

Countryside Master Plan



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June 20, 2011

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September 17, 2012

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Introduction

The City of Roanoke purchased the Countryside Golf Course property in November 2005. The golf course was closed in winter 2010 and City planning staff initiated a public participation process to identify potential reuse options. Throughout July and August 2010, six community meetings were held to get input. Staff also hosted meetings with other stakeholders such as economic development professionals, developers, and Realtors. The process culminated with a briefing to City Council, who authorized a six-month master planning process.

Work on the master plan began in October 2010, with the Planning Commission serving as the advisory body for the project. The Commission met in eight work sessions, including an open house at William Fleming High School. Citizens living near the property attended all the work sessions and were given an opportunity to comment and ask questions throughout the process. The Commission began the planning process in October by walking the property. A number of nearby residents joined in the walk and discussed issues and concerns with Commissioners along the way.



Countryside residents join the Planning Commission on a walking tour of the land.

Plan Summary

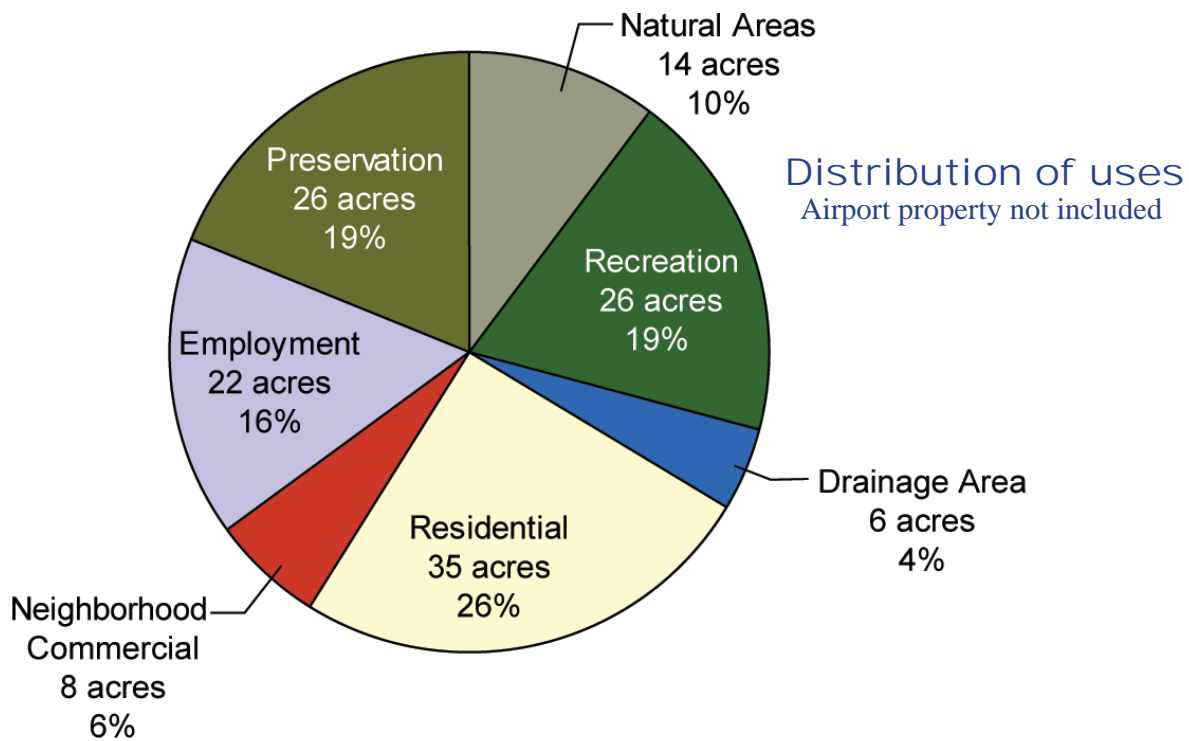
This plan recommends the property be developed as a new mixed use neighborhood set within the context of other neighborhoods and existing development. This model is consistent with and implements the *Vision 2001-2020* Comprehensive Plan and the *Strategic Housing Plan*, which recommended tried-and-true traditional patterns that sustain value over generations.

The challenge is to plan an infill development within an existing neighborhood context. Unlike greenfield development, this plan must respond to the street patterns, terrain, and buildings that already exist. Moreover, the existing neighborhood fabric must be respected.

Time and again in the public meetings, citizens cited loss of open space and natural areas provided by the former golf course as their principal concern. This plan restores and enhances those amenities and furthermore makes them publicly-accessible. The community will have natural areas well-connected by a system of trails as well as new recreation opportunities needed in this part of Roanoke. Over half of the property's 139 acres will be dedicated to open space uses such as recreation, ~~agriculture~~, preservation, and natural areas. An additional 71 acres owned by the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission, though not publicly-accessible, will be open space.

The Central area features a cluster of mixed residential development with a wide variety of housing types bracketed by a neighborhood park, a community park, and preservation areas. Space is reserved for a small neighborhood center to evolve as residential and other commercial development occurs.

Actual development of the residential, employment, agricultural, and neighborhood commercial uses will be carried out by private sector developers. Some of the larger-scale recreational uses could be developed by the private sector in partnership with the City.



Distribution of uses by planning area

	Laurel Ridge	Frontage	Ranch-Mattaponi	Mattaponi-Countryside	Portland	Central	Total	%
Residential	10			6		20	35 acres	25%
Neighborhood Commercial						8	8 acres	6%
Employment		20				3	22 acres	16%
Preservation	11	8	1	4		3	26 acres	19%
Naturalized Area			7	7			14 acres	10%
Recreation			4		12	10	26 acres	19%
Drainage		1	2	1		2	6 acres	4%
Total*	20	28	15	18	12	45	139	100%

*Discrepancies in addition due to rounding

Note: Airport property not included

Planning Approach

The planning approach was guided by the development principles and policies of the *Vision 2001-2020 Comprehensive Plan*, which advocate the best of familiar traditional development patterns in new development. Other plans such as the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (2007), the *Peters Creek North Neighborhood Plan* (2002), and the *Roanoke Valley Conceptual Regional Greenway Plan Update* (2007) also provided valuable guidance to the process.

The first task was to draft a set of urban design principles specific to the Countryside property to guide environmental protection, orienting features, general arrangement, mobility, development forms, and amenities. The commission identified these principles as critical:

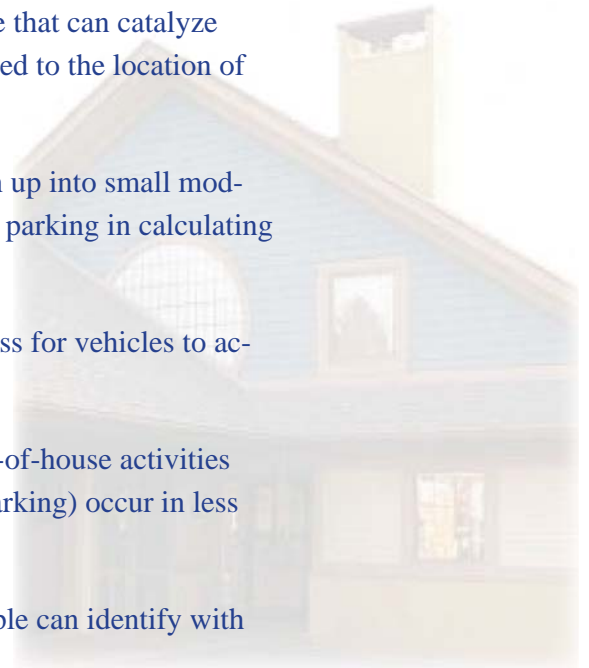
- **Use land efficiently** by deliberately designating the use of all spaces—whether for building, parks, or preservation.
- **Preservation areas** such as riparian buffers, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and existing wooded areas should be designated as areas to remain in a natural state (allowed to revert to a natural state).
- **Residential diversity** should be provided through a variety of dwelling types that allow people of different life styles, ages, family composition, income levels, and tastes to live in close proximity and to interact with one another.
- **Street connectivity**. New development should have streets that provide connection, pedestrian amenities, and have minimum pavement width. Consider extension of existing public dead-end streets where appropriate.
- **Recreation facilities** should be integrated into neighborhood fabric rather than set off from it.



