supervisors
5. Adjourn

April 3, 2025

To: Comprehensive Plan Working Group

From: Ligon Webb, Planning Director

RE: Discussion Items/Topics for 4/8/2025, CWG Meeting

1. Family Subdivision

Currently, family subdivisions are allowed in the A-10, R-2, and RU zoning districts. In the A-10 district, the newly created family parcel must be at least 3 acres, and the remaining (residue) parcel must be at least 5 acres—meaning a minimum of 8 acres is required to complete a family subdivision. In the R-2 and RU districts, both the new family parcel and the residue parcel must be at least 2 acres each, for a total of 4 acres.

In all zoning districts, a property must be owned for a minimum of five years before it can be divided for a qualifying family member. After the division, the newly created family parcel must also be held in ownership for five years before it can be sold.

Discussion: Should the acreage requirements for family subdivisions in the A-10 district be reduced—for example, to 2 acres for the new family parcel and 3 acres for the residue parcel (a total of 5 acres)? It is assumed that the five-year ownership and holding period requirements would remain unchanged.

2. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by Zoning Districts

Agricultural-10 (A-10): An accessory dwelling or apartment is allowed, up to 50% of the floor area of the main dwelling.

Rural Residential (RR): Same regulations as A-10; accessory dwelling or apartment allowed, up to 50% of the floor area of the main dwelling.

Rural Residential-5 (RR-5): Accessory dwelling or apartment allowed, up to 35% of the floor area of the main dwelling.

Single-Family Residential (R-2): Accessory dwelling or apartment allowed, up to 35% of the floor area of the main dwelling.

Residential Utility (RU): Accessory dwelling or apartment allowed, up to 35% of the floor area of the main dwelling.

Discussion: The Planning Director believes the County currently has a permissive accessory dwelling unit and accessory apartment ordinances. Here are a few items to consider:

In A10, RR, zoning districts allowing ADUs and Accessory Apartments to be over 50 percent of main dwelling's floor area by conditional use permit (CUP)

In RR5, R2, RU, allowing ADUs and Accessory Apartments to exceed 35 percent of the main dwelling's floor area by conditional use permit (CUP).

In RR, RR5, R2, and RU allow ADUs to be non-site built (i.e., "stick built") provide a conditional use permit (CUP) is obtained and the ADU meets Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards (HUD code, contains 320 sq ft of interior floor area, and placed on a permanent foundation.

3. Conservation Subdivisions

Powhatan County currently allows conservation subdivisions by-right under its subdivision ordinance. Below is a summary of how they work:

A conservation subdivision (also known as a "cluster" development) allows a developer to group homes on smaller lots than typically required under the zoning ordinance, in exchange for preserving a significant portion of the property as permanent open space density bonus would be allowable. While Virginia requires such provisions in high-growth localities, Powhatan does not fall into that category, having not met the 10% population growth threshold between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses.

Where Conservation Subdivisions are Currently Allowed (By-Right): Conservation subdivisions may currently be developed by-right (without rezoning) in the following zoning districts: A-10, RR, and RR-5

Density Bonuses - Developers can gain additional lots by setting aside more open space:

A-10, RR districts: 20% bonus if 60% of the site is conserved. 25% bonus if 70% is conserved.

RR-5 district: 10% bonus at 60% conservation. 15% bonus at 70% conservation.

Example: A 200-acre parcel zoned A-10 could be divided into twenty 10-acre lots by-right.

If 60% of the land is preserved as open space, a 20% density bonus allows for 4 additional lots, for a total of 24 lots, each with a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft.

If 70% is preserved, a 25% density bonus allows for 5 additional lots, totaling 25 lots, again at 40,000 sq. ft. per lot.

