



AGENDA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

CITIZENS WORKING GROUP

SUBCOMMITTEE FOR HOUSING/LAND USE MEETING

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

6:00 PM CALL TO ORDER (Village Building - Conference Room)

1. Call to Order
2. Continued Discussion: Housing and Residential (See Attached Discussion Items Memo dated May 8, 2025)
3. Susan Winiecki – Update on Housing Study/Survey
4. Adjourn

May 8, 2025

To: CWG Subcommittee for Housing/Land Use

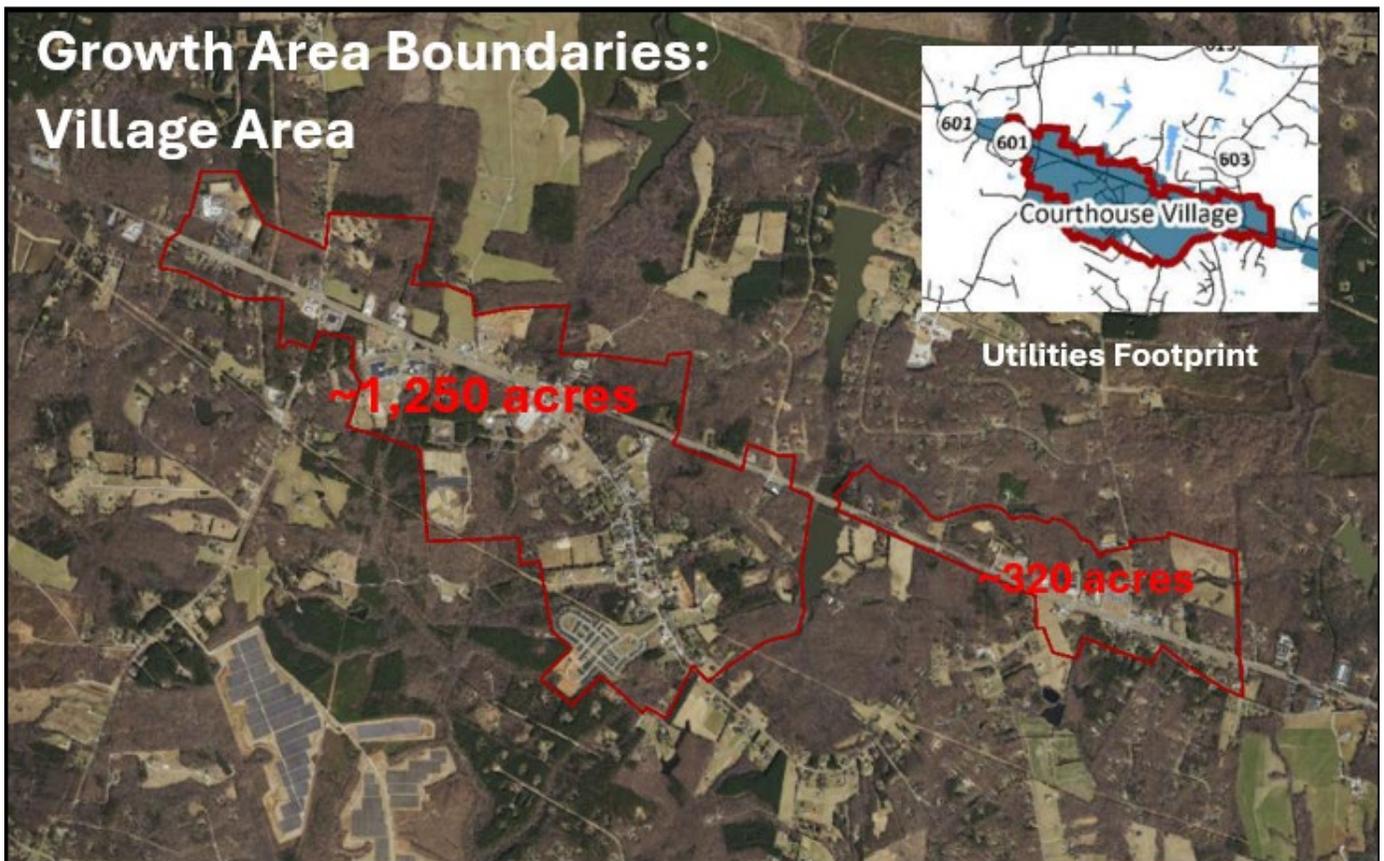
From: Ligon Webb, Planning Director

RE: Discussion Items/Topics for 5/14/2025, CWG Housing Subcommittee Meeting

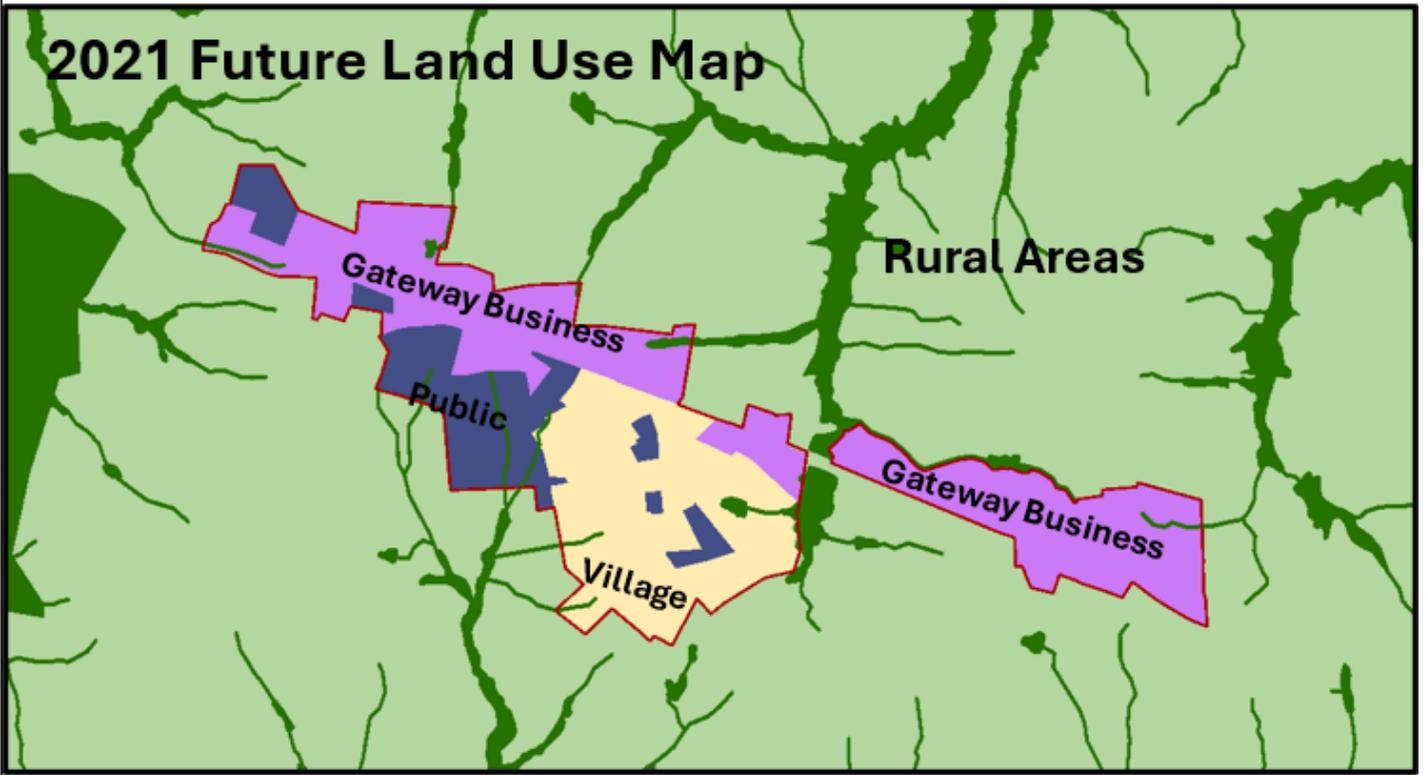
1. Housing Priority Map (2021 Future Land Use Map)

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.