- **Commercial development** should be small in scale and provide opportunities for locally-owned enterprise. Commercial buildings and sites should be designed so there is no need to separate or screen them from residential uses.



- **Future neighborhood center.** Reserve land area in a strategically appropriate place for a future neighborhood center to provide opportunities to live, work, shop, play, and interact in a neighborhood setting.
- **Quality of housing** should stress form, materials, finishes, and orientation, rather than square footage.
- **Streets must be carefully designed as public spaces** where vehicles travel at neighborhood-appropriate speeds.
- **Squares, parks, and civic space** should be created deliberately as orienting features for development. In turn, buildings fronting on them should define their edges.
- **Create a center.** The neighborhood should have a main orienting feature that may be made up of multiple important features. This clear center of community life can become so important that the area is known by it.
- **Urban agriculture.** Consider urban agriculture as a use that can catalyze development with a community market closely connected to the location of food production.
- **Automobile parking** should be de-emphasized, broken up into small modules, and well-shaded by large trees. Consider on-street parking in calculating available supply.
- **Alleys or narrow lanes** should be used to provide access for vehicles to access to driveways or garages in the rear of houses.
- **Building/lot orientation** should be considered so back-of-house activities (e.g., trash collection, utilities, loading, delivery, and parking) occur in less conspicuous locations.
- **Orienting features** are buildings or amenities that people can identify with and help other development fall into place.



- **Main buildings.** Use main buildings as orienting features around which to arrange other development. Examples include commercial buildings, multifamily buildings, places of worship, or institutional buildings such as a school, recreation center, or community center.

The design principles guided development of this plan and should further guide the evaluation of development proposals. The principles are included in their entirety as part of this document.

Roanoke's lack of developable land means the Countryside property is too much of an opportunity to settle for conventional development. Rather, the goal is to use the best design principles to guide development of a unique new neighborhood that responds to the site, the goals contained in adopted city development plans, and existing neighbors. New development should complement and add value to the neighborhoods surrounding the property. The development pattern should enable people to live, work, shop, and play within their neighborhood—as they do in many of Roanoke's existing neighborhoods.

Once the principles were established, the next step was to identify sensitive environmental areas or assets and remove them from consideration for development. The property contains a multitude of streams, ponds, wetlands, wooded areas, and steep slopes that are best left in their natural state to become amenities for new and existing development. These areas were mapped and identified as preservation areas.



A portion of the Laurel Ridge area is designated for preservation.

To aid in the planning process, seven distinct areas of the property were identified. Each planning area was studied closely and evaluated for its development potential. Many concepts were developed to test different arrangements of lots and buildings. Daniel Dart, a landscape architect with Parks and Recreation, provided precision-scaled drawings to show possible lot configurations and building placements. Careful attention was paid to the areas lying between Ranch Road, Mattaponi Drive, and Countryside Road because they directly abut stable single-family areas. The most challenging area was the Central area because it is open to a multitude of uses and an almost infinite number of arrangements.

The *Lick Run Phase III Greenway* study recommended a route in the vicinity of the Countryside property. Parks and Recreation staff studied possible routes for a greenway and feeder trails.

Parks and Recreation staff were also heavily involved in the planning process to identify opportunities to integrate park elements into the neighborhood. After testing several versions, the plan recommends two parks: a small-scale neighborhood park just west of the neighborhood center and a medium-scale community park adjacent to William Fleming High School to take advantage of the proximity to the school. The neighborhood park would serve residents living within a half mile and the community park would have a larger service area of several miles radius. If athletic fields are included in the community park, they should be carefully sited and designed to eliminate or minimize negative impacts such as light trespass and noise. Room for a pocket park or civic square is reserved next to the neighborhood center.

Stormwater management is important to any development, but is especially important here given the proximity to Lick Run. Nontraditional stormwater systems that are natural and form amenities for the community should be employed. There are numerous strategies such as Light Imprint and Low Impact Development that favor a dispersed and natural system over piping to constructed rip-rap-lined detention basins. Such systems are often less expensive to construct and maintain, but they do require creativity and careful planning. Existing natural drainage areas are reserved in anticipation of serving these functions.

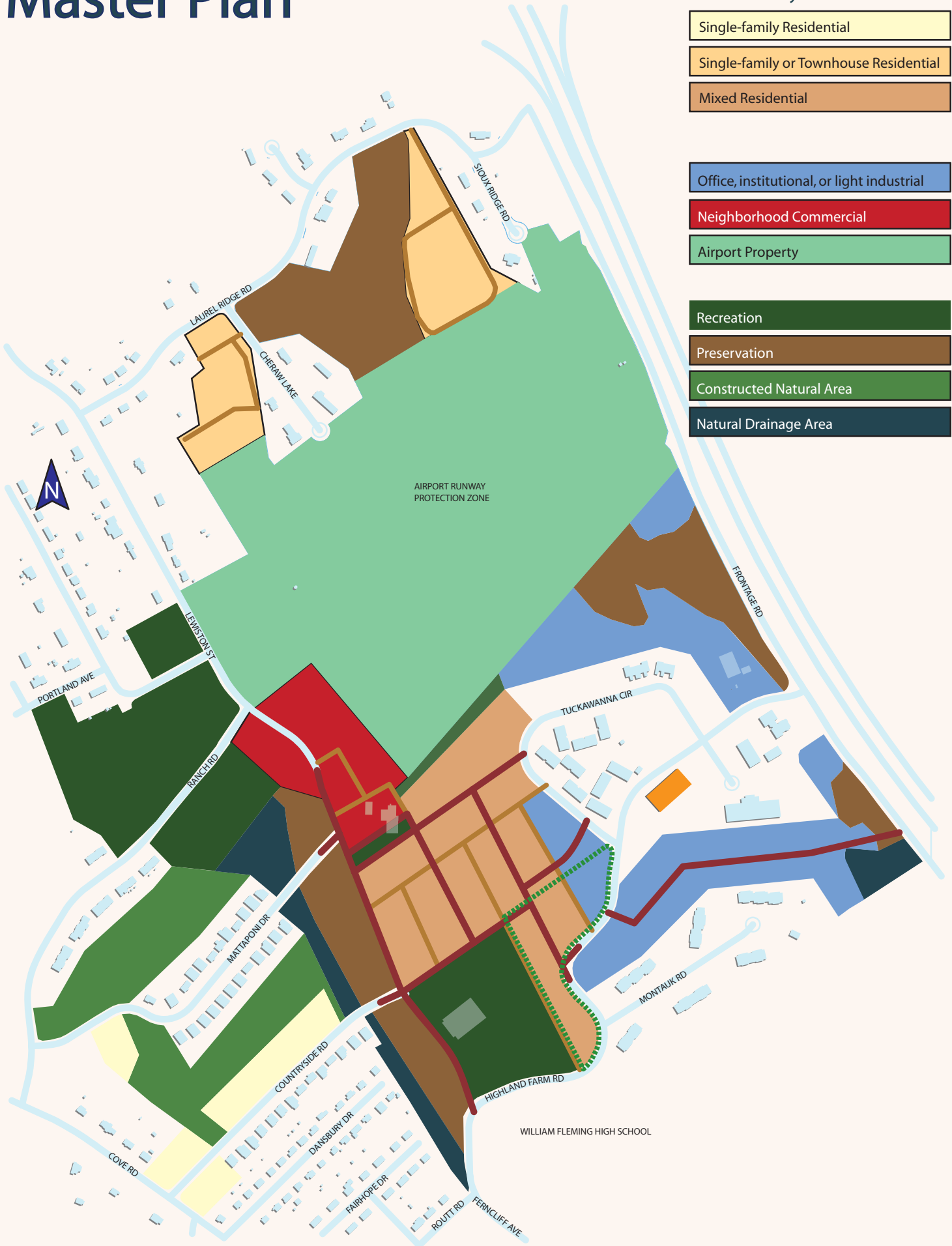


The Lick Run Phase III greenway study recommends routes through the Countryside property.