Current Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

	Conservation		dwelling
For Projects >=50 acres	Easement Required	Density	units/acre
2. existing	40% under by right	clustering only, no bonus	0.1
3. existing	60% under by right	20% by-right bonus	0.12
4. existing	70% under by right	25% by-right bonus	0.125

Requirements for all conservation subdivisions

1. The minimum lot size in conservation subdivisions is 40,000 sq ft (0.92 acres)

Proposed Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

% cons area	% dev area	entire parcel allowed density per acre 0.1 + x	implied per acre % density bonus per acre	parcel acreage 100	dev area	du	average lot size	acreage per du on entire parcel
40	60	0.100	0%	40	60	10	6.00	10.00
55	45	0.115	15%	55	45	11	4.09	9.09
70	30	0.130	30%	70	30	13	2.31	7.69

Proposed Requirements for all conservation subdivisions

1. All conservation subdivisions require a CUP
2. The calculated conservation area cannot include land within the county-designated natural conservation areas (i.e., unbuildable land under current county ordinances)
3. The minimum parcel size that may be placed in a conservation subdivision is 50 acres
4. The minimum lot size in conservation subdivisions is 2 acres
5. The conservation areas must be located to provide maximum protection for environmentally sensitive areas.
6. Within the Priority Conservation Areas as designated in the comprehensive plan, minimum 200 ft non-disturbance buffers must be maintained about all wetlands, perennial creeks, and intermittent streams.

Discussion: Are the current by-right conservation subdivision standards appropriate?

Do conservation subdivisions help strike a balance between housing supply and rural land conservation?

Should all conservation subdivisions be subject to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) instead of being by-right?

What are your thoughts on allowing larger density bonuses by CUP?

Would it be better to remove conservation subdivisions altogether in favor of allowing higher density only in designated growth areas?

4. Consolidation of Village Growth Area Districts and Planned Development Districts

Existing Zoning Districts in Village Growth Areas: Village Residential (VR), Village Center (VC), and Courthouse Square Center (CHSC)

These districts are designed to support compact, mixed-use development patterns within the County’s designated Village Growth Areas, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Development in these districts is subject to traditional zoning regulations, including minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and density limits.

Planned Development Districts: Village Residential – Planned Development (VR-PD), Village Center – Planned Development (VC-PD), Commerce Center – Planned Development (CC-PD), and Planned Development District (PDD – Commercial/Industrial)

These districts allow for master-planned developments under unified control, providing greater flexibility than traditional zoning—particularly in terms of lot size, setbacks, and mixed uses—while still maintaining density caps. The planned development framework is intended to support higher-quality, pedestrian-oriented design and more cohesive neighborhood or commercial center planning.

Each Planned Development District corresponds to a specific land use classification in the Comprehensive Plan:

VR-PD: Walkable neighborhoods in areas classified as Village Residential.

VC-PD: Small-scale, mixed-use development in areas classified as Village Center.

CC-PD: Larger-scale commercial and light industrial uses in areas classified as Commerce Center.

PDD: Large master-planned developments incorporating commercial and light industrial uses, with complementary residential, in areas classified as Economic Opportunity.

Discussion: Is the current system of eight separate zoning districts overly complex for managing Village Growth Area development?

