TOWN OF Blacksburg VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND BUILDING

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TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kali Casper, AICP, Assistant Planning Director
Maeve Gould, AICP, Comprehensive Planner

RE: Land Use chapter and Future Land Use map series

DATE: February 5, 2021

There are four maps in the Future Land Use map series:

- Map A: Future Land Use
- Map B: Urban Development Areas and Town Boundary Areas
- Map C: Neighborhood, Employment, and Service Areas
- Map D: Paths to the Future

Changes to Map A: Future Land Use will be discussed at two subsequent meetings on February 16th and February 23rd.

The attached Map A does not incorporate any of the individual private future land use requests or the staff-initiated future land use proposals. These requests and proposals will be shown in individual maps so that the changes can be considered separately. Only the approved changes will be reflected in the final version of Map A: Future Land Use, once the whole Plan is adopted.

The attached Map A does include the following broad changes:

- Low Impact Commercial and High Impact Commercial categories have been combined into one category called Commercial. The text reflects more detail regarding what types of commercial may be appropriate based on the adjacent neighborhoods and transportation network.
- A new category has been created for Downtown Commercial due to its unique mixed use nature.

On the attached Map A, properties brought into the Town through Boundary Line Adjustments with Montgomery County do not have a future land use designation and depicted with no color. These properties will be discussed individually as part of the staff-initiated future land use proposals on February 23rd.

Attached Maps B & C have been updated to reflect changes to the chapter text.

Map D: Paths to the Future will be distributed with the staff-initiated future land use proposals on February 23rd.

LAND USE

GOAL

Guide growth in a responsible manner that results in quality, sustainable development and redevelopment, fosters an equitable and inclusive community, and retains Blacksburg's small town feel and high quality of life.

Sustainability Goal

Support land use policies and programs that contribute to a sustainable community and the wellbeing of residents by fostering smart growth and lower-impact development practices, reducing car-dependency, planning for future climate resiliency and adaptation, addressing the housing, transportation, and services needs of low-income and traditionally marginalized populations, and protecting natural resources and ecosystem services.

Community Engagement

Meaningful community engagement is key to the Town's ethic of governance. There are a number of standing committees and working groups that advise staff and Town Council on land use topics such as the Board of Zoning Appeals, Corridor Committee, Historic or Design Review Board, Recreation Advisory Board, Housing and Community Development Advisory Board, and the Planning Commission. Community members are also encouraged to attend and share their priorities and concerns at Planning Commission and Town Council public hearings when land use topics are being discussed.

OVERVIEW

Since 2000, the Town's population has grown by approximately 12% and Montgomery County's population has grown by approximately 17%. This growth has been reflected in a need for new housing, infrastructure, and services and an increase in new development and redevelopment projects. Finding a balance between this growth and retaining Blacksburg's small town feel is a challenge that is reflected in the Comprehensive Plan survey. For the biggest challenges Blacksburg faces, respondents identified several concerns related to limited opportunities in a small town such as a lack of shopping and retail options and limited jobs. At the same time, respondents identified other concerns related to community growth such as high cost of housing, increased traffic congestion, and loss of small town feel.

Similarly, this dichotomy was found in survey responses for what community members want for Blacksburg in the next 10 years. There were many responses related to limited opportunities in a small community such as a desire for greater diversity of restaurants and entertainment and more diversity of shopping and retail stores. At the same time, there were many responses related to concerns over community growth such as a desire for greater protection of natural resources and decreased traffic congestion. Retaining the identity of the Town, as supported by but separate from the University, is another challenge as the both the University and the

community grows. These contrasting results show the tension inherent in how the Town grows and develops in the future.

This chapter considers how the Town should allocate land for different types of uses to meet the needs of all of the community. The needs of the community are identified and described in the other chapters of this plan and the concepts in these chapters are interconnected with land use. For example, sprawling development has greater environmental impacts such as loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity and requires greater investment in public infrastructure including utilities and the transportation network.

The Town seeks to ensure adequate public services are provided, good design principles are used, and growth is thoughtfully integrated into the existing community. Building upon the rest of the plan, this chapter creates expectations for community members, developers, and property owners for how the Town should grow and develop. These expectations are laid out in the Community Character Principles, Design Considerations, and the Land Use Map Series.

Land uses can vary in their intensity, from lower intensity such as resource protection, which preserves the natural environment, to higher intensity such as industrial, or commercial, which have greater impacts around traffic, light, noise, and pollution. Within Town, some neighboring incompatible land uses have been the result of historical development patterns, which created a direct interface between commercial and residential uses. While residential uses may not be compatible with all commercial and industrial uses, residential in a mix of uses can be very desirable. For example, in the Downtown residential units are mixed with civic and commercial uses such as restaurants, retail, and offices. By combining future land use designations with guiding principles and design standards, this chapter provides a framework for creating land use compatibility within Town.

Evaluation of how development proposals, whether by-right or through a public hearing process, fulfill the goals of this Plan becomes increasingly complex as the Town grows. The Town relies primarily on the standards in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance to implement the Comprehensive Plan. These standards must provide sufficient detail and guidance for development so that the vision of the Plan is achieved. For example, Use and Design Standards and Development Standards should be clarified and strengthened to ensure that development forms meet expectations and reflect the community's vision.