Master Plan

Land Use Key

Single-family Residential
Single-family or Townhouse Residential
Mixed Residential
Office, institutional, or light industrial
Neighborhood Commercial
Airport Property
Recreation
Preservation
Constructed Natural Area
Natural Drainage Area



Laurel Ridge

The Laurel Ridge area consists of two development parcels designated in the map to the right as A and C. These parcels should be developed with either single-family dwellings, townhouse dwellings, or both. Because of the shape of the parcels, most lots would need to be accessed via rear-access lanes. Parcel A has frontage on two existing streets. Development studies showed the parcels could support up to 50 townhouses or 33 single-family dwellings.

The area between the two development parcels—designated as B—contains a former irrigation pond, wetlands, and a stream. Development potential is limited by steep slopes, forested areas, and floodplain. It should be designated as a preservation area and allowed to revert to a natural state with the exception of the former tee box area, which is ideal for a greenway trail head.

On Parcel A, the plan recommends exclusion of a small part of the northwestern corner because of the proximity and orientation of the home of the adjoining owner.

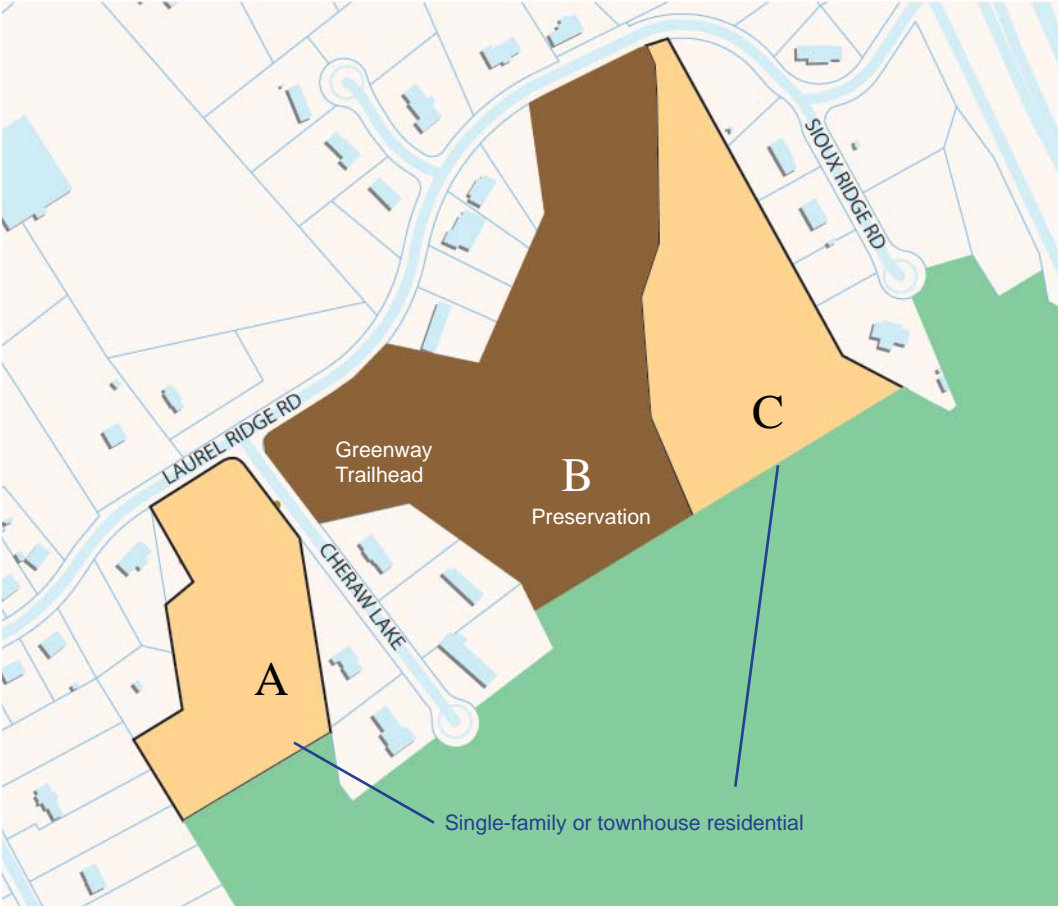
Elevation, proximity to the natural area, and adjacency to the open space of the RPZ make these parcels attractive development opportunities. Parcel C is within a noise impact area and may be a more attractive opportunity in future years.

The City should sell the land fee simple to a developer with zoning conditions or conditions contained in a development agreement.



This study shows a potential scenario for single-family houses fronting on a green and accessed via a rear-access lane.

Laurel Ridge



Portland

This planning area consists of two parcels along the extension of runway 6/24. The parcels are in the center of the noise impact area and are therefore not appropriate for any residential use.

Shortly after this plan was adopted, a local business submitted a proposal to use this area for urban agriculture to include row crops, a building for preparation and sales of produce, and 400 pastured chickens. The proposal was presented publicly in September 2011. Public opposition from neighboring residents was strong and the proposal was withdrawn. While opposition focused on the element of the operation that included chickens, it became apparent that no form of agriculture would be supported by the neighbors.

The idea of recreational use, and specifically athletic fields, was explored while formulating concepts for the original plan. Four of the five concept drawings presented at public workshops showed the larger parcel could support at least two full-size fields. Planning staff determined the land use to be appropriate and would be consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan's recommendations for more athletic fields in suburban Northwest Roanoke. However, the recreation idea was tabled in favor of urban agriculture when the plan was adopted by City Council.

Development with athletic fields would have the benefit of ensuring green space is preserved for a defined period. Accordingly, the Portland area should be designated for recreational use and, specifically, considered as a site for athletic fields.

A greenway connection along Lewiston Road should be developed concurrently to provide convenient access from the Miller Court area to the new neighborhood park on Ranch Road.



Portland



This concept shows potential arrangement of two full size athletic fields and a smaller practice field. A greenway along Lewiston provides a convenient connection to the new neighborhood park.

Ranch-Mattaponi

This area lies between existing single-family and townhouse residential development. The parcel is too narrow to support a conventional street with parcels on each side because the resulting parcels would be very shallow. Moreover, most of this parcel is impacted by airport noise. Airport studies, however, project that it will be outside the noise impact areas by 2025. The western portion of this parcel will not be an attractive residential development opportunity for 10 or more years.

This plan recommends that the northeastern portion be developed as a neighborhood park (depicted in solid green) and the frontage along Mattaponi and Lewiston be reserved for a future small-scale neighborhood center. The remaining land should be converted to passive natural area (medium green) that will not require intensive maintenance. A naturalistic form of gardening called “edible forest gardening” would be an ideal option.