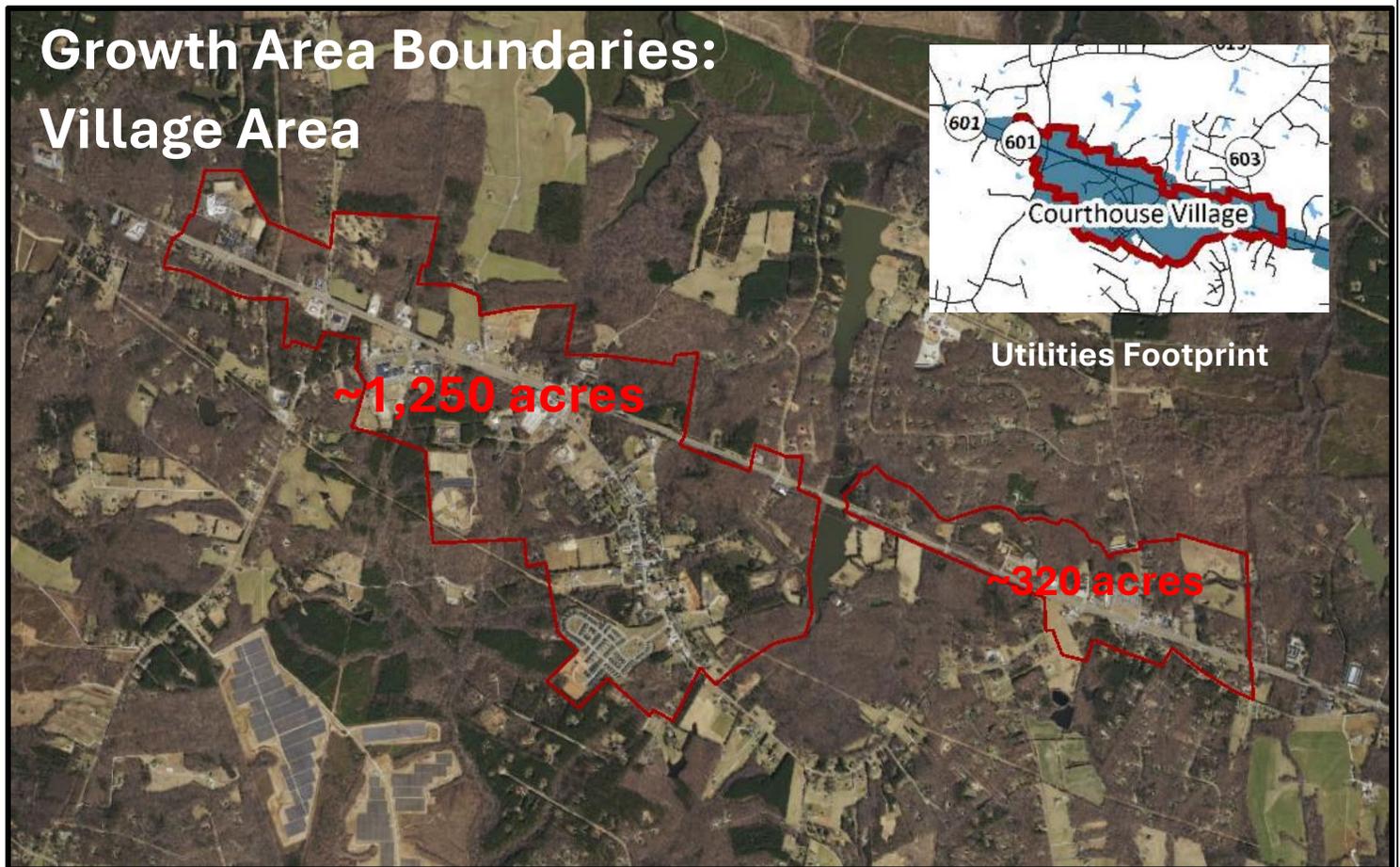
Would consolidating these into fewer, more flexible Planned Development districts support better planning outcomes?

Should rezonings to any new consolidated planned district be limited to Growth Areas with public utilities?

