Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 3.1 – Growth Management

Goal: Albemarle County's Development Areas will be attractive, vibrant areas for residents and businesses, supported by services, facilities, and infrastructure. Growth will be directed to the Development Areas and the County's Rural Area with its agricultural, forestal, historic, cultural, scenic, and natural resources will be preserved for future generations.

Strategy 1a: Continue to encourage approval of new development proposals in the Development Areas as the designated location for new residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development. Only approve new development proposals in the Rural Area that are supported by Rural Area goals, objectives, and strategies.

Chapter 4.1 Natural Resources

Goal: Albemarle's ecosystems and natural resources will be thoughtfully protected and managed in both the Rural and Development Areas to safeguard the quality of life of present and future generations.

Objective 1: Ensure clean and abundant water resources for public health, business, healthy ecosystems, and personal enjoyment by preventing shortages and contamination.

> ..."Investment in public utilities in the Development Areas occurs to help prevent sprawl and contamination of groundwater supplies. Retaining groundwater resources is one of the reasons why new residential development in the Rural Area is not encouraged."…

Chapter 6.1 Economic Development

Goal: Albemarle's economy will be diverse, strong, and sustainable, and retain and benefit County citizens, existing businesses, and new local ventures.

Objective 4: Ensure that there is sufficient land to accommodate future business and industrial growth, and plan for infrastructure to serve employment areas where these businesses are located.

Strategy 4b: Encourage development of business and industrial uses in the Development Areas on appropriately zoned land and consider proactively rezoning land to allow for light industrial uses that have been identified on master plans.

Chapter 7.1 Rural Area

Goal: Albemarle's Rural Area will have thriving farms and forests, traditional crossroads communities, protected scenic areas, historic sites, and preserved natural resources.

Relationship to the Vision: The Rural Area provides places for agriculture, forestry, protection and preservation of natural resources, and tourism. These places are home to residents who find a sense of community in the Rural Area's crossroad villages. Retaining the important parts of Albemarle's rural heritage is essential to the County, which relies on its scenic beauty and natural resources to support its quality of life.

Features expected in the Rural Area include:

1. A strong agricultural and forestal economy with large unfragmented parcels of land on which owners can produce their goods, have opportunities to gain value from processing their own produce, and have access to local markets;

2. Protected natural resources, which include mountains, hills, and valleys, healthy streams and sustainable supplies of clean groundwater, and diverse, interconnected areas of viable habitat for native wildlife;

3. Protected historic structures, archaeological sites, and other cultural resources;

4. Rural and historic landscapes that enhance the visitor's experience;

5. Crossroads communities that provide support services and opportunities to engage in community life;

6. Distinct boundaries between the Development Areas and buildings and sites that are clearly rural; and

7. Well-informed citizens who understand the cultural, economic, and ecological aspects of the Rural Area.

Land Use Plan for the Rural Area

…"Policy and Zoning Ordinance changes are recommended to promote the County's preferred uses for the Rural Area, including supportive uses for agriculture, historic preservation, tourism, crossroads communities, and strengthening land conservation initiatives. The strategies discussed in this Chapter all share the goal of helping to keep the Rural Area rural."…

Consideration of New Uses in the Rural Area

This Chapter recommends consideration of a few new land uses in the Rural Area, including supportive uses for agriculture, tourism, and crossroads communities. The County recognizes that a delicate balance exists between providing more opportunities for supporting rural uses and allowing so many of them that the Rural Area features are lost. Frequent tour buses along County roads can cause rapid deterioration of narrow gravel roads. Excessive noise can interfere with a horse or cattle operation. It is important that any change take place slowly with enough time to evaluate potential impacts. Analysis of the impacts of the recent Zoning Ordinance changes should be conducted before adopting new zoning regulations. Policies, programs and regulations that address only one aspect of the Rural Area to the

detriment of others should be avoided or, where already in place, revised. Only by prudent and thoughtful decision making will the Rural Area resources be preserved while encouraging uses that benefit the economy.

Criteria for Review of New Uses As new uses are proposed in the Rural Area, it is essential that they be able to meet the following standards. New uses should:

- relate directly to the Rural Area and need a Rural Area location in order to be successful, (e.g., a farm winery has to be located in the Rural Area and would be unlikely to succeed in the Development Areas);
- be compatible with, and have a negligible impact, on natural, cultural, and historic resources;
- not conflict with nearby agricultural and forestal uses;
- reflect a size and scale that complements the character of the area in which they will be located;
- be reversible so that the land can easily return to farming, forestry, conservation, or other preferred rural uses;
- be suitable for existing rural roads and result in little discernible difference in traffic patterns;
- generate little demand for fire and rescue and police service;
- be able to operate without the need for public water and sewer;
- be sustainable with available groundwater; and
- be consistent with other Rural Area policies.