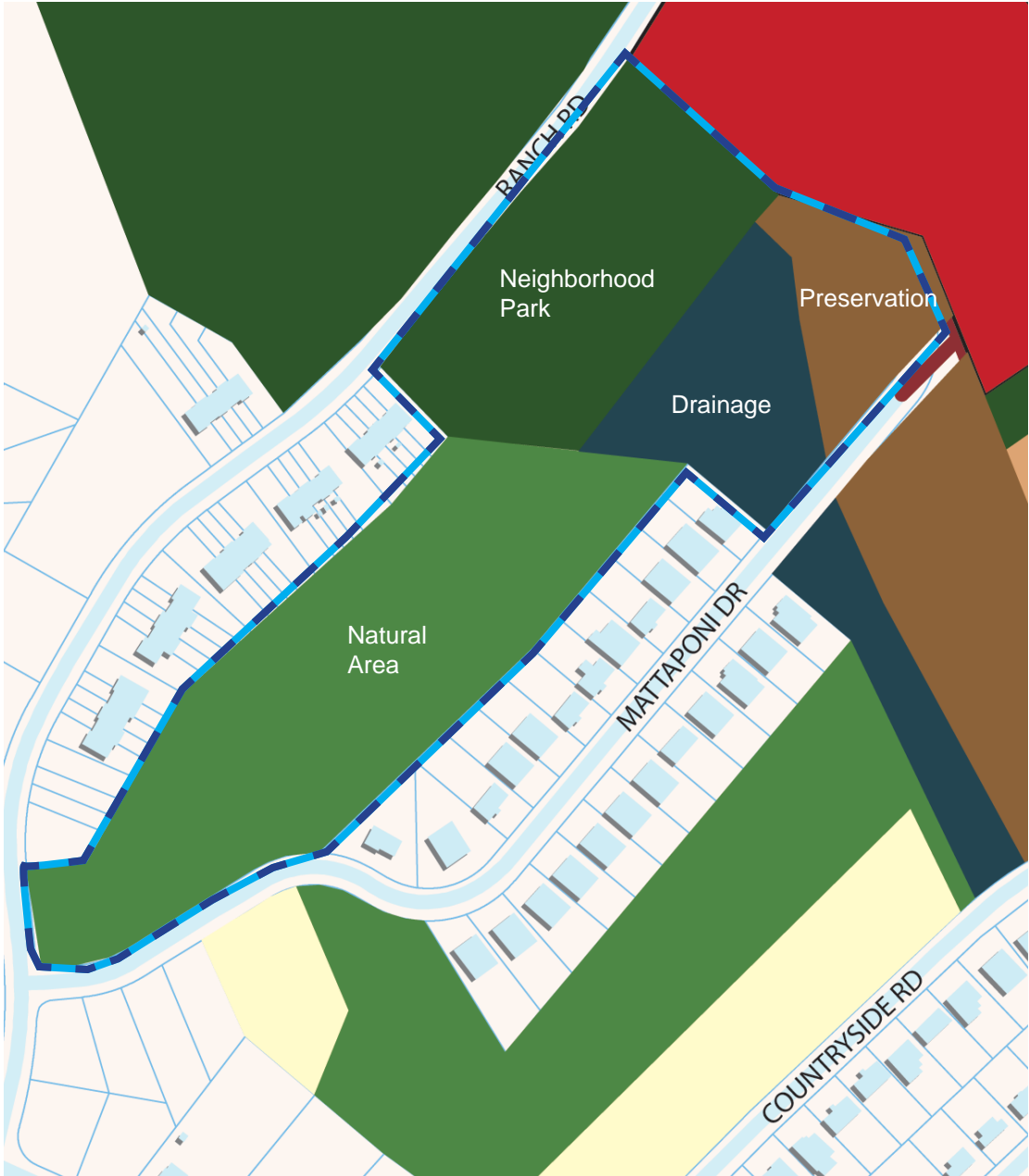
The former cart path should serve as a feeder trail to the proposed greenway.

The natural area and neighborhood park should be retained by the City. Development of the natural area, trail, and park will depend on availability of public funding. The drainage and preservation areas, if used to support development, should be conveyed to a developer with conditions restricting them to these uses.



Xeriscaping, using drought-resistant native plants, could be used to provide a desirable natural area with little or none of the long-term maintenance requirements of turfgrass.

Ranch-Mattaponi



Mattaponi-Countryside

This area was the location of the former 10th and 11th holes and lies between existing single-family development. The land has frontage on two streets, with most frontage lying on Countryside Road.

This plan recommends single-family residential development along the existing frontages of Countryside Road and Cove Road (depicted in pale yellow). The land area could support 19 to 25 single-family dwellings depending on lot patterns. Lots should be consistent with existing lot patterns found on Countryside Road. Two to three single-family lots are recommended on the existing Mattaponi frontage.

The area of the former 10th and 11th fairways, between existing and proposed development, is too narrow to support additional development and should be retained as a constructed natural area that will not require intensive maintenance. (medium green). The former cart path could be adapted to serve as a feeder trail to the proposed greenway and form a circuit with the Ranch-Mattaponi trail. Green strips should be reserved to provide access to the natural area and trail from Countryside Road and Mattaponi Drive. These strips should contain defined trails feeding to the central trail. The master plan illustrates the concept and general location of these green strips, but the precise location, number, and size should be coordinated with a proposed development pattern and evaluated as part of a development proposal. The goal is to strike the best balance between maximizing the land available for new development and maintaining the views that existing residents have into the open space.

Because of existing frontages and adjacency to strong existing single-family homes, this area is among the most attractive development opportunities.

The City should consider fee simple sale of development lots. Sale should be with zoning conditions or conditions contained in a development agreement that apply the master plan design principles.

The natural area should be retained by the City, with development of the natural area and trail dependent upon availability of public funding. The drainage and preservation areas, if used to support development, should be conveyed to a developer with conditions restricting them to these uses.

Mattaponi-Countryside



Frontage

The Frontage planning area abuts Highland Farm Road, Tuckawanna Circle, and Frontage Road. As the low point of the property and the route of Lick Run, a large portion of the land should be designated for preservation and natural stormwater management. Approximately 22 acres are suitable for development. The pond at the eastern tip of the property could be used as a natural stormwater management feature.