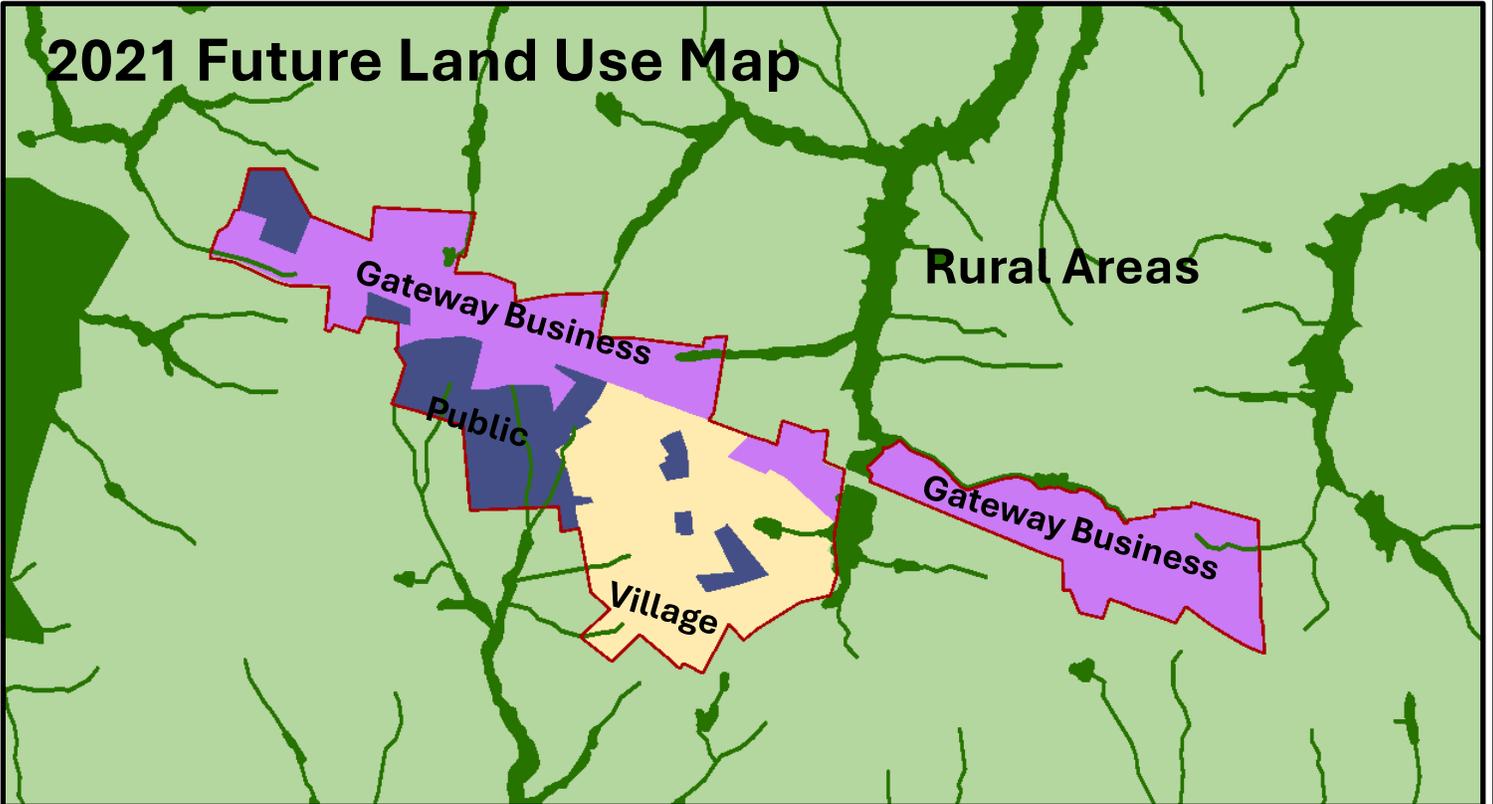
Could fewer Planned Development districts allow for a mixture of uses, to include commercial and housing (mixed use)?

5. Housing Priority Map (2021 Future Land Use Map)

The Comprehensive Plan Workgroup (CWG) has been tasked with reviewing the County's 2021 Future Land Use Map, with a focus on identifying areas within the established Growth Area that may be suitable for future residential development. These Growth Areas are generally characterized by the availability of public water and sewer and are intended to accommodate more compact development patterns that contrast with the County's rural preservation goals outside of these boundaries.