The Plan considers the whole community to lay out planning and design principles that thoughtfully integrate new development into the Town. The long-term community vision laid out in this chapter should guide decision-making. This vision may not always be the most profitable for owners and developers in the shorter term but considers the long-term benefits to the overall community. In the decision making process, competing priorities and policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan must also be balanced. The text and maps of this chapter and other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan should be considered and evaluated in their entirety in guiding community growth and in land use decision making.

The primary components of the Land Use Chapter are listed below:

- Map A: Future Land Use
  - Descriptions of Future Land Use Designations
  - Mixed Use Area Overlay Descriptions
- Map B: Urban Development Areas and Town Boundary Areas
- Community Character
  - Community Character Principles
- Design Considerations
  - Residential Infill Development Guidelines
  - Non-residential Development Design
- Map C: Neighborhood, Employment, and Service Areas
  - Commercial and Employment Areas
  - Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods
  - Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods
  - Suburban Residential Neighborhoods
  - Rural/Undeveloped Areas
- Map D: Paths to the Future
- Historical Development Patterns
  - Historic Preservation
- Land Use Objectives & Policies

MAP A: FUTURE LAND USE

Future Land Use is often confused with current land use or zoning designations. Future Land Use generally depicts how the Town envisions different land uses will be distributed in the future. Current Land Use is how a particular parcel is currently developed. A Current Land Use map provides a baseline reference for how the Town exists today that can be compared to how Blacksburg is envisioned on the Future Land Use Map (Map A). Zoning Districts are how the various Future Land Use designations are implemented, and they regulate specific uses and associated development standards. Parcels within Town have designations for future land use, current land use, and zoning. Future land use designations express the community's long-term vision and may or may not align with current zoning designations or current land use. These differences are deliberate and intentional. For example, an apartment building located along an arterial roadway may have a future land use designation of commercial to encourage future commercial redevelopment in that location. Copies of the Future Land Use map, Current Land Use map, Zoning map, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance can be obtained at the Town of Blacksburg's Planning and Building Department or on the Town's website.

The Future Land Use map is general in nature, due to the scale of the maps required to illustrate the future land uses in the entire Town. For example, the Future Land Use map may designate an area as entirely residential but some small commercial such as a neighborhood scale grocer may be appropriate in the area to support the residential uses. Basic definitions of the designations listed on the Future Land Use Map are listed below. The typical implementing zoning districts are listed for each Land Use Designation.

Descriptions of Future Land Use Designations

Creek Valley Overlay

Land adjacent to streams where land use and development is regulated for protection of the streams and adjacent steep slopes.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Creek Valley Overlay District (CVO).

Park Land/Open Space/Resource Protection

This is a broad category that includes public recreational space and parks, dedicated public or significant private open space, and lands under conservation easement, all of which should be retained in perpetuity.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Can occur in any zoning district.

Very Low Density Residential

Net density of one dwelling unit per acre and some low-intensity agricultural uses.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Rural Residential 1 (RR-1), and Rural Residential 2 (RR-2) and Planned Residential (PR).

Low Density Residential

Up to four dwelling units per acre; commonly single-family detached residential units.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Low Density Residential (R-4) and Planned Residential (PR).

Medium Density Residential

Up to and including ten dwelling units per acre; or up to 20 bedrooms per acre, whichever is less. Bedrooms per acre is the primary measurement for multi-family residential uses.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Transitional Residential (R-5), Old Town Residential (OTR), Planned Residential (PR), and Planned Manufactured Home (PMH).

Limited High Density Residential

More than ten dwelling units per acre; greater than 20 bedrooms per acre, but less than 30 bedrooms per acre. Bedrooms per acre is the primary measurement for multi-family residential uses.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Low Density Multiunit Residential (RM-27), and Planned Residential (PR).

High Density Residential

More than ten dwelling units per acre; or more than 20 bedrooms per acre. Bedrooms per acre is the primary measurement for multi-family residential uses.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Low Density Multiunit Residential (RM-27), Medium Density Multiunit Residential (RM-48), and Planned Residential (PR).

Civic

Schools, government offices and buildings, hospitals, and other institutional uses.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Can occur in any zoning district. See LU.20.

Downtown Commercial

Small-scale commercial uses with high pedestrian volumes and limited parking needs, frequently utilizing shared parking areas; vertically mixed uses with upper story residential and office uses. Uses that are smaller in scale with more limited impacts around noise, parking, traffic, and lighting are appropriate. Examples include restaurants, retail, small markets and grocers, personal service establishments, and fine arts studios.

Typical Implementing Zoning District: Downtown Commercial (DC)

Commercial

Small or large-scale commercial developments. Uses with higher impacts including but not limited to factors such as lighting, noise, parking, traffic and hours of operation are appropriate along arterial roadways. Examples include larger scale retail, restaurants, and offices, hotels/motels, and auto-service related uses. Uses that are smaller in scale with more limited impacts are appropriate adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Examples include smaller scale professional offices, retail establishments, and restaurants. While complementary residential uses may occur in these areas, the primary use of this designation is commercial.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: General Commercial (GC), Planned Commercial (PC), Office (O), Research and Development District (R&D), and Mixed Use (MXD).