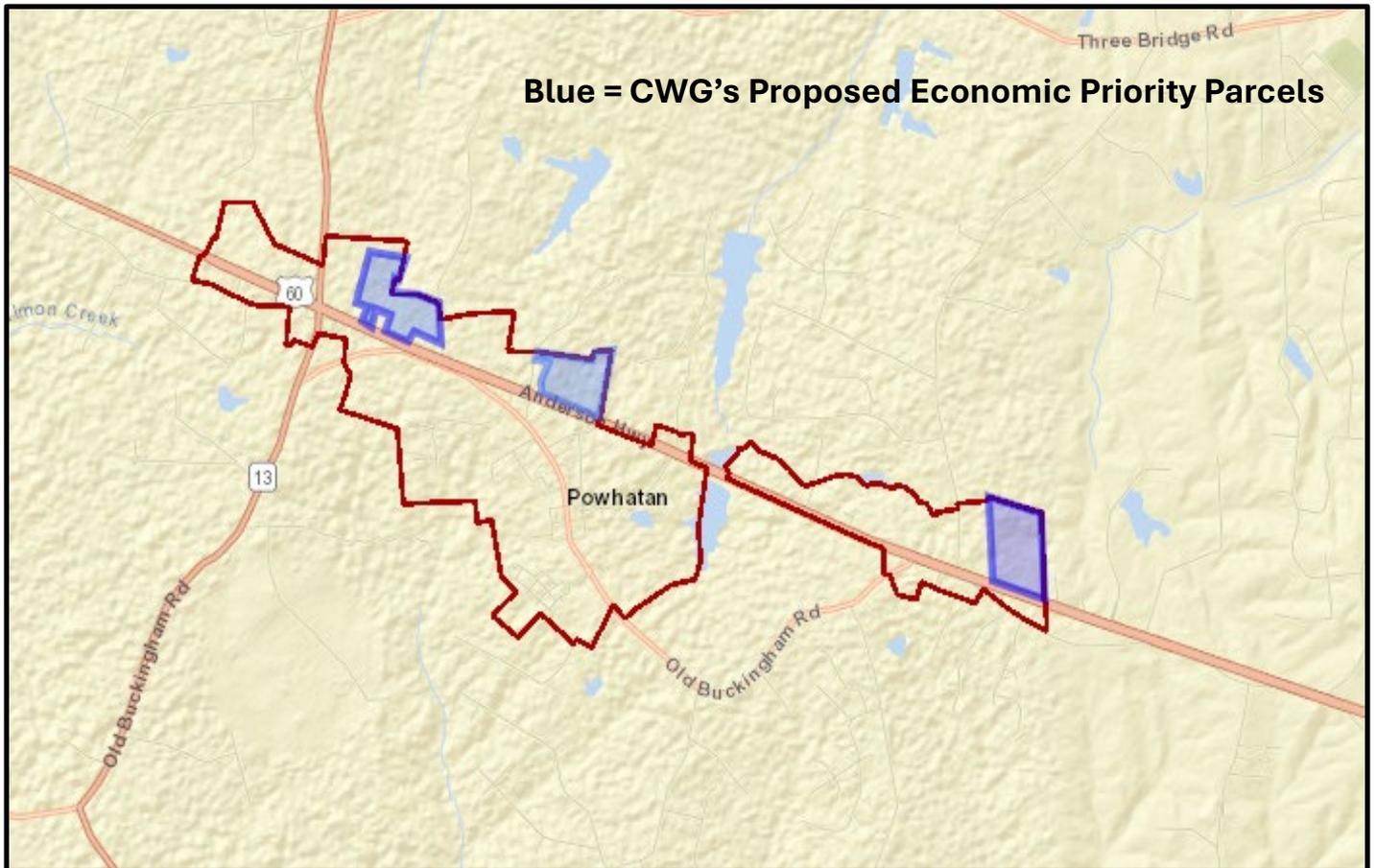
2021 Comprehensive Plan Growth Area Boundaries: Village Area