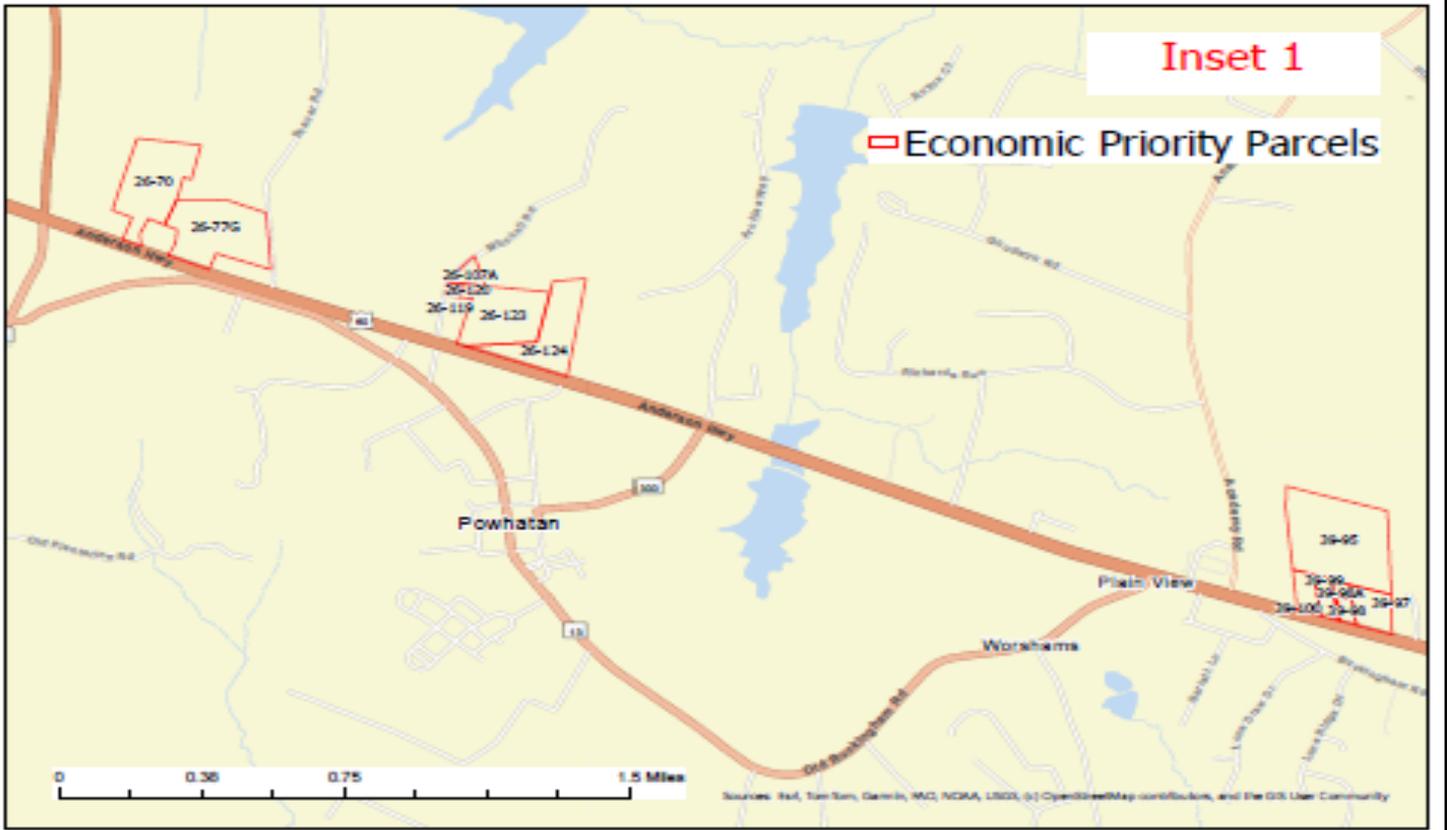


2021 Future Land Use Map



Inset 1

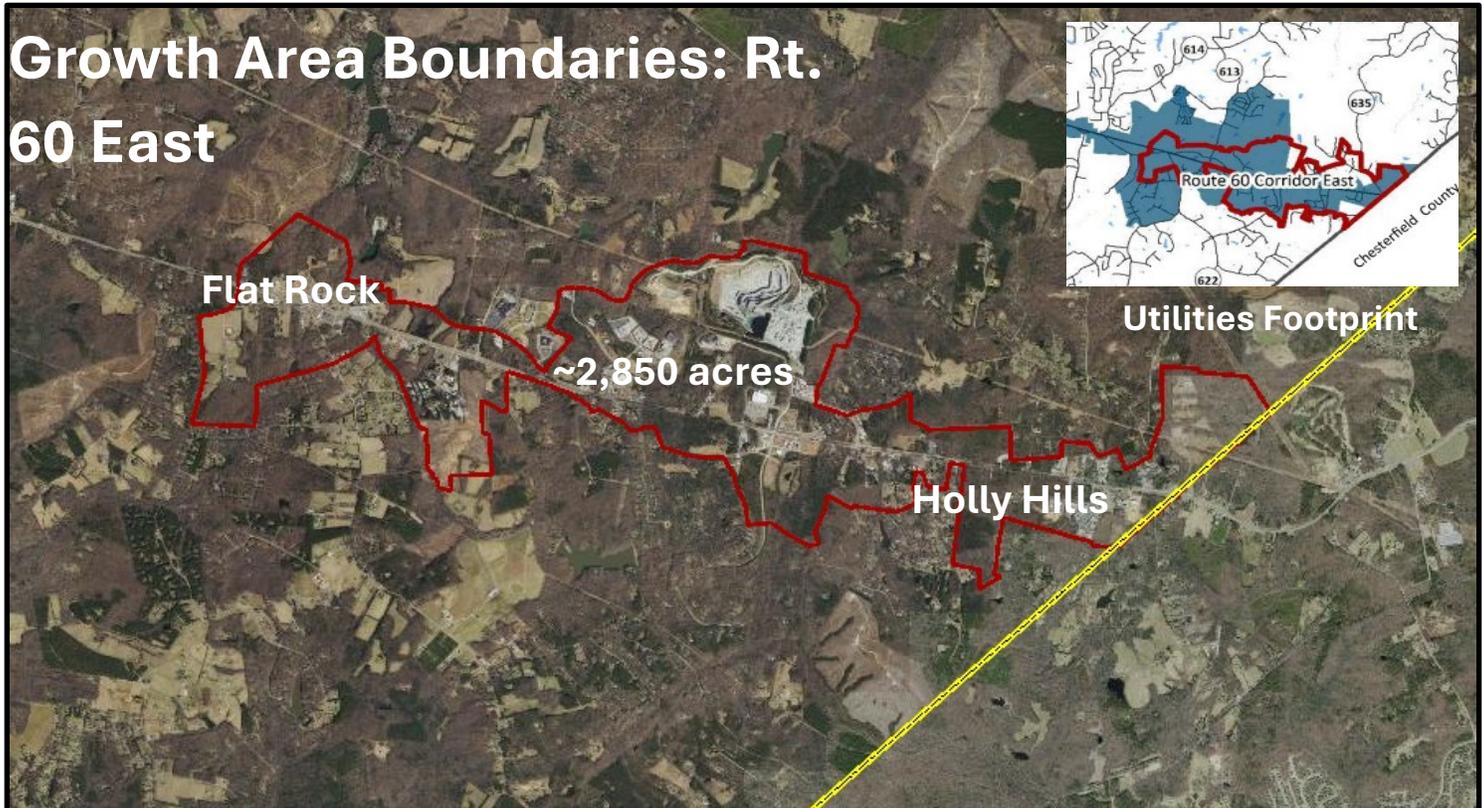
□ Economic Priority Parcels



Discussion: Would this area potentially be a suitable area for future residential or mixed-used development?