Research and Development

Research and development offices and laboratories, and light industrial uses that have minimal external impacts and are compatible with surrounding land uses**.**

Typical Implementing Zoning District: Research and Development (R&D).

Industrial

Industrial uses such as light industrial with limited impact but can include uses that may produce moderate to significant external effects. Uses include raw materials processing, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution centers, and other large-scale operations.

Typical Implementing Zoning District: Industrial and Planned Industrial.

Airport

Aviation related uses and services to support the Virginia Tech Montgomery Regional Airport.

Current Implementing Zoning District: Research & Development (R&D).

University

The core of the Virginia Tech campus, including academic buildings, residence halls, administrative offices, recreational fields, dining facilities, retail establishments, and parking to support the activities of the University. University-owned lands outside of the core campus do not have this designation but typically reflect surrounding future land uses. University-owned lands are not regulated by Town zoning districts.

Typical Implementing Zoning District: University and College (UNIV).

Mixed Use Areas

Developments containing a mix of both residential and non-residential uses. Refer to the

Mixed Use Descriptions below for more detail of each designated area.

Typical Implementing Zoning Districts: Mixed Use (MXD), Downtown Commercial (DC), General Commercial (GC), Planned Residential District (PR), and Planned Commercial District (PC).

Mixed Use Area Overlay Descriptions

As outlined on Land Use Map A: Future Land Use, proposed Mixed Use Areas are designated within the Town where a mix of residential and non-residential development and redevelopment is encouraged. These areas are located on major roads, served by public utilities and transit.

The Mixed Use Area boundaries are intended as a general guide of where mixed use developments are desired. If a property is bisected by a Mixed Use Area boundary line, features such as ownership, topography, transportation network, and site design shall guide if it is appropriate to include the properties or adjacent properties in the Mixed Use Area. Individual development requests when a property is bisected by a Mixed Use Area will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Regardless of zoning classification, all properties within a Mixed Use Area should be cohesive with adjacent properties by providing thoughtfully integrated pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections, and complementary architecture and site design features. There is no single accepted ratio of uses that makes for the most successful mixed use area. Consideration should be given to the context and economics of each area. Key features of any Mixed Use Area include the following:

a. Vertically mixed use buildings typically with ground floor retail and restaurant space and upper story residential and office uses. Where feasible, a mix of uses should be incorporated horizontally throughout the entire site as well as within each building.
b. Access to transit stops with shelters located on the perimeter of the development and, where feasible, internal to the development to serve the area.
c. Internal pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that connects to public transit stops and to the external bicycle and pedestrian network. Pedestrian and bicycle features such as a loop trail and covered bicycle parking are best practices.
d. Limited entrances to arterial roadways to reduce bicycle and pedestrian conflicts, to help prevent additional traffic congestion, and to help prevent the appearance of strip commercial shopping centers. On-site vehicular parking should be accommodated without dominating the streetscape or landscape.
e. Site design and site layouts that are coordinated with, connected to, and complemented by other developments in and adjacent to the area. While mixed-use developments may be designed independently of each other, they must function with surrounding developments.
f. Arrangement and configuration of buildings, building setbacks, and streets that create public gathering spaces and contribute to community vibrancy. The result should be a welcoming and attractive built environment that encourages and accommodates people living, working, shopping, and visiting these mixed use areas.
g. Outdoor activities such as outdoor dining are encouraged to promote commercial and pedestrian vitality. Complementary uses, such as daycare and preschool facilities, are supported within the Mixed Use Areas.

h. Sustainable development techniques such as EarthCraft and LEED certifications, the preservation of existing mature trees, and the use of landscaping buffers within each development.
i. Adequate protection for historical and environmentally sensitive sites. Where appropriate, these should be incorporated into the site design.
j. Design styles and features, such as universal design, that accommodate a wide range of people.
k. Pedestrian-scale block lengths. Superblocks, blocks exceeding 800 feet in length, should be divided into smaller lengths.

It is not anticipated that all property within every Mixed Use Area will be developed into a mixed use development. If the property is not developed as mixed use, the property's underlying future land use designation will guide development of that site. The designation of a Mixed Use Area on the Future Land Use map does not affect existing zoning or the evaluation of rezoning requests based on the underlying of the Future Land Use designation. The designation of a Mixed Use Area on the Future Land Use map does not obligate the Town to approve a rezoning for a mixed use development. The designation does not mandate a specific type or style of development on a property.

The following Mixed Use Area descriptions provide additional guidance regarding the desired mix of uses for each specific area to consider when changes are requested:

Mixed Use Area A*:* This area was located along Prices Fork Road adjacent to the U.S. Route 460 Bypass and was removed from the Future Land Use Map Classifications by Resolution 10-B-14 dated October 14, 2014 following completion of the Prices Fork Road Corridor Study.

Mixed Use Area B: Consideration should be given to the potential reconfiguration of Old Glade Road to realign connections to Prices Fork Road. Collaboration on changes in this area should be coordinated with the transition of University Mall to Virginia Tech ownership. Given redevelopment opportunities in these areas, a joint study between the Town and the University would be beneficial.