2021 Future Land Use Map



Blue = CWG's Proposed Economic Priority Parcels

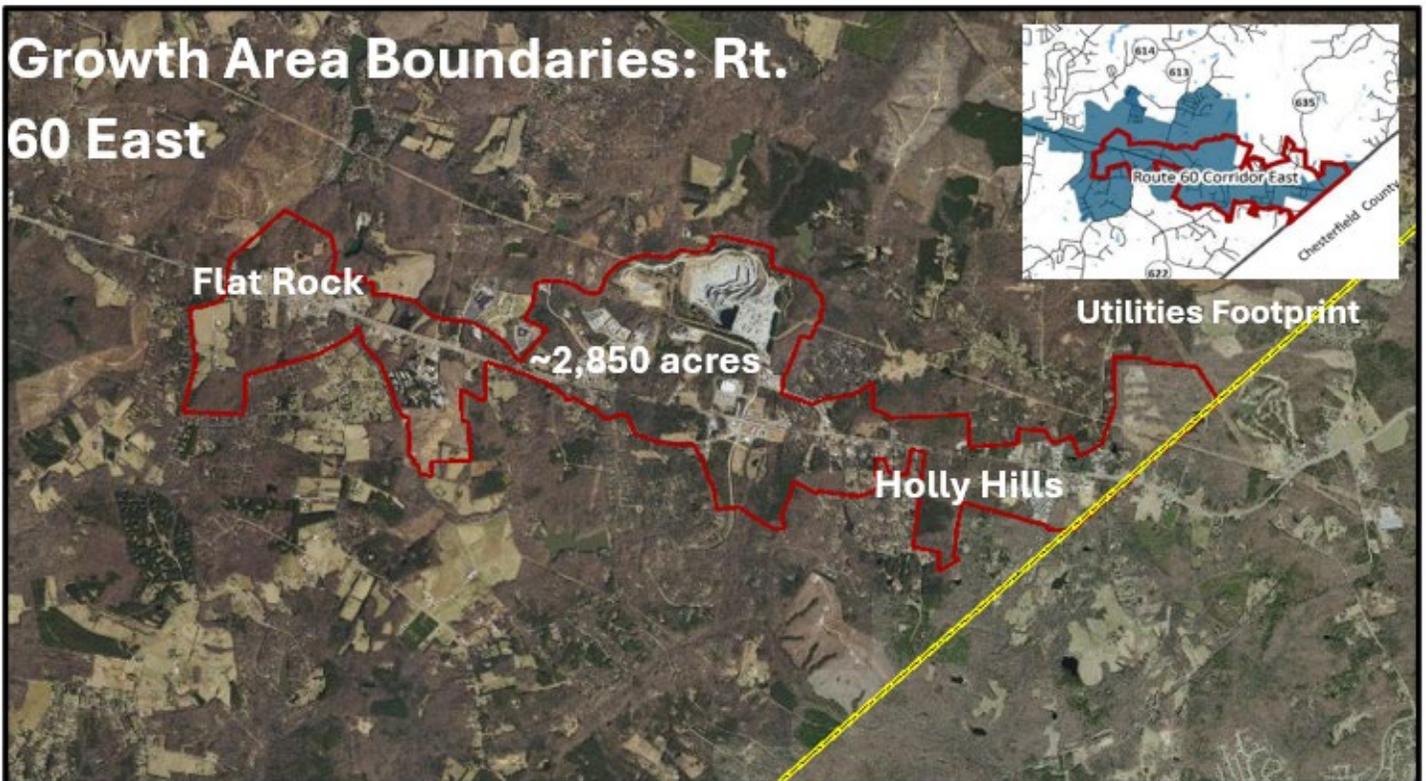


Discussion: Would this area potentially be a suitable area for future residential or mixed-used development?

