

Ashwood Boulevard Road Connection and Trailhead - Staff Analysis

The proposal for Brookhill includes construction of a public street from the development to Ashwood Boulevard through County-owned property to the north. In addition, the applicant has proffered to provide a greenway trail and paved parking area for a trailhead for the greenway to the Rivanna River on this same property. See Figure C within the proffers in Attachment E. Construction of these improvements requires Board approval. The PL29 Plan as well as strategies within the Comprehensive Plan support the approval of this connection as outlined below.

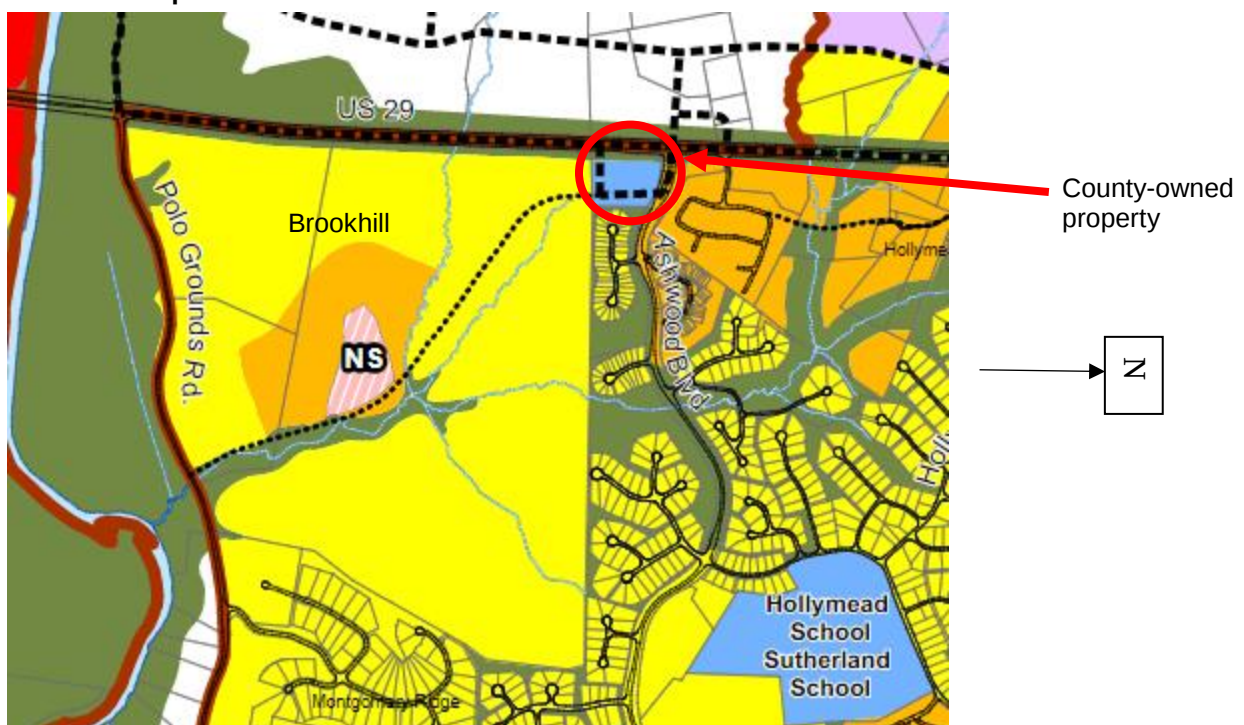
PL29 Plan:

The County-owned property (TMP 046B5-00-00-001C0) is a 4.75 acre parcel designated for future institutional use. As seen on the maps below, road connections through this parcel were anticipated in the PL29 Master Plan (see maps below). The Brookhill plan shows provides the street running parallel to Route 29 across this County-owned property. Between the new stormwater facility associated with the widening of Route 29 and right-of-way width requirements for that connecting street, usability of this parcel for other uses has been severely diminished. A trailhead with parking for the greenway is a public use that can take advantage of the small parcel size and is considered an institutional use.