Mixed Use Area C: Transitional residential uses should be located closer to the existing residential neighborhoods to provide a natural transition between the commercial uses on North Main Street and Prices Fork Road. Where more detailed planning studies have occurred, such as the North Main Corridor Study and the Downtown Strategic Plan, development and redevelopment should be guided by these studies.

Mixed Use Area D: The entirety of Mixed Use Area D has been master planned through the Midtown Development or other recent redevelopments. Development should occur in accordance with these plans. The Midtown Development contains lands dedicated for public use, which will enhance the vibrancy of Downtown.

Mixed Use Area E**:** Transitional residential uses should be located closer to the existing residential neighborhoods to provide a buffer between the commercial-oriented uses on South Main Street.

Mixed Use Areas F & G: While adjacent to each other, topography prevents easy interaction between Mixed Use Areas F & G. Care with the design and development of both areas should be taken so there are complementary land uses, pedestrian access, and, where possible, vehicular connections between the two areas. Attention to aesthetic and architectural detail is critical in these areas as a gateway entrance to Town.

Mixed Use Area H**:** Lower intensity uses should be a transition to the adjacent existing residential areas on Giles Road and Patrick Henry Drive.

MAP B: URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS & TOWN BOUNDARY AREAS

The Town adopted Urban Development Areas (UDAs) in 2011 to meet State requirements at the time. While adoption of UDAs became optional in 2012, the Town has elected to retain them as a useful growth management tool. UDAs are intended to serve as a focal point for growth over the next 10 to 20 years. Development within UDAs should be compact or part of a mixed use development designed to accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic with a full complement of services and amenities. UDAs were designated, in part, due to the existing availability of infrastructure. Development in UDAs should also provide for transit facilities or stops. Development in these areas should be guided in part by the mixed use area guidelines previously discussed.

The designation of UDAs does not prevent rezoning of developments outside these areas, nor obligate the Town to approve rezonings within them. The designation of UDAs does not affect existing zoning, nor do UDAs mandate a specific type or style of development on a property.

Within the Town, there are eight geographic areas designated as UDAs. The UDAs are shown on Map B of the Town's Land Use Map Series. While the UDAs generally correspond with areas designated as mixed use on the Future Land Use Map, Map A of the Town's Land Use Map Series, the boundaries are not synonymous.

Montgomery County has also designated Urban Development Areas including one along the southern boundary of Town as shown on the map. This map also depicts the Montgomery County future land use designations for areas adjacent to the Town's corporate limits. The Town should coordinate with Montgomery County on land use including natural resources and the provision of public utility and transportation infrastructure, on developments in the County's UDA and other areas along the Town/County boundary, especially those areas designated Urban Expansion and Village Expansion.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

There are key attributes that are consistently identified as important in the community and that contribute to Blacksburg's quality of life. The Comprehensive Plan Survey results show that the most valued aspects of Blacksburg are:

- Mountain location
- Small town feel
- Safety of the community
- Sense of community
- Quality of schools
- Greenway/trail systems
- Parks and open spaces

Other previous efforts identified these same characteristics but also noted the importance of Blacksburg as a place for economic opportunity, the importance of walkability, and the identity of Blacksburg as a sustainable community. While its meaning can vary, Blacksburg defines community character as the aspects that make up the look and feel of the Town and the attributes that make Blacksburg unique. The principles below expand on these attributes to ensure that development and redevelopment further the qualities listed above. Each principle should be used guide community decision-making retain the features that make Blacksburg "Blacksburg".

Community Character Principles

CCP 1. **Well-designed pedestrian and bicycle friendly infrastructure is essential to the Town's identity as a walkable and bikeable community.** This infrastructure should be a primary consideration in the design process for development. Pedestrian infrastructure is required to be constructed in all new developments. Connections to routes on the Paths to the Future map should be made through new development or Town programs.

CCP 2. **Lifestyle conflicts are inherent in a college town, where neighborhoods may have a mix of students and non-students.** Students moving into established neighborhoods may have different expectations than neighbors with regard to noise, upkeep, parking, and occupancy. Property management, education, and code enforcement can mitigate some of these conflicts.

CCP 3. **Schools are anchors within the community.** The Town values high quality education at all levels. Public and private schools foster a family-friendly community. Public schools also serve as recreational areas and community gathering places. Neighborhood schools in particular are valued for their walkability. The Town is fortunate to have a number of schools integrated into neighborhoods – these should remain.

CCP 4. **Places of worship are important anchors in a neighborhood.** These also serve as community gathering places. The Town is fortunate that many places of worship are integrated into Downtown and existing neighborhoods and they should be retained. These have historically been developed at a scale and intensity appropriate to the

surrounding community. New places of worship should fit into the context of the surrounding area.

CCP 5. **Equity and inclusion are important values in the community.** The Town should work to increase housing and transportation options for historically marginalized populations through the development decision-making process.

CCP 6. **Historic landmarks and properties are an important part of the character of the Town.** Efforts should be made to maintain and protect historic landmarks and properties. Focus should be placed on the use or creative re-use of historic properties to enhance the Town's economic base and vibrancy. New development and redevelopment in the Historic District should be constructed with a focus on quality and should weave into the existing fabric of the Historic District.