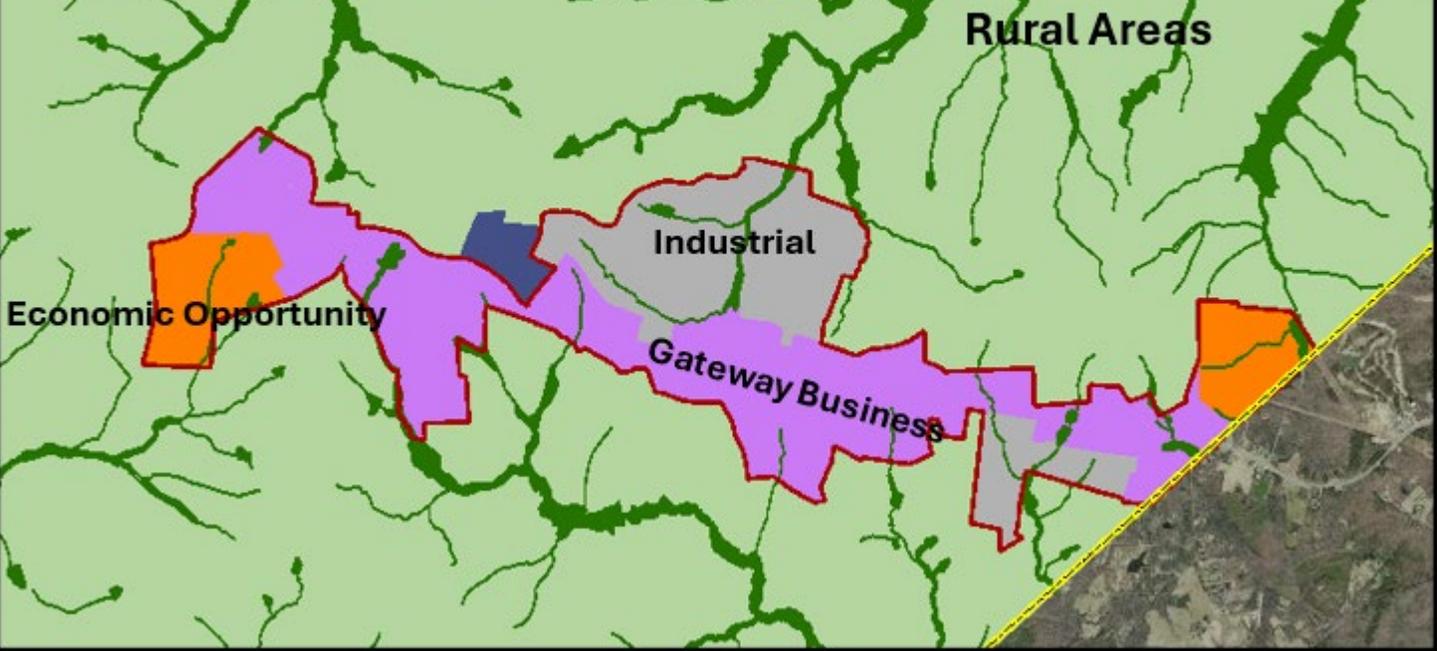


2021 Comprehensive Plan Growth Area Boundaries: Rt. 60 East

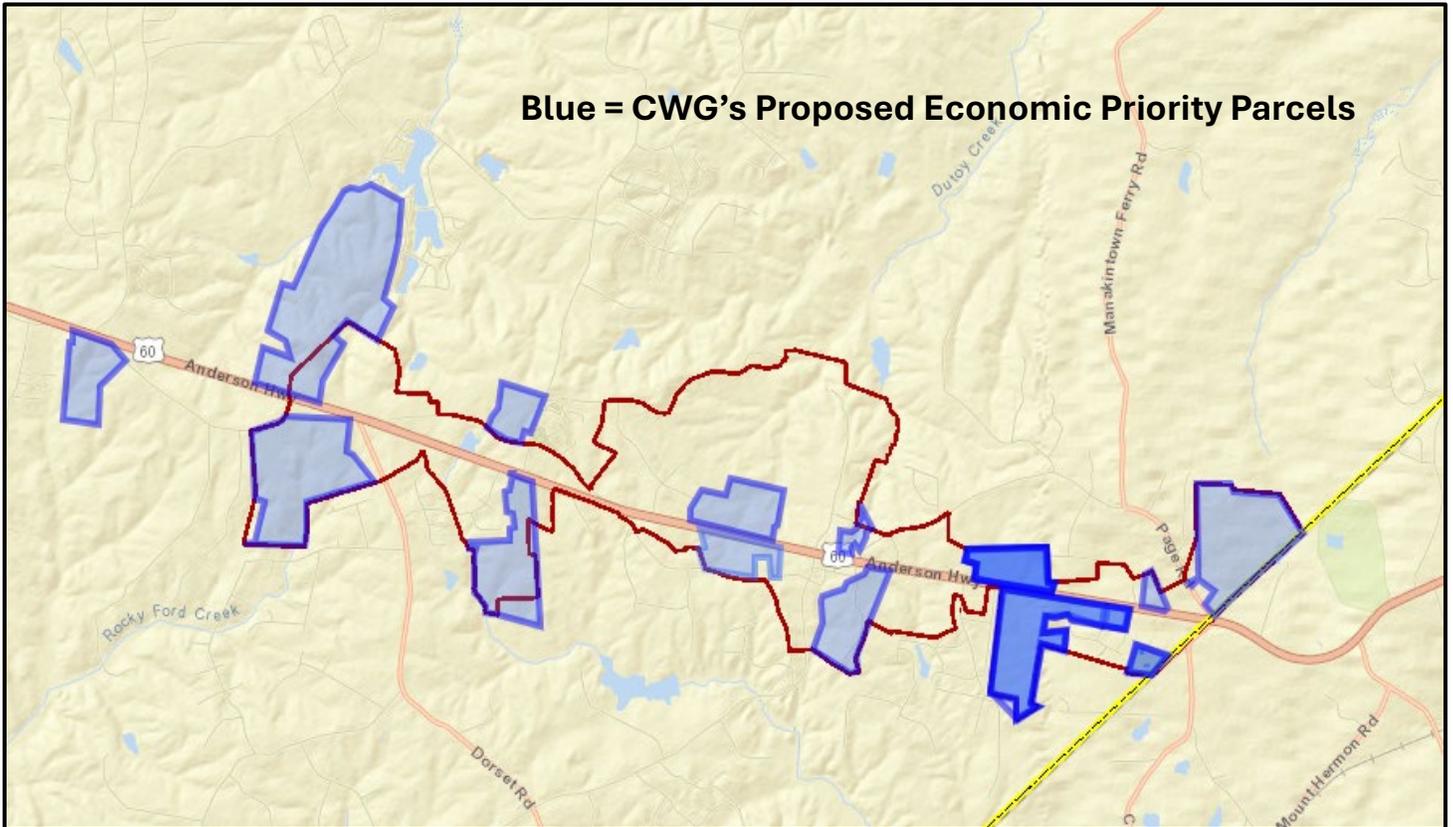
Growth Area Boundaries: Rt. 60 East



2021 Future Land Use Map



Blue = CWG's Proposed Economic Priority Parcels



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



2. Potential Consolidation of Village Growth Area and Planned Development Districts

This introduces the concept of a **Unified Development District (UDD)**—a new zoning district proposed to replace and consolidate several existing zoning classifications that currently guide mixed-use and master-planned development in Powhatan County’s designated growth areas.

The name “**Unified Development District**” (UDD) is offered as a **working title** for discussion purposes. Other names could certainly be considered; however, UDD is being used at this stage because it clearly communicates the purpose of the district and is **less likely to be confused** with existing zoning districts in the County’s ordinance, such as the Planned Development District (PDD).