The road connection provides a leg of an anticipated future “jug handle” for a future grade separated interchange at Ashwood and Route 29, as shown on the Land Use map. Construction of the jug handle (the ramp road between 29 and this Brookhill street) will not be necessary if this connection is made, as Brookhill effectively provides this connection to Route 29 with a proposed right in / right out at their main entrance. Additionally, this street will provide an important alternative access during construction of a graded separation at Ashwood and Route 29.

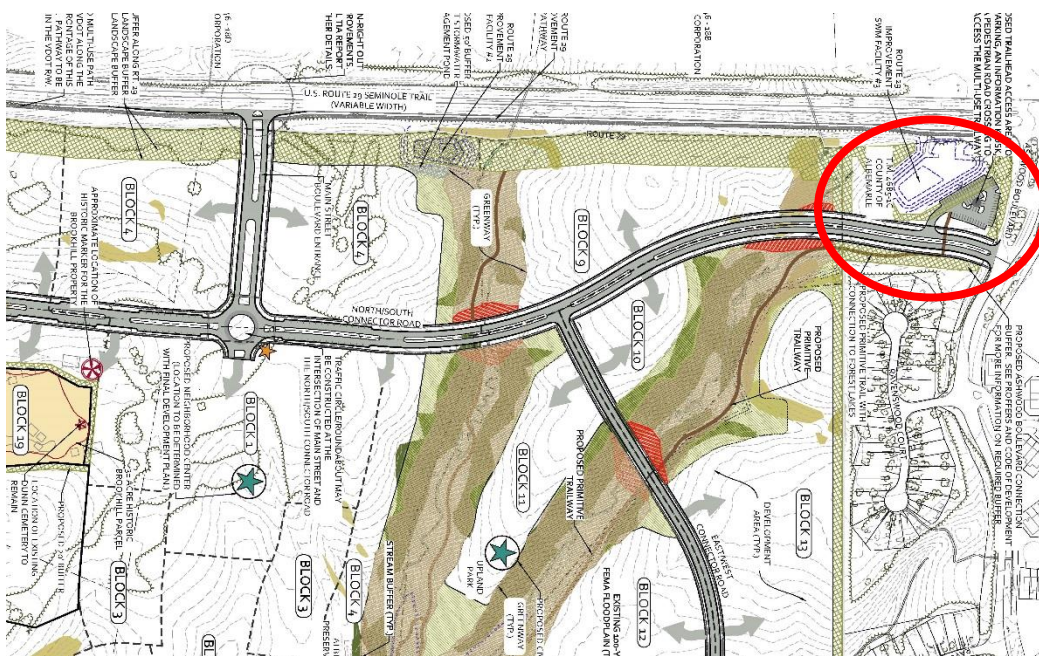
Allowing the developer to construct the public street across the County-owned property is beneficial to both the County and the developer. If the Brookhill property was developed by-right with 277 residences, the subdivision ordinance would require that a road be built to the property line, but not all the way through to Ashwood Boulevard. If and when the connection was needed the County and not the developer would have to pay for construction. In addition, this connection is necessary for traffic distribution for the development. If the connection is not made, the other intersections and entrances may not be able to handle the traffic generated by this development. An updated TIA will need to be submitted to analysis the impact of removing the connection. It was supported by a majority of the Planning Commission at their August 2016 meeting.