CCP 7. **Having thriving arts and culture enhances the community and supports the Town's economy.** Efforts should be made to promote and celebrate arts and culture in the community, such as providing venues and spaces and sponsoring events.

CCP 8. **With limited availability of commercial land, efficient use of the land is critical to provide services to a growing population**. To serve the needs of the community, support opportunities for commercial development and redevelopment in appropriate locations. As the Town grows, so does the need for services, creating an opportunity for commercial development at multiple scales. Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet this need. Residential development should not encroach in these areas unless incorporated as part of a well-designed mixed use project.

CCP 9. **Commercial development should be street-oriented.** Pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders are better served by buildings that meet the street with functional street-oriented customer entrances and vehicular parking located to the side or rear. Parking should not be a dominant feature of the development**.** There should be clearly defined safe pedestrian routes to buildings and to the public sidewalk system across vehicle travel ways. Building and site design should consider the specific site including the nature of the adjoining street and topography.

CCP 10. **To ensure economic viability over time, commercial structures should be constructed with sustainable, quality building materials and well maintained.** Quality construction techniques and materials should be used so that new buildings have a long lifespan. Architectural style should complement the surrounding areas. The conversion of existing residential property to small scale commercial or office uses should use the existing residential structure on-site or construct the new building in a scale and design that fits within the context of the neighborhood.

CCP 11. **Offices should be thoughtfully integrated into the Downtown as part of the desired mix of uses.** Offices should contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of Downtown both day and night. Office uses are encouraged on upper floors. Ground

floor office uses should be limited on Main Street and may be more appropriate on side streets or locations with limited pedestrian visibility.

CCP 12. **Work with Virginia Tech and the Virginia Tech Foundation on future projects to maintain the integrity of commercial and residential areas in Town.** University-related uses should be thoughtfully considered to ensure they fit within the context of the surrounding areas, particularly with respect to scale, massing, and compatibility of use.

CCP 13. **To encourage mode shift, transportation planning should be multimodal and prioritize designs that move people rather than vehicles.** This should be a primary focus in evaluation of the Town's Transportation Project Priorities, Capital Improvements Program, and infrastructure provided as part of development projects. This prioritization increases the sustainability of the transportation network by reducing car dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.

CCP 14. **Public health and broader community wellbeing are greatly valued in the Town.** The Town should support transportation improvements and land use patterns that foster a healthy community by increasing walking and bicycling for daily activities.

CCP 15. **Increasing safety and efficiency for all modes is important in maximizing the functionality of the transportation network.** This can be accomplished for both residential and non-residential development by using and expanding the street grid pattern, minimizing curb cuts and driveways, adding internal connections between properties, optimizing signal timing to accommodate all modes and minimizing conflicts between modes. This is a high priority for arterial and collector roads.

CCP 16. **Transit connections and bus stop amenities encourage ridership and are important components of the transit system.** These elements should be part of the design of new developments and be coordinated with Blacksburg Transit regarding service availability.

CCP 17. **Blacksburg is a responsible headwaters community for Southwest Virginia.** Developments within the Town should minimize short and long-term impacts on surface waters (streams and ponds), groundwater, karst features, and wetlands.

CCP 18. **Responsible site design and development practices should be used to minimize environmental impacts within the Town.** Development or redevelopment should meet and exceed federal, state, and local regulations to minimize the impacts of soil erosion, stormwater runoff, and non-point source pollution.

CCP 19. **Creation of public and private parks and recreation amenities, both for active and passive uses, is an important part of land use development decisions.** A variety of gathering spaces should be accessible to community members throughout the Town. Recreation areas should be thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of the development, neighborhood, and broader community.

CCP 20. **The preservation of open spaces is highly valued by the community.** Provision of private and public open spaces on both a small and large scale can be achieved by protecting environmentally sensitive areas, wildlife habitats, and scenic viewsheds, and promoting agricultural and forestal lands. Dedicated and recorded open space, passive recreational open space, and community gardens within developments are ways to preserve open space. Open space should be considered in the initial stages of development design and should be thoughtful, functional, contiguous, and logical in location and design. Urban locations may be better served by active recreation, parks with programming, and public gathering spaces. Public open spaces should be accessible to the whole community.

CCP 21. **The Town is committed to minimizing light pollution by adhering to International Dark Sky Association standards.** The design and placement of new lighting for buildings, parking areas, and streets should minimize uplight, light intrusion into adjacent areas, and glare. Special attention should be given to lighting when transitioning from higher intensity to lower intensity uses.

CCP 22. **For safety, maintenance, and aesthetics, new developments are required to place utilities underground.** Where feasible and financially possible through developer contribution, Town subsidization, or other financial sources, existing above-ground utilities should be relocated underground.

CCP 23. **The Town is committed to the co-location of utilities in order to minimize impacts and maximize efficiency of infrastructure serving the public**. The Town supports installation of utilities in locations that are the least physically and visually intrusive to the community.