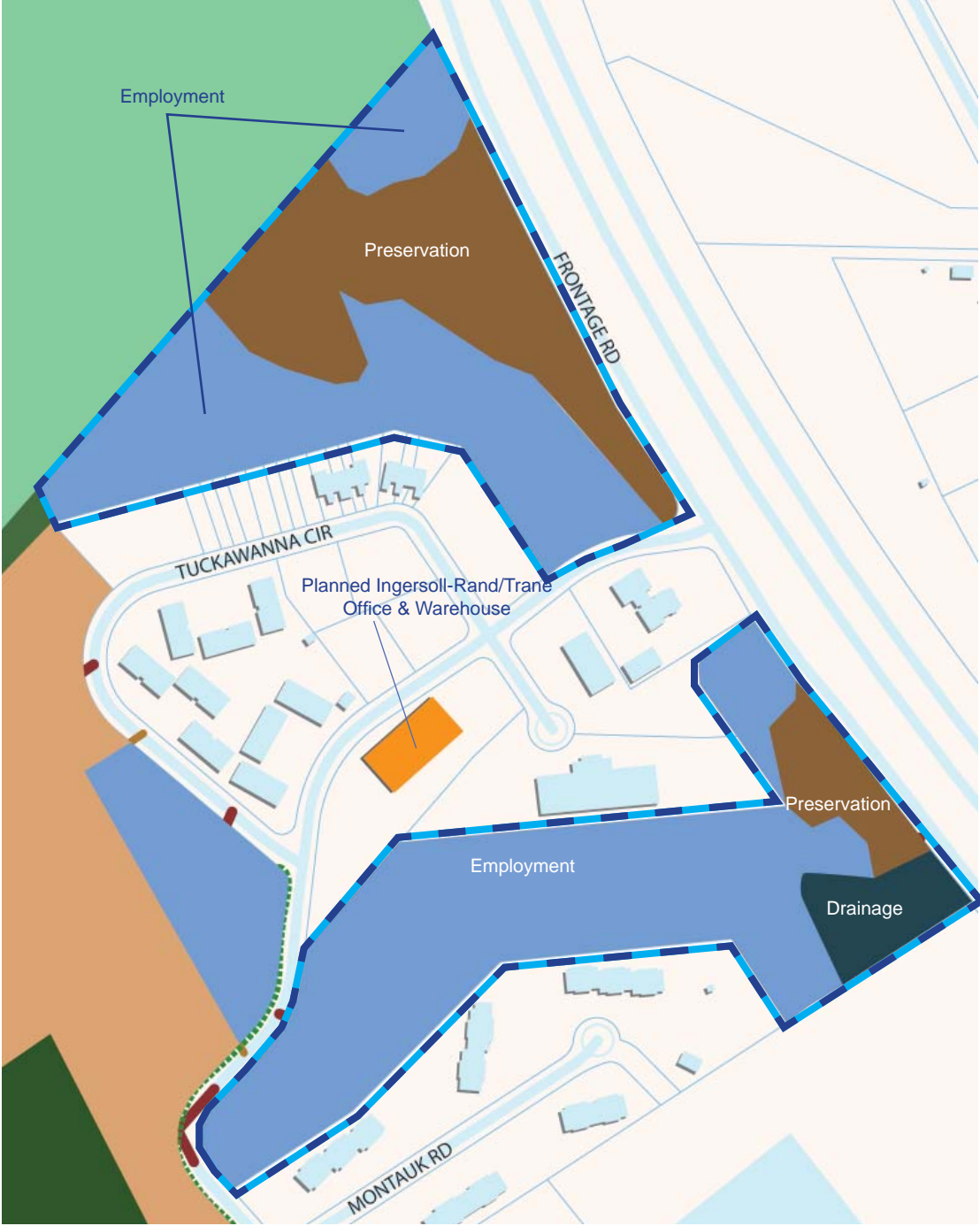
This area should be oriented to uses that provide employment. The land is ideal for light commercial such as offices, educational uses, and light industrial development such as assembly. Buildings should be relatively small in scale. Residential uses could be included in mixed use buildings. The eastern portion of the Central area fronting on Tuckawanna Circle is designated for similar uses.

During the development of this plan, a new development broke ground in the Frontage area on property adjacent to the Countryside property. Newbern Properties is building a new 20,000 square foot office and warehouse building to be occupied by Ingersoll-Rand/Trane, solidifying the company's presence and employment generation in the area.

There is broad consensus that the barn and silo are iconic and should be preserved and reused by an entity other than the City. The condition of these structures should be thoroughly assessed to determine if adaptive reuse is feasible.

The City should sell the developable land fee simple with zoning conditions or conditions contained in a development agreement that apply the design principles.

Frontage



Central

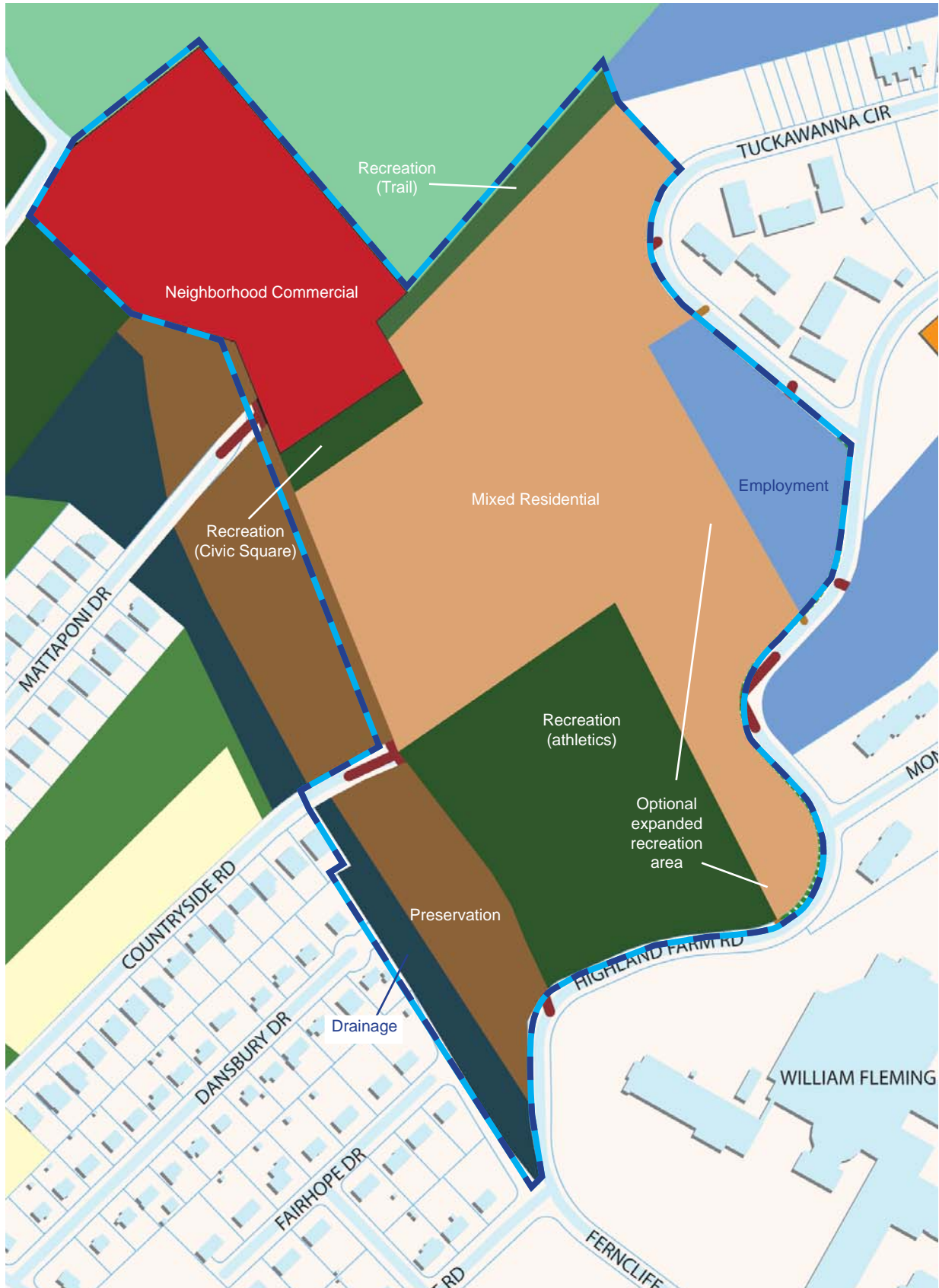
The Central area is the most usable part of the property and has the most potential to host a diversity of land uses. It contains the former clubhouse and a three-court tennis building, both in fair to poor condition.

The plan recommends that most of the land be dedicated to new residential development with a mixture of housing types to include single-family homes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings. Different housing types should be woven together in each block, thus the master plan diagram shows “Residential Mix.” Apartment buildings should be small in scale and are most appropriate at street intersections to take advantage of additional frontage for street parking. Roanoke’s neighborhoods provide many examples of successful mixing of housing types within the same block.