Land Use Map

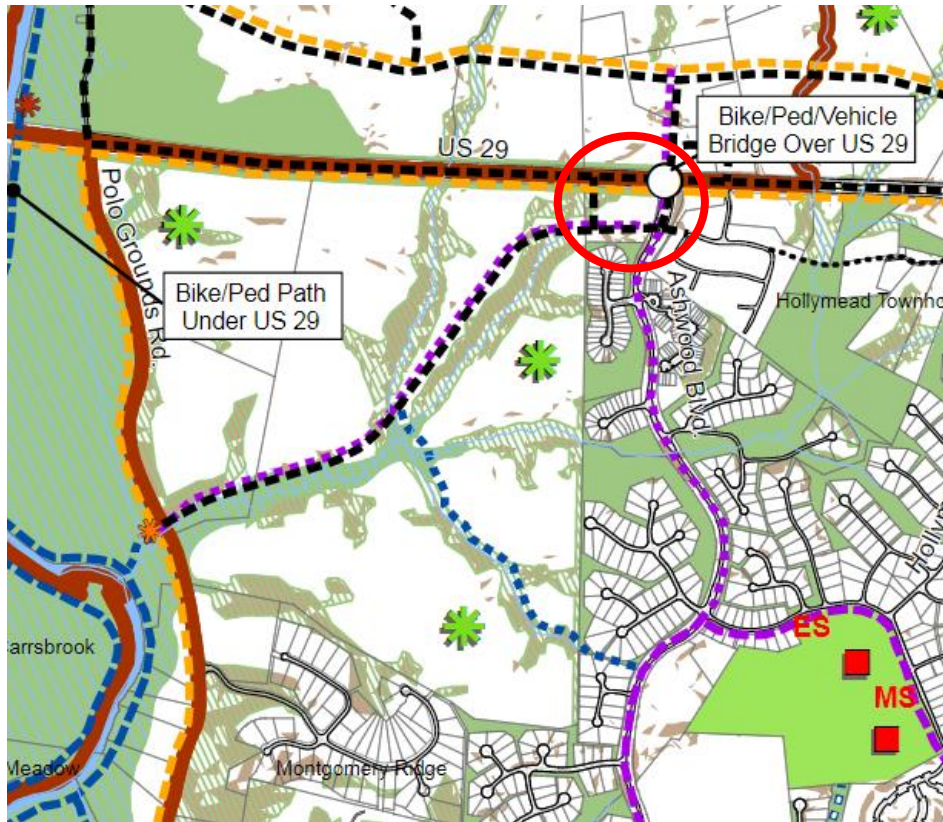




Land Use Map- Enlargement



Brookhill Application Plan

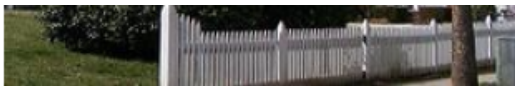


Parks and Green Systems Map

Comprehensive Plan:

In addition to the connections being shown within the PL29 Plan, the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan also contains strategies in the Development Areas chapter for multi-modal transportation opportunities, interconnected streets, and transportation networks that support this connection. These strategies and text are provided below:

Strategy 2j: Continue to require that streets are interconnected in the Development Areas, ensure that exceptions occur rarely and not routinely.



Source: Dan Reed, justupthepike.com 2013- used with permission.

and length. Interconnections make new neighborhoods accessible to existing residents and to mixed use and employment areas.

Vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections accrue numerous benefits in the Development Areas. They enable pedestrians to walk easily to many destinations. They allow for residents to more easily access shopping centers, jobs, and entertainment. Interconnections ensure that traffic has alternative routes. Car trips can be reduced in number

The County's subdivision regulations changed in 2005 to require that street connections are built to the property line of adjoining properties. Interconnections continue to be important in new developments to avoid creating an isolated environment that requires motorists to travel long, roundabout routes. Although street connections can be resisted by existing neighborhoods, connections provide alternate traffic routes for old and new neighborhoods and can also improve emergency response time.

Figure 12 shows an interconnection between the Forest Lakes North and the Forest Lakes South subdivision. Although opposed by all three neighborhoods in 1998, the Board of Supervisors viewed it as an important interconnection between neighborhoods, especially because of the location of the nearby school complex. The connection does not appear to have had a negative impact on residents. It has enabled school buses to travel from Forest Lakes North to the schools without travelling on Route 29 North. It has also allowed residents from Forest Lakes North and Forest Lakes South to use both clubhouses in the developments.

Interconnections can sometimes be hampered by physical features such streams and railroad tracks. For streams, a balance must be made between the frequency of stream crossings and the potential effects that such crossings have on stream banks, riparian habitat, and the stream itself. This balance is particularly important for the remaining large [greenfield](#) sites in the Development Areas. The master planning process should be used to determine which streams will ultimately be crossed for interconnections and which streams should be avoided. Additionally, few railroad crossings will be approved by the railroad companies in the future. As a result, desired railroad crossings should be identified in Master Plans. Since these crossings are often critical to the success of the County's transportation network, conversations with railroad company officials should begin sooner rather than later.