The County’s current zoning ordinance presently includes a variety of **Village Growth Area Districts** (VR, VC, CHSC) and **Planned Development Districts** (VR-PD, VC-PD, CC-PD, and PDD). These districts have historically supported walkable, mixed-use, and context-sensitive development, but over time they have become administratively complex and overlapping in purpose.

The idea of a single, consolidated district was discussed by the Citizens Working Group (CWG) as part of the comprehensive plan update process. This proposed UDD would simplify the zoning framework while promoting compact, high-quality, “master planned”, and infrastructure-ready development in designated growth areas. At this stage, **County staff is seeking a general endorsement of the concept** and in the future more detailed standards, ordinance language, and implementation strategies may be developed by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Overview of Potential Standards for Unified Development District (UDD)

The Unified Development District (UDD) is proposed as a consolidated master-planned zoning district that would replace the existing Village Growth Area and Planned Development Districts. The UDD would be available only through a zoning map amendment and applicable only in areas designated as **Future Growth Areas** in the Comprehensive Plan.

Key provisions of the proposed UDD would include, but limited to, the following:

Unified Development Plan (UDP):

Each UDD application would require submission of a **Unified Development Plan (UDP)**. This document would serve as the zoning and site development guide and must include:

A to-scale master plan showing:

Land uses (residential, commercial, civic, open space)

Lot sizes and general configurations

Road and trail networks

Open spaces, stormwater areas, and buffers (with size and planting types)

Inter-parcel connections to adjacent developments (where feasible or planned), as well as future connections to adjoining parcels

A **phasing plan** for site development to build out

A **land use summary chart** detailing land allocated to various uses (residential, commercial, open space, etc.)

Architectural renderings of proposed buildings (residential, commercial, and mixed-use), which shall be submitted and conformed to during development

A statement of residential density, which must not exceed six (6) units per acre

Permitted Residential Uses:

Residential uses within a UDD may include single-family dwellings, townhouses or duplexes, and apartments, or any combination thereof, as shown on the approved UDP.

Permitted Commercial and Industrial Uses:

A UDD may also be used for stand-alone commercial (Commerce Center/CC), light industrial (Light Industrial/I1), or mixed-use development. In the case of CC or I1 zoning district uses, all by-right and conditional uses listed in the zoning ordinance would still apply, meaning that if a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is required, it (a CUP) would also be required within the UDD.

Public Infrastructure Requirements:

All UDD developments must be served by public water and/or sewer

All roads must be constructed to VDOT standards and dedicated to VDOT for public maintenance

Administrative Flexibility:

Minor modifications (e.g., reductions in density or internal layout changes) may be approved by the Planning Director

Substantial modifications (e.g., density increases or major layout changes) require Planning Commission review and Board of Supervisors approval

No Minimum Lot Size:

At this time, the UDD does not establish a minimum lot size, allowing the district to be applied to small, medium, or large sites provided the proposal reflects a cohesive master-planned approach. This issue can be revisited based on CWG input.

Majority of Site Must Be Within a Growth Area:

At least 50% of the land area of a proposed UDD must be located within a designated growth area. The remainder may extend beyond this boundary if the overall development remains cohesive and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Flexible Parcel Configuration:

A UDD may consist of a single parcel or an assemblage of two or more contiguous parcels under unified ownership or control at the time of application. This flexibility accommodates both small infill sites and larger master-planned developments

Summary and Request for CWG Consideration

The **Unified Development District (UDD)** is intended to streamline Powhatan County's zoning framework by consolidating seven existing districts into one flexible tool that supports walkable, connected, high-quality, master-planned development **allowable in identified Growth Areas as shown on the Comprehensive Plan**. It allows for a range of uses—residential, commercial, institutional, and light industrial—through a clear, visual, and enforceable master plan (**the UDP**).