The 2007 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* noted that Roanoke has a general shortage of athletic fields for its population and specifically a 22 field deficit for soccer/football fields. The property offers an opportunity to increase the supply of fields and provide a venue for regional sports tournaments. A cluster of four fields is optimal for hosting the tournaments that result in positive economic impacts by bringing visitors to Roanoke. The southern portion of the Central area is identified as the optimal location for recreational use geared toward athletics because of its easy access via Ferncliff Avenue and its proximity to William Fleming High School. The area to the east—designated as residential on the master plan— should be considered as an option for creating an expanded recreational area (indicated as area within the dotted green line). With the addition of this optional area, the area south of the extension Countryside Road could accommodate up to four athletic fields. The design and scale of new athletic facilities should be carefully evaluated to ensure compatibility with the surrounding land uses. Park infrastructure should include both neighborhood and community park areas.

The Commission discussed the tennis building and determined that retaining it could be considered only if significant improvements to its appearance are made beyond simple rehabilitation. The metal-clad building should be refaced and improved with windows. Single-story additions could help step down the mass of the building and help it fit into a neighborhood context. Several groups have expressed in using it as part of an athletic complex.

Central



The northern portion should be reserved for future neighborhood commercial development. The area is relatively small (about one block in length). The existing low density development in the area is not likely to support such development now, but could in the future as density builds up and Lick Run greenway is routed through or near the site. The community market recommended on or near the Portland site could catalyze development.

The former clubhouse may not be retained long-term because it occupies the location of the future neighborhood center. It could serve a private-sector interim use over the short term such as a market or meeting space, or it could be reconfigured to fit within an evolving neighborhood center.

The land on the eastern part of the site fronting on Tuckawanna Circle is designated for the same type of commercial development described for the Frontage area.

The Commission considers a highly-connected street system to be a crucial feature in the development of this portion of the site. The master plan diagram shows short block lengths of 400 to 600 feet, which is comparable to blocks in Roanoke's traditional neighborhoods.

The proposed street system will provide mobility for the new neighborhood and enhance connectivity of existing residents in the area. Ferncliff is effectively extended north to Lewiston. Such a connection has caused concern among residents participating in the planning process, so the street will need to be carefully designed to encourage vehicle speeds appropriate for a neighborhood setting. While acknowledging these concerns, the Commission considers the proposed street connections to be fundamental features in the design of the new neighborhood. Roanoke's Street Design Guidelines provide street configurations that can encourage slower vehicle speeds through their design.

Alleys should provide access to rear parking areas, and a place for service such as refuse collection. Alleys could be a location for creative stormwater management approaches.

The City should consider sale or lease of the areas not retained as a community park with zoning conditions or conditions contained in a development agreement that apply the design principles.



Local examples of townhouses and small apartment buildings that can be mixed in among single-family dwellings.

RPZ (Runway Protection Zone)

The RPZ is owned by the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission. Even though the City has no ownership interest, it was important to consider the possible uses the property could support.

There was considerable discussion on the RPZ at one planning session with Efren Gonzales, Deputy Director of the Commission. Because the RPZ is designated to protect people and property on the ground, the airport staff is wary of any use of the land that might allow or attract people. Another concern is any use that might attract birds, which are obviously a hazard to navigation.

A large portion of the former golf course was located in the RPZ. Mr. Gonzales indicated that use was permitted to be continued as a “grandfathered” use, but could not be newly established or re-established now that the course is closed. Airport staff was wary of the idea of agricultural use because it may attract birds. However a solar collector “farm” is a possibility. Finally, there was discussion about the possibility of a greenway traversing the land. Airport staff was not optimistic that the FAA would approve of the use because it would attract people.

Potential uses of the land are very limited, but there is an attractive opportunity to route the Lick Run Greenway through the property. The greenway need not traverse the center of the RPZ, but there would be great advantage to a route that skirted the edges to gain access to a trail head in the preservation area near Laurel Ridge Road. At the January 2010 open house session, many attendees supported the greenway route through the RPZ. The Commission recommends the City pursue a definitive ruling on a greenway traversing the land and perhaps seek a variance in consideration of a route along the edge(s) of the RPZ. This plan also recommends the airport consider a greenway use along the portions of airport-owned property that is not within the limits of the RPZ. If the greenway cannot be routed through the RPZ, it will need to be routed alongside existing streets in the area.

RPZ
Open Space



Greenway and Trail System

The *Lick Run Phase III Greenway* study recommended a route in the vicinity of the Countryside property. Parks & Recreation staff studied possible routes for a greenway extension through the development. There is tremendous potential to create a central spine of greenway with feeder trails connecting into it. In addition to providing connections from the natural areas, there should be short connections providing pedestrian and bicycle links from the dead ends of Dansbury Drive and Fairhope Road. A circuit of walking trails was often cited by residents as a highly-desired amenity. Many of the former golf course's cart paths could be adapted as trails.

The preferred route for the Lick Run Greenway enters the property from Ferncliff Road near William Fleming and follows a south-north path to the future neighborhood center. From there, the greenway continues north through a portion of airport property (non-RPZ) then skirts along the edge of the RPZ to a trail head at Laurel Ridge Road. Feedback at the January 2011 open house indicated very strong community support for this proposed route. Because there is concern about such use of the RPZ, such a route will require further discussion with the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission and staff. A route along Lewiston Street and Laurel Ridge Road is shown as an alternative.