Most importantly, the success of the use should be related to its rural location. For example, a farm winery where most of the grapes are grown onsite is a Rural Area use. A standalone wine store that sells wines from all over the world is a commercial use that belongs in the Development Areas. A department store distribution center located near an interstate interchange should be in the Development Areas, but a storage and distribution facility for locally produced agricultural products could be located in the Rural Area. Performance standards will be needed for any new uses to ensure that the size, scale, and location of the new commercial uses recommended for the Rural Area are appropriate. It is of prime importance that the appearance and function of new uses blend and not detract from the key features of the Rural Area. New uses should not overwhelm an area in terms of their function or visibility.

Crozet Master Plan

Chapter 4 Future Land Use

Fringe Areas and the Route 250 West Corridor Crozet has notable agricultural history and was once known as the Peach Capital of the state. Today, the Development Area, which includes areas historically farmed, is designated for future growth, but orchards and other agricultural activities continue in the surrounding Rural Area. During the development of this Master Plan update, a review took place of the fringe areas to determine whether any conditions had changed since adoption of the prior Master Plan. Specifically, the eastern quadrant of the I-64 and Route 250 West interchange was studied to consider whether the boundary of the Crozet Development Area should be expanded to allow for a business and industrial park. After study, as well as input from residents, it was determined that an expansion of the Development Area is not warranted at this time and that all new buildings for office, retail, and industrial uses should be located within the existing Community of Crozet. This Master Plan update recommends that the Rural Areas outside of the Community of Crozet remain rural, including the stretch of Route 250 West between the Development Area boundary and the interstate interchange.

The edges of the Crozet Development Area are surrounded with important Rural Area and scenic resources, including Route 250 West a designated Byway, and properties under easement or used for agricultural activities. In keeping with the County's policies to have commercial and industrial development occur only within the designated development areas, additional commercial or industrial development of the fringe areas is not recommended.

The fringe areas of Crozet are designated as Rural Areas in the County Land Use Plan and changes to County policy to allow for further commercial and industrial development are not supported by this plan. Commercial and industrial development in these areas are discouraged for several reasons, most importantly water supply watershed protection. Commercial and industrial users can be large water users and potentially impact groundwater supplies. Similarly, they can require larger septic systems, which are not appropriate in the County's Rural Area. Commercial and industrial uses bring traffic to the Route 250 West corridor. In addition, commercial uses draw users away from Downtown and can negatively affect efforts to revitalize Downtown. Additional recommendations for the land use in these areas are found in the Rural Areas Plan.

While the policy goals are to protect the Route 250 West corridor and Rural Area from further development, the existing zoning in these areas permits commercial and other uses "by-right." By-right uses do not require approval by the Board of Supervisors. By-right uses are approved administratively by the staff because the zoning ordinance allows them. Special uses, on the other hand, require Board of Supervisors' approval because they represent a potentially more intensive development that can have negative impacts on an area. When requested for approval, the only special uses that should be approved are those that have minimal impacts on the Rural Areas, environmental resources, and transportation systems; improve the form of development in the fringe area; or better achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan than uses which are allowed by right.

In addition to transportation and potential environmental impacts, preservation of the rural scenic character of Route 250 West is important to retain its status as a Virginia Byway. Preservation of the rural scenic character of this area is important because it contributes to the quality and physical character of the Crozet community. Byways are also important tourist routes, drawing visitors to destinations and stimulating the local economy. For these reasons, inside the Development Area, most properties along the corridor are shown as Greenspace or with a vegetated buffer.

As previously mentioned Route 250 West is an Entrance Corridor. Throughout the County, Entrance Corridor design guidelines are not corridor-specific and more work is needed to develop corridor-specific guidelines. Corridor-specific guidelines will help the County achieve unity and coherence, while recognizing the uniqueness of Crozet.

Specific Recommendations for Route 250 West:

- Do not approve any rezoning for new development along the Route 250 West Corridor.
- Preserve the rural scenic character of Route 250 West.
- Develop corridor-specific design guidelines for Route 250 West in and near Crozet.
- Where special use permits or waivers to requirements are allowed, only approve uses which have the least impact on the Rural Areas, environmental resources, and transportation systems.