The UDD is especially well suited for:

Walkable residential communities

Commercial or employment centers

Mixed-use villages that integrate housing, shops, services, schools, or civic uses

At this juncture, staff is requesting general endorsement from the CWG to proceed with further development of this concept once the updated Comprehensive Plan is

adopted. Specific ordinance language, development standards, and review procedures would be prepared following additional study, feedback, and coordination with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

3. Cluster Development / Rural Cottage Courts (via CUP)

As Powhatan County continues to explore rural housing alternatives, staff is seeking feedback from the Citizens Working Group (CWG) on a potential zoning approach to enable **small-scale housing clusters** that are thoughtfully designed, compact in layout, and appropriate for rural or utility-served areas. These communities—referred to here as **Cluster Developments** or **Rural Cottage Courts**—would be available only by **Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** and could help address shifting demographic needs while maintaining Powhatan’s rural character.

These housing types offer alternatives to traditional large-lot subdivisions by providing **modestly sized homes (600 to 1,200 sq ft)** arranged in a compact footprint. They are well suited for:

- **One- or two-person households**
- **Seniors seeking to age in place**
- **Residents seeking low-maintenance or community-oriented living**

Cluster developments would typically consist of **small, detached homes** arranged around a shared green, courtyard, or trail, with a strong emphasis on **walkability and community space** rather than large private yards. The development would be subject to **design guidelines**, which could regulate roof forms, porches, siding materials, color palettes, fencing, parking arrangements, and overall architectural style—ensuring that the project reflects a cohesive and intentional design.

These housing clusters would **likely be structured as rental communities**, with one person or entity owning the land and potentially the homes. However, **alternative ownership models** could also be allowed or encouraged. These might include **fee simple lots, condominium ownership, or housing cooperatives**, creating opportunities for both long-term renters and homebuyers.

This type of development could be allowed in rural zoning districts (e.g., A-10, RR) or utility-served growth areas, depending on site context. In rural areas, larger parcels may be necessary to support well and septic infrastructure and to accommodate required buffers. In utility-served areas, more compact forms may be appropriate.

Importantly, these homes are **not intended to be “tiny homes” on wheels or trailers**, but rather **permanent, code-compliant dwellings on foundations**—distinguished by thoughtful scale, clustered layout, and community design. While there are some similarities to tiny home concepts, the intent is to provide a **high-quality, small-home living option** that is responsive to current housing trends and needs in Powhatan County.

This concept should also **not be confused with “conservation subdivisions,”** which are a more traditional land subdivision technique that require a certain percentage of land to be permanently conserved as open space. In contrast, **cluster housing is not tied to required land conservation** and focuses instead on **housing form, site layout, and shared amenities**.

Several localities in **Virginia** have adopted **cluster housing or small-scale cottage housing provisions**, including:

- **Albemarle County**, which allows cluster development in rural areas with density incentives for open space preservation
- **Loudoun County**, which includes cluster options in rural and transitional zoning districts
- **Fauquier County**, which permits rural clusters by special exception
- **Montgomery County**, which has explored rural housing overlays with clustered formats
- **James City County**, which allows small-lot cluster housing as part of their Residential Cluster Overlay

These examples demonstrate how rural and fast-growing counties are using cluster housing to offer **more diverse housing choices** while balancing preservation and growth.

Planning Director’s Commentary: Cluster Housing

Whether or not decision makers in Powhatan County ultimately choose to add something like cluster development or rural cottage courts to the zoning ordinance, it will be a topic worthy of continued discussion. That said, I believe this concept will continue to **gain momentum both regionally and nationally**. As communities grapple with challenges related to **housing affordability, shrinking household sizes, and an aging population**, more jurisdictions are beginning to look **“outside the box”** for development models that balance flexibility with quality design.

In my view, cluster housing also offers more **efficient use of land**, reducing pressure to further subdivide larger tracts into traditional lots. By concentrating modestly sized homes

into smaller footprints with shared infrastructure and open space, we may be able to meet new housing demands without fragmenting Powhatan’s rural landscape.

Cluster development represents one such model—and may offer long-term value as part of Powhatan’s broader approach to thoughtful rural planning.

VISUALS: Cluster Housing



An example of cluster housing development in a rural area



An example of cluster housing development in a denser Village area



An example of an exiting housing cluster development in Farmville, Virginia

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