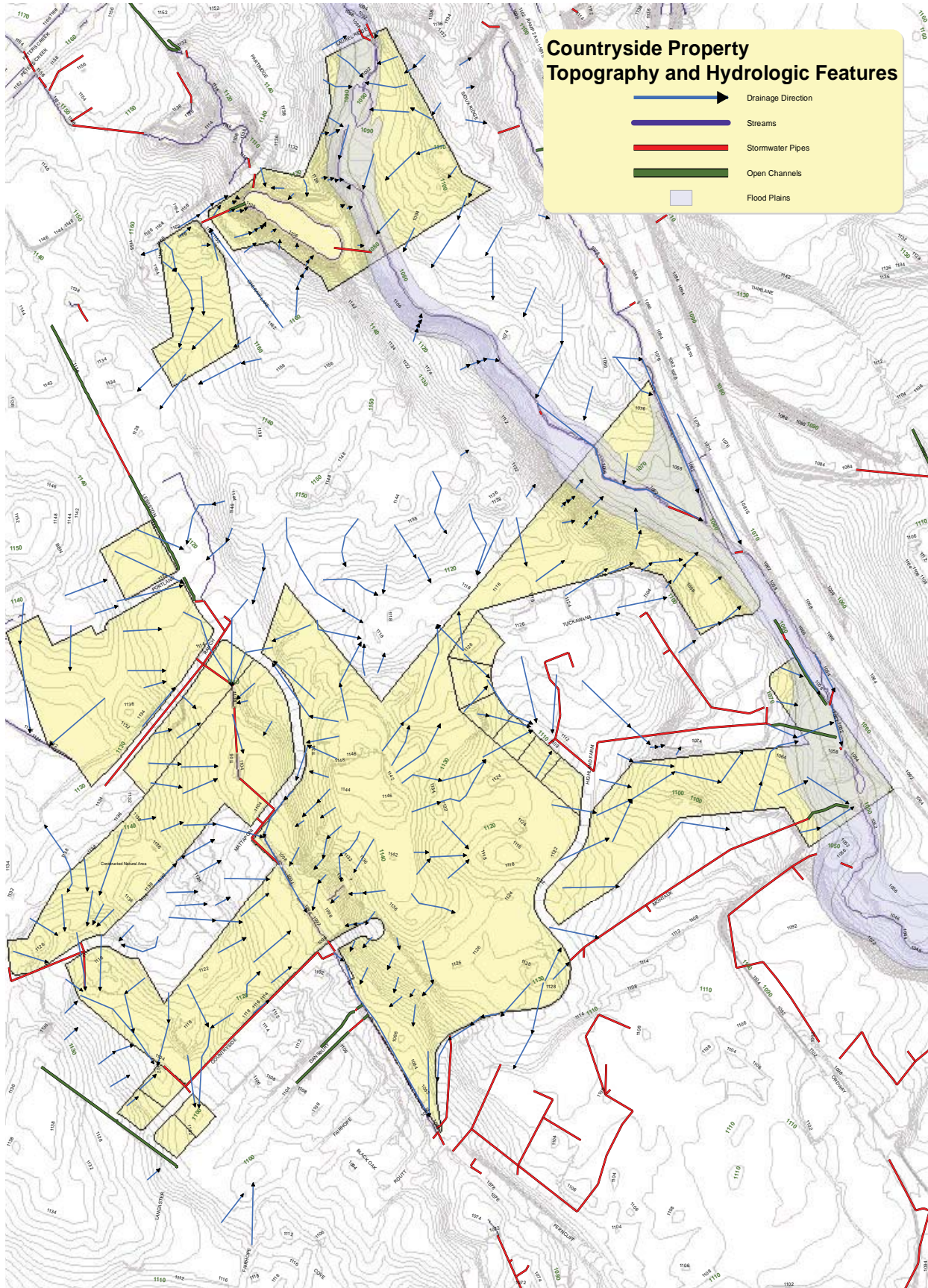
Environmental Repair and Preservation

As an urban stream, Lick Run and its tributaries should be assessed to identify opportunities for restoration action. With turf fertilization operations ceased, some improvement of the water quality has certainly begun to occur already. Such restoration may include actions such as removing culverts, restoring/regrading floodplains, and constructing/expanding wetlands. At a minimum, unneeded culverts that trap debris and preclude natural flow patterns should be removed. Riparian buffers should be established through preservation or revegetation with native plant species.

Existing trees and forest fragments should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Accordingly, this plan sets most forest fragments aside for preservation. Where tree removal is unavoidable, the tree canopy should be replaced. Roanoke's zoning ordinance requires that development include a certain amount of tree canopy and encourages preservation of existing trees through extra credits toward the required canopy.

Development of steep slopes should be avoided as well. Such areas, often wooded, were identified and designated for preservation. Consequently, few if any areas for development will require extensive grading.

Natural drainage techniques should be employed throughout the development. Stormwater management, which addresses both the quantity and quality of water entering natural waterways, should avoid approaches where water is piped and concentrated into large basins that are usually unattractive and sometimes nuisances. Rather, development should have a decentralized system where treatment structures are kept open and have a natural appearance. There are many accepted practices such as retention ponds, open channels, and filtration areas that can be attractive amenities rather than liabilities and can even multitask as usable features. Such techniques are well-illustrated in the *The Light Imprint Handbook*, authored by Roanoke native Tom Low of DPZ.



Development Strategy

In working through the process, plans have been drawn with a high level of detail—down to the lot sizes and building placements—to test how concepts would work. The final master plan is less detailed with no buildings or lot lines shown. Less detail leaves room for creativity on the part of developers to propose feasible projects. Successful proposals may not look exactly as shown on the plan, but they must adhere to critical design principles and specified land uses. A developer, for example, may propose curved streets rather than straight ones. In the case of streets, the critical features to consider are the block length and the level of connectivity provided.

The City could consider development incentives in accordance with its policy where there are extraordinary expenses associated with the development. Most of the difficult-to-develop land has been designated for preservation so no such development barriers are known, but they could arise. Incentives such as below-market consideration for the land could be considered where the value and quality of the proposed development are clearly extraordinary. Otherwise, any sales of land should be at market value. Each proposal should have a demonstrable financial benefit to the City either in terms of monetary consideration or through future revenue increases.

There are two general tools to ensure the master plan is followed. The first is the rezoning process. Any uses other than recreational or agricultural uses must go through the rezoning process where the Commission and City Council can effectively evaluate adherence to this plan. The second approach is through development agreements executed as a condition of sale.

When the golf course was in operation, the City needed to have a single developer take on the entire development because development of any portion of the property meant the entire course would be taken out of operation. This approach was problematic because developers tend to focus on a single niche such as residential or commercial, thus limiting the pool of potential developers to those who are willing to take on mixed-use projects as a master developer.

With the golf course closed, the City can market smaller, more manageable development opportunities and invite proposals for development of smaller portions of the property over time. There are likely to be many developers, but the master plan will act as the glue holding the pieces together and ensuring good relationships between uses. As development proposals are evaluated, the effect on other sections of the development must be assessed to ensure future phases remain feasible. The City must necessarily assume a caretaker role to ensure such big picture issues are considered.

Implementation

This plan recommends that each area be marketed as an opportunity and solicit proposals with fact sheets based on existing templates used to advertise other City-owned properties, with added information about area demographics and housing markets.

As proposals are submitted, a team should be formed to evaluate them. This team should have representatives from the Planning Commission and city staff such as finance, real estate, engineering, parks and recreation, development review, and planning. Proposals should be evaluated based on their adherence to the design principles and land use arrangements specified in this plan. Other important considerations include the financial benefit or cost to the City, the benefit provided to the area, and the relationship to the existing community. Proposals should be made with a general concept in mind, with detail being added after there is consensus that the idea is acceptable. This team could review conceptual proposals and make recommendations to City Council.

Moving forward into the development phase, the City must be sensitive to the concerns of the surrounding community. This will require a balance between a developers' need for confidentiality and the need for public transparency.

Public Improvements

Concurrent to marketing development opportunities, the City should identify priorities for public investment in recreational amenities, construction of natural areas, and stream restoration. Planning and Parks and Recreation staff should work together to develop planning-level cost estimates for these proposed public improvements:

- Construction of greenways and trails
- Construction of park amenities
- Construction of natural areas
- Development of athletic facilities
- Environmental improvements

Once the costs for these improvements are known, potential funding sources should be identified. Generally, funding should be included in the City's Capital Improvement Program. Where available, federal and state grants should be sought to leverage funding for environmental improvements.

Immediate implementation of some public amenity within two years is desirable. Such investment would demonstrate the City's commitment to the public amenities and in turn instill confidence in potential developers that the City intends to carry out this plan. Based on public comments and previously adopted plans, the greenway and trail system should be the priority for public investment, even if this segment of Lick Run greenway does not immediately connect to the existing Lick Run Greenway.

Conclusion

Since the City purchased the property in 2005 with the intent of developing it as a mixed-use housing cluster, residents in the Countryside area have felt uncertain about what will happen. This master plan provides existing and prospective residents with more certainty about the nature of development that could occur next to them. Because development is market-driven, there are no assurances about timing. Nor can there be assurances that the plan will not need to be amended at some point in the future. However, any modification will be subject to the public processes of land disposition and zoning amendment.

The planning process has been deliberate and citizens have been heavily involved throughout the process. Staff and the Commission could not accommodate all requests, some of which were conflicting, but all comments were heard and considered.

Patience is an important virtue as we emerge from a severe real estate downturn. The property is large, diverse, and fragmented. Strong neighborhoods develop and evolve over many years and it would not be unreasonable to assume that full build out might take up to 20 years. Certain parts of the property may develop quickly while other parts may take many years before development opportunities are realized. It may be that the City will have to consider several proposals before the ideal development is identified for a particular area. Roanoke has no other such opportunities to create a new neighborhood. Compromising in order to accelerate build out should be resisted. If done carefully and deliberately, the Countryside property is certain to become an extraordinary new community.

Design Principles: Orienting features

Orienting features. Use identifiable buildings or amenities to help other development fall into place.

Squares, parks, and civic space should be included as orienting features for development. Buildings that front on them should define their edges.