CCP 24. **The Town supports preservation of scenic viewsheds and encourages the minimization of impacts from the height and mass of buildings, cell towers, or other features.** Development should be oriented and designed so that scenic viewsheds are preserved.

CCP 25. **Gateway entry corridors are the first impression of the Town and should include attractive streetscapes, significant landscaping, and high-quality building design.** The Town should provide landscaping and maintenance, and entry and wayfinding signage within the right-of-way at key gateways. Development proposals in gateway corridors should be designed to minimize the visual impact of parking, and with attention to landscaping and signage.

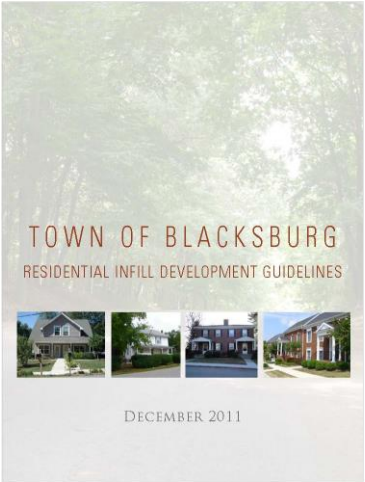
CCP 26. **Being a sustainable community requires commitment beyond the Town boundaries.** The Town should work with the County on land use transitions and infrastructure that support sustainability along the jurisdictional boundaries.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Design considerations, whether in new development or redevelopment in the Town, are ways in which the Community Character Principles are implemented. The Town recognizes that site design, form, and design details should fit within the context of the area and can have a significant impact on the look and feel of a community. Both public and private development should reflect the importance of these elements.

Residential Infill Development Guidelines

In an effort to supplement existing Town Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance regulations and provide more guidance on residential design, in 2011, a set of Residential Infill Development Guidelines were developed. These guidelines should be applied to new development as well as to redevelopment, which is often challenging in urban infill areas.



Residential Infill Development Guidelines

Residential "infill" development can range in size and scale, varying from construction of one home on a single lot up to a larger subdivision development. Infill development should be compatible with the surrounding area. In many cases, residential infill will require planning approvals, and the guidelines will serve as a useful tool in the review and approval of planning applications.

The following is a summary of the residential infill design principles identified in the Town of Blacksburg Residential Infill Development Guidelines.

- **Building Orientation:** Orienting buildings toward the street contributes to a pedestrian-friendly street environment and provides a visually rich street edge.
- **Setback:** Consistent front building setbacks create a uniform appearance along the street.
- **Building Frontage/Entries:** Landscaping in front of buildings and entry features, such as porches or steps, create visual interest and give the neighborhood an identifiable character.
- **Off-street Parking:** Parking for residential areas that plays down the visual impact of cars and parking garages, respects the character of an existing neighborhood, and creates pedestrian-friendly streets.
- **Planning for Parking:** Shared structured parking can accommodate more parking than surface parking lots and can be designed so that the structures do not dominate street frontage of a building.
- **Alleys:** Alleys are a part of the Town's historic street structure, and they are a way to provide off-street parking without impacting the pedestrian friendliness of a residential street.
- **Screening/Landscaping:** Hedges, trees, shrubs, and fences can provide privacy, a transition between spaces, and can help buffer pedestrians from vehicle traffic.

- **Open Space:** Comfortable outdoor places in multifamily developments can provide a place for people to sit, rest, and interact, fostering a sense of community.
- **Connectivity:** An interconnected street network and compact blocks provide the framework for a greater diversity of building types close to one another and promote pedestrian and bicycle activity by making connections between destinations accessible and convenient.
- **Walkways:** Internal walkways within larger residential developments promote pedestrian movement by connecting users from the public sidewalk network and parking areas to ultimate destinations within a site.
- **Scale and Massing:** Buildings should be designed to fit within the context of the surrounding structures and create visual interest for pedestrians.
- **Architectural Features:** Structures that are designed with key architectural features similar to existing homes contribute to a sense of place and complement the neighborhood.
- **Character and Context:** Infill designs should be sensitive to the vernacular and traditional architecture found in Blacksburg and Southwest Virginia.
- **Streetscape:** Streetscape designs that include trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, drinking fountains, newspaper boxes, or other pedestrian-oriented amenities help encourage pedestrian activity and promote safety.
- **Sidewalks:** Well-connected and maintained sidewalks provide gathering space and safe places for pedestrians to travel.
- **Crosswalks:** Crosswalks provide higher visibility to pedestrians at logical crossing points and can be basic white striping or can include other elements such as raised surfaces or aesthetic materials.
- **Bicycle Facilities:** Streets that provide an efficient and interconnected network and amenities for bicyclists can help support bicycle activity in a community.
- **Complete Streets:** Complete Streets provide an efficient and interconnected network for bicyclists, pedestrians, drivers, and transit users of all ages and abilities.

Non-Residential Development Design

There are common design principles that are important in both residential and non-residential development. Equal and careful attention should be paid to the design details of these non-residential developments, redevelopments, and retro-fitting projects. The following design principles should be considered in the design of non-residential development.