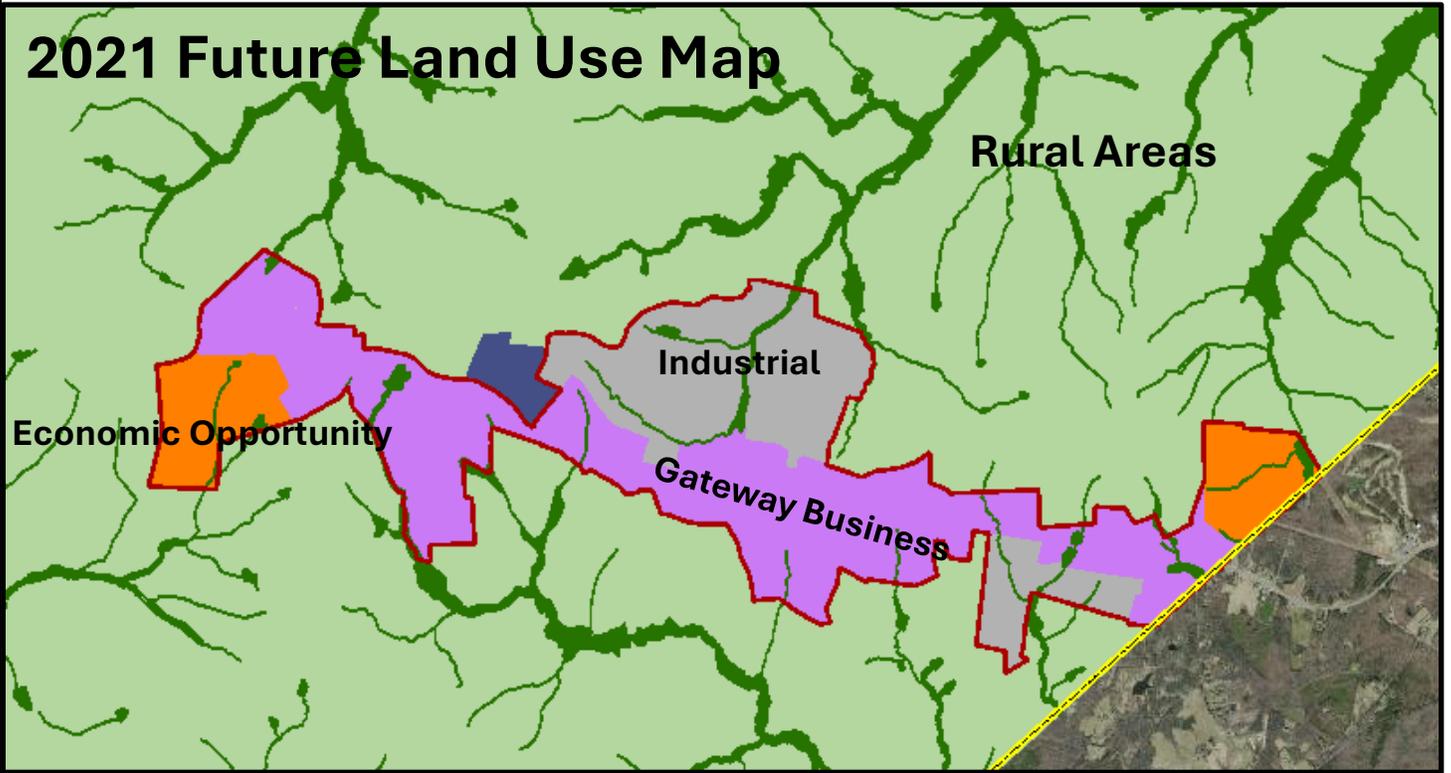


Growth Area Boundaries: Rt. 60 East



Utilities Footprint

2021 Future Land Use Map



Red Lane

Economic Priority Maps

Chestnut Oaks

2

Flat Rock

3

60

peder-Rd

Dorset-Rd

Discussion: Would this area potentially be a suitable area for future residential or mixed-used development?