Create a center. The neighborhood should have a main orienting feature that may be made up of multiple important features.

Main buildings. Use main buildings as orienting features around which to arrange other development. Examples include commercial buildings, multifamily buildings, places of worship, or institutional buildings such as a school, recreation center, or community center.

Future neighborhood center. Reserve land for this orienting feature in a strategically appropriate place for a future neighborhood center to provide opportunities to live, work, shop, play, and interact in a neighborhood setting.

Urban agriculture. Urban agriculture can catalyze development with a community market closely connected to the location of food production.

Streets become an important orienting feature, but should be seen as something providing access to development.

Design Principles: General Arrangement

Residential densities should generally be higher within and near a village center, and become lower with distance from the village center.

Residential diversity. Provide a variety of dwelling types that allow people of different life styles, ages, family composition, income levels, and tastes to live in close proximity and to interact with one another. Housing for elderly people and multifamily buildings should be integrated into the neighborhood rather than clustered in an enclave. Consider using multifamily buildings as “main” buildings around which to arrange other uses.

Recreation facilities should be integrated into neighborhood fabric rather than set off from it. Consider using a recreation-related building as a “main” building. Consider non-traditional or unique recreational opportunities. Having a picnic shelter (gathering place), preferably on or near a greenway, is essential.

Preservation areas such as riparian buffers, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and existing wooded areas should be designated as areas to remain in a natural state (allowed to revert to a natural state).

Commercial and community agriculture. Reserve land to grow food and market it locally.

Use land efficiently. All spaces, whether for building, parks, or preservation should be deliberately designated.

Building/lot orientation. Carefully consider where back-of-house activities occur (e.g., trash collection, utilities, loading, delivery, and parking) and locate them in less conspicuous locations.

Employment. Light industrial establishments are desirable, even in close proximity to residential development, where operations generate minimal or no off-site impacts.

Design Principles: Mobility

Greenways and bikeways should be fundamental part of transportation and land use planning. Link orienting features with trails so they function for both mobility and recreation. Consider feeder trails that connect to the greenway system.

Street connectivity. New development should have streets that provide connection, pedestrian amenities, and have minimum pavement width. Consider extension of existing public dead-end streets where appropriate.

Dead-end streets. Public dead end streets should be avoided because they do not benefit any citizens other than those with frontage along it. Dead-end streets or drives that are necessary due to existing development patterns or topography should be privately owned and maintained, except where they can provide public bike and pedestrian connectivity.

Sidewalks and street trees should be provided along both sides of every new public street.

Alleys or narrow lanes should be used to provide access for vehicles to access to driveways or garages in the rear of houses. Consider a development pattern where houses front on a green rather than on a street.

Streets must be carefully designed to create a superior urban frontage and discourage speeding.

Automobile parking should be sized at the minimum size necessary, hidden, de-emphasized, broken up into small modules, and well-shaded by large trees. Consider on-street parking in calculating available supply.

Design Principles: Building & Development Forms

Traditional neighborhood design principles should be used in new development. (e.g., relatively small lots, consistent setbacks, on street parking, garages to the rear/side of main buildings, interconnected streets, narrow/deep lotting patterns)

Add lasting value. The “bones” of buildings, such a structure, windows, form, and cladding material, should be designed and constructed to add lasting value. Consider multiple life cycles of buildings over generations. This principle is especially important for civic buildings.

Quality of housing. Housing should stress the quality of its form, materials, finishes, and orientation, rather than square footage. The value for most new dwellings must be at or above the regional median in order to balance the City’s overall housing supply.

The architecture of new housing is important. Standards should be established to stress orientation to human scale (rather than vehicles). Consider front porches on dwellings as a semi-public area to provide outdoor living spaces and encourage informal interaction by neighbors.

Environmental responsibility. Development should use land efficiently, encourage energy conservation, use renewable energy resources.

Commercial development should be small in scale and provide opportunities for locally-owned enterprise. No portion of the property is appropriate for large scale commercial buildings. Commercial buildings and sites should be designed so there is no need to separate or screen them from residential uses.

Front yards should be shallow and consistent. Bringing houses close to the street maximizes rear yard space. Commercial buildings should directly abut the sidewalk.

Side yards, typically unused space, should be very small.

Connect buildings. Explore housing forms that connect buildings to one another such as townhouses or single-family attached. Consider forms where buildings are connected along their narrow sides with longer sides exposed.

Design Principles: Amenities

Squares, parks, and civic space should be created deliberately as orienting features for development.

Integrate a community park. Development should include community park elements such as a playground, pavilion, community center/meeting hall/conference center, basketball court, and tennis court. These elements may necessarily be dispersed among the development, but well connected with trails. Multipurpose athletic fields (lacrosse, soccer, football) can be incorporated, but have the disadvantage of being land-intensive. Because fields do not involve construction of structures, the expense for initial development is relatively low; athletic fields should be considered as non-permanent placeholders for a future use in 10-20-30 years.

Trees. Streets and parks should have large deciduous trees. Trees are remarkably inexpensive given the value they add. Consider formal arrangements of trees to define and shade streets and pathways.

Design Principles: Parks, Greenways, and Trails

Orientation. Recreation facilities, opportunities, and landscapes should be integrated into the natural fabric of the project, complementing both natural features and residential living. The center of community life can be focused on a healthy green environment where natural terrain, forests, and active public spaces are centerpieces of the neighborhood.

Reuse of buildings for recreation. The property contains three existing structures: the clubhouse, the tennis building, and the barn. In evaluating the reuse of any of these buildings, consider their long-term sustainability, function, aesthetics, program, and ability to complement the project. These buildings could support both traditional and non-traditional outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities.

Park Classification. Use preferred existing landscapes to accommodate differing park types such as pocket, neighborhood, community, and linear.

- Include pocket and neighborhood park features within the residential scale within a 5 minute walking distance from one's home. These features may include picnic shelters, grills, formalized play areas, unstructured open play areas, plus hard court activity areas.
- Include community type park features along the perimeter of the residential core, preferably buffering residential from retail and commercial land uses. These amenities could include larger picnic and outdoor gathering pavilions.
- Include linear park landscapes (greenways) to connect conservation areas as identified herein, weaving such within the various land use types such that steep slopes, viewsheds, conservation areas, and forest fragments are seamlessly connected.

Conservation Areas. Preservation areas should be linked via greenway corridors such that riparian buffers, forest fragments, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and viewshed access are preserved in their natural state and protected from development. Landowners should inventory and catalogue these areas prior to development, including the creation of a prescriptive management plan to insure long-term sustainability.

Trails. Multiuse trails and active transport facilities should be a fundamental part of recreation, land use, and transportation planning.

- Recreational trails enable users to experience outdoor settings. Greenway trails, single-track, or double-track trails should be routed within natural green spaces, landscapes, parks, forested areas, natural resources, and conservation zones. They should connect to built-up locations such as residential housing, retail, village centers, schools, and commercial development.
- Sidewalks and bicycle accommodations should be built within the public right-of-way as part of any new or upgraded street.

Design Studies

Many ideas were tested as part of the planning process. These excerpts show some of the configurations shared with the community to get their feedback at an open house. Some of the ideas shown here were included in the final plan, but many were discarded in favor of better ones.



Study of Laurel Ridge area showing single-family houses fronting on a green and accessed via a rear-access lane.



Study of the area between Ranch Road, Mattaponi Drive, and Countryside Road.



Athletic fields near William Fleming High School in the area of the tennis building.

Commercial development in the Frontage area.





Nighborhood commercial and athletic fields. In the final plan, the athletic fields were removed and the neighborhood commercial area was reduced to a single block.



Single family dwellings on the Central area.

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