- **Building Orientation:** Orienting buildings toward the street contributes to a pedestrian-friendly street environment and provides a visually rich street edge.
- **Setback:** Building setbacks should be appropriate to the surrounding area and context of the adjacent street. This can be achieved with either a minimum setback or a minimum build to line.
- **Building Frontage/Entries:** Landscaping in front of buildings and covered entries can create visual interest. Recessed storefront entries can offer an intimate scale for the pedestrian, identity for the individual business, and an amenity for the street. Commercial storefronts with a high degree of transparency are the most welcoming to pedestrians.

- **Off-street Parking:** Non-residential uses should reduce the visual impact of cars by locating parking to the side or rear and using landscaping and other means to screen parking from the street.
- **Planning for Parking:** Shared structured parking can accommodate more parking than surface parking lots and can be designed so that the structures do not dominate street frontage of a building. For increased access, parking areas should be connected and provide for future connectivity between adjacent developments.
- **Alleys:** Alleys are a part of the Town's historic street structure and can provide service access for non-residential uses.
- **Landscaping/Outdoor Space:** Well landscaped non-residential developments with comfortable outdoor spaces can provide a place for employees to gather or rest. Mature landscaping should be retained, where possible, to create cohesion with the neighboring uses. Outdoor dining enhances the built environment and is encouraged for restaurants, cafes, and coffee shops.
- **Connectivity:** An interconnected street network and compact blocks provide the framework for a greater diversity of building types close to one another and promote pedestrian and bicycle activity by making connections between destinations accessible and convenient.
- **Walkways:** Accessible internal walkways within larger non-residential developments should connect users from the public sidewalk network and parking areas to ultimate destinations within a site. These should be considered early in the design process to provide optimal access for all users.
- **Scale and Massing:** Buildings should be designed to fit within the context of the surrounding structures and create visual interest for pedestrians.
- **Building Design:** Non-residential buildings should be designed with high quality, sustainable building materials and should incorporate architectural features that create visual interest.
- **Character and Context:** Infill designs should be sensitive to the vernacular and traditional architecture found in Blacksburg and Southwest Virginia but also consider new and innovative contemporary design.
- **Streetscape:** Designs that include trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, or other amenities create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.
- **Sidewalks:** Well-connected and maintained sidewalks provide gathering space and safe places for pedestrians to travel.
- **Crosswalks:** Crosswalks provide higher visibility to pedestrians at logical crossing points and can be basic white striping or can include other elements such as raised surfaces or aesthetic materials.
- **Bicycle Facilities:** Streets that provide an efficient and interconnected network and amenities for bicyclists can help support bicycle activity in a community. Non-residential development should provide secure, covered bicycle parking for employees, customers, and visitors.
- **Complete Streets:** Complete Streets provide an efficient and interconnected network for bicyclists, pedestrians, drivers, and transit users of all ages and abilities.
- **Public Art:** Public art can be thoughtfully incorporated into development to enhance community spaces.

Non-residential development should incorporate key features of the Mixed Use Areas where geographically appropriate. Where more detailed planning studies have occurred, such as the North Main Corridor Study and the 2019 Downtown Strategic Plan, development and redevelopment should also be guided by these studies. The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance are used to implement the design principles in this chapter and these standards should be updated to ensure that development reflects the above principles and meets the community's vision.

Map C: NEIGHBORHOOD, EMPLOYMENT, AND SERVICE AREAS

The Land Use Map Series, Map C: Neighborhood, Employment, and Services Areas Map, illustrates different types of areas that can be found throughout the Town of Blacksburg. Using this map, all neighborhoods and areas in Blacksburg are classified into different styles based on a number of key characteristics. In the past, the Comprehensive Plan included planning elements that were based on geographic neighborhoods. Map C replaced these neighborhood areas as not all residents identified with the designations. However, there may be an opportunity to voluntarily establish some geographic neighborhoods in the future. The classifications in Map C are not based on geography, but on commonalities and factors including historical patterns of development, transportation network, neighborhood characteristics such as density and type of development, and potential development opportunities. The boundaries reflect the predominant land use form within each area. There may be isolated instances or enclaves of a land use form that do not conform with the designation of the area. For example, there may be a single family home located beside a multi-unit residential apartment building; however, the boundaries of the areas were determined based on the predominant land use form and the common issues identified with that area. The result is that areas of the Town that share similar characteristics and face similar challenges were classified together into the following categories:

- Commercial and Employment Areas
- Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods
- Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods
- Suburban Residential Neighborhoods
- Rural/Undeveloped Areas

Both private proposals and Town projects will be reviewed using these categories to evaluate if the proposed development or capital improvements will benefit the area. If the proposed land use is different from the adopted Neighborhood, Employment and Service Area, the category more closely matching the proposed land use may also be considered during the review process to better evaluate the proposed land use request. The following section lays out the issues and opportunities for each of these categories.

Commercial and Employment Areas

The five main commercial and employment areas are the University, the Corporate Research Center, the Blacksburg Industrial Park, the Hospital/U.S. Route 460 Business Corridor, and the Retail/Service corridors. The Retail/Service corridors include Downtown, North Main Street, Prices Fork Road, South Main Street, and University City Boulevard. The Employment areas in

the Town contain the majority of the jobs in Blacksburg. The Commercial areas contain the restaurants, retail shopping, and other services for the community. These areas include all but one of the Town's gateway entrances. The other primary gateway, North Main Street, is discussed under *Suburban Residential Neighborhood Areas* later in this chapter. More detailed information on the different commercial and employment areas can be found in the *Economy & Employment chapter*.