6. What might a variety/balance of housing types look like in Powhatan?

Single-Family Detached Homes: Still the dominant form in most rural areas; Range from large-lot rural estates (5–10+ acres) to smaller-lot homes (0.25–1 acre) in village settings. Ideal for families, multigenerational households, and homeowners who value space.

Conservation Subdivision Homes: Clustered single-family homes on smaller lots (e.g., 0.5– 2 acre) with shared open space; Provides flexibility while preserving farmland or natural areas/ Appeals to homebuyers who want rural living with some neighborhood feel.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): Garage apartments, basement units, or standalone cottages; Often used for aging parents, adult children, or rental income, makes more efficient use of infrastructure without changing rural character; Can support multi-generational living

Cottage Courts / Pocket Neighborhoods: Small clusters (4–10) of compact homes (800–1,200 sq. ft.) around shared green space: Promotes walkability and neighbor interaction; Allows gentle density in village cores or transition areas

Townhomes (Rowhouses): Appropriate in designated Village Centers or growth areas with utilities; Provides affordable ownership or rental options; More compact footprint helps preserve surrounding land.

Planned Developments: These master-planned developments would allow for a mix of housing

7. Potential Rural conservation tools

Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs): Voluntary program where landowners agree not to develop their land for a set period (typically 4–10 years). Participants benefit from land use tax deferrals and protection from rezonings and eminent domain. Helps create large contiguous blocks of agricultural and forested land used widely across Virginia; ideal for maintaining the viability of working farms and timber operations.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): Local governments or land trusts purchase the development rights from landowners, who agree to permanently preserve their land. Land remains privately owned and used (e.g., farming, forestry). Requires local funding and/or grant support (e.g., Virginia Land Conservation Foundation). Great for protecting high-quality soils, water resources, and historic rural landscapes.

Conservation Easements: A permanent legal agreement recorded on the deed, voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner. Restricts future development while allowing traditional uses (farming, forestry, recreation). Often facilitated by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) or local land trusts. Landowners may receive state tax credits, federal tax deductions, and estate tax benefits. Powerful tool for long-term conservation of rural land.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A market-based approach: landowners in designated “sending areas” (rural/ag land) sell development rights to developers in “receiving areas” (growth areas). Preserves rural land while encouraging higher-density development in appropriate locations. Requires careful zoning, mapping, and a functioning market.

TDR programs are in place in counties like Loudoun and Montgomery (MD).

Rural Cluster or Conservation Subdivisions: Allows homes to be clustered on smaller lots in exchange for preserving a substantial portion of the property as permanent open space. Powhatan already allows these by-right in A-20, A-10, RR, RR-5, and R-2 zoning districts. Could be enhanced by: Requiring permanent conservation easements on open space, increasing minimum open space requirements, Using Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) for more flexibility and design oversight

Scenic or Agricultural Overlay Districts: Special zoning overlays that protect viewsheds, heritage corridors, or active agricultural areas. Can include buffering, architectural standards, or use limitations.

8. Potential Rural Housing Alternatives

Rural Cottage Courts: Small clusters of detached homes (typically 600–1,200 sq. ft.) arranged around a shared green space or courtyard. Maintain the scale and character of rural living while allowing more homes per acre where utilities exist. Ideal for:

Aging residents looking to downsize

Young professionals or first-time buyers

Modest workforce housing

Can be paired with conservation design or limited to growth areas with public water/sewer.

Encourages neighborly interaction, efficient land use, and aesthetic cohesion.



What cottage court might look like in a less dense and/or rural area



What cottage court might look like in a denser and/or village area

Public-Private Partnerships (P3s): These collaborations can help deliver affordable, attainable, or workforce housing without placing the full financial burden on the County:

County + Nonprofit Developer (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, Piedmont Housing Alliance)

County + Private Developer + Utility Authority to bring infrastructure to a growth area housing site