Constructing interconnections should be the rule rather than the exception. However, at times it may not be possible to make a connection in the short term. In these cases, right-of-way should be reserved for dedication in a manner consistent with planned transportation improvements, and non-roadway connections made, such as walking and bicycle paths.

Figure 12: Interconnection of Timberwood Parkway to Powell Creek Drive in Forest Lakes Development in Places 29 Area



The street connection and trailhead shown on the plan and proffered will allow for multi-modal transportation opportunities. Bike lanes and sidewalks are proposed on both sides of the connecting street to Ashwood Boulevard. The proposed greenway trail system that will be dedicated to the County from the Rivanna River will also continue and connect to Ashwood Boulevard. The trailhead will allow more opportunities for nearby residents to use the greenway trail to the River, and other County parks and trails. The trail to the River will allow residents in Hollymead and this development to connect to the Northtown trail which is planned to extend from Hollymead into the City of Charlottesville.

Strategy2k: Provide for multi-modal transportation opportunities in new development and encourage the building of complete streets.

Multi-modal transportation means that drivers, walkers, bicyclists, and transit users all have the ability to travel. Complete streets provide sidewalks, bike lanes, and stops for public transit. Sidewalks make it possible for pedestrians to walk from place to place, as well as make transit stops accessible. As indicated earlier, sidewalks are expected on all new and improved streets in the Development Areas and existing sidewalks should be adequately maintained. Transit is a key feature of multimodalism and expansion of transit should be anticipated as new mixed-use developments are built outside of the current routes. More information on multimodalism and ways to provide for complete streets can be found in Chapter 10.

Strategy 3d: Identify and build pedestrian, bikeway, roadway, and transit connections that facilitate movement between neighborhoods and services, especially near wide, busy roads, such as Route 29 and Route 250.

Residents in many of the County's existing neighborhoods, especially in the Pantops and Places29 areas lack the ability to easily access employment, shopping, and services because of major barriers such as Route 29 North and Route 250 East. Other streets such as Rio Road and Hydraulic Road connect with Route 29 North but also carry heavy traffic. Lack of crosswalks or safe ways to cross heavily trafficked streets, along with missing sidewalks, bikeways, transit, and road interconnections hamper efforts to achieve the expectations of the Neighborhood Model. Master Plans identify many places where improvements are needed. Identification of additional improvements through the Master Plan updates, as well as funding in the CIP, will ensure that residents will truly be able to live, work, and play in close proximity.

While staff believes that this interconnection is essential to the development and implementation of both the PL29 Master Plan and the overall Comprehensive Plan, the Forest Lakes community has expressed concerns with this connection leading to excessive delays and congestion at the Ashwood and Route 29 intersection, especially during the morning peak traffic period. While staff appreciates these concerns, the traffic impact analysis provided with this project that was reviewed and approved by VDOT and County engineering staff indicates that no further delays at the Ashwood Boulevard traffic signal. Staff has reviewed the Forest Lakes concerns and the traffic impact analysis, but believes that with the recommended transportation improvements at full build out of the Brookhill development, the level of service at this location will improve. As stated in the staff report, US 29 at Ashwood Blvd currently operates at an overall LOS C during AM peak and LOS D during the PM peak. Under the build out conditions the intersection is projected to operate at an overall LOS B during both the AM and PM peak hours.

The Forest Lakes HOA held a meeting, which staff attended, on October 20th, 2016. There were approximately 46 residents in attendance. The residents expressed unanimous opposition to the trailhead/parking lot. The majority of the residents would not like the connection to Ashwood to be made at all, however, if the connection is approved, would like either the left hand turns onto Ashwood from Brookhill to be prohibited from the hours of 7am-9:30am M-F, or no left hand turns onto Ashwood from the connector at all.

SUMMARY:

The proposed interconnection is supported by both the PL29 Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Staff and the Planning Commission recommend approval of the use of County property for this connection.