Commercial and Employment Area Issues and Opportunities for the Future

- Large employment areas can spur both commercial and residential development nearby. These uses should be complementary and designs will need to fit into the context of the area.

- University decision-making can impact not only the Town's infrastructure, particularly transportation, but also influence land use patterns adjacent to the campus. The Town and the University should carefully consider the interface between campus and Town to minimize these impacts.

- It is important to provide different types of employment areas to meet different employer needs. These can include larger campus style developments as well as smaller employment facilities located closer to or within commercial areas.

- Where large, self-contained employment areas exist that attract a regional workforce, they can become less integrated with other services and activities provided in the Blacksburg community. There is an opportunity to encourage both ridesharing to limit infrastructure impacts and active programming to encourage employees to participate in local activities and patronize other local businesses.

- Unique utility demands of new Research and Development, Light Industrial or Manufacturing businesses in these areas will need to be accommodated and incorporated into the Town's infrastructure.

- Offices complement retail, restaurant, and other commercial uses and are part of the desired mix of uses in these areas.

- Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet demand due to the limited availability of commercial land in Town. This redevelopment can contribute to the local economy by creating new jobs and expanding the tax base.

- The activity in these areas generates traffic and congestion. Transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and other creative options, such as staggered working hours and telecommuting, can mitigate some of these negative vehicular impacts.

- Connectivity between the non-residential uses in these areas provides options for employees and customers alike to move between the uses without having to go out into the main road network. Connections should be safe for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles, particularly in areas with greater delivery traffic.

- There is an opportunity to upgrade technology infrastructure in these areas to create a more economically competitive environment.

- Creating a master plan for site redevelopment in these areas helps to assure that coordinated site design is achieved.

- Site design elements such as street orientation, preservation of historic landmarks, adequate open space, and effective and efficient use of land are important to these areas and can address the Town's goal of economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods

Urban/walkable neighborhoods are compact residential neighborhoods located within walking distance of employment and commercial centers. These areas typically have access to all modes of transportation, including transit as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Streets are typically organized in a grid pattern, which allows for easy pedestrian travel. Pedestrians can travel from these areas to commercial centers, the University, and neighborhood schools.

The urban/walkable neighborhoods in Blacksburg are centered around Downtown and the original Sixteen Squares. Residential neighborhoods developed over time beginning with this historic core and gradually moving outward. These are some of the oldest neighborhoods in the Town, and they contain a number of historic homes. There is a strong community sentiment for preserving these structures, and the Blacksburg Historic Overlay District was created for this purpose. Places of worship and neighborhood schools are an important anchor to these areas. They function as gathering places and are recreational and cultural centers for their neighborhoods.

Urban/Walkable Neighborhood Issues and Opportunities for the Future

- These neighborhoods are predominately made up of single-family detached homes. Other uses and forms may be compatible with these neighborhoods with thoughtful design.

- Due to the proximity to campus, lifestyle conflicts may occur in these neighborhoods, especially with undergraduate students renting property in these areas. Property management, education, and code enforcement can mitigate some of these conflicts.

- Encourage fraternity uses to relocate on-campus so the non-conforming structures can be converted back to single-family residential uses or other alternative compatible uses such as art studios, bed and breakfasts, or other creative small-scale commercial uses.

- These areas are close to schools, the University, and businesses. Additional pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in these areas can reduce car dependency.

- There is a limited inventory of homes within walking distance of the University and Downtown. In addition, these homes are often beyond the financial reach of many young families, young professionals, or employees of the University or Downtown

businesses who would like to live in this area. Creative strategies are needed to encourage more homeownership in these neighborhoods (*Refer to the Housing chapter*).

- With the access to Downtown services and amenities, there is an opportunity to provide for more aging in place in these neighborhoods.

- Lower speeds on neighborhood streets can reduce conflicts and help improve multi-modal safety.

- The housing stock in these areas is aging. Property maintenance can help improve the lifespan of these houses.

- Due to the proximity to campus, spillover parking can be an issue in these neighborhoods. Opportunities to reduce the number of parked vehicles in this area should be explored and encouraged.

Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods

These neighborhoods are primarily apartment developments rented to students due to the proximity to the Virginia Tech campus. There is a limited amount of multi-family housing available to meet the needs of other market segments, either for rental- or owner-occupancy. In these dense student areas, there are typically fewer lifestyle conflicts with larger rental developments where residents have a shared set of expectations. The compact forms of development in these areas allow residents to rely less on personal vehicles as they have access to public transit and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Most of these areas are located just beyond the urban/walkable neighborhoods and near the Town's major employment and commercial areas. Most of these neighborhoods also have easy access to the U.S. Route 460 Bypass, the main transportation route to I-81 and surrounding localities.

Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhood Issues and Opportunities for the Future

- Transit service in these areas should continue to meet the needs of students and be expanded to meet the needs of non-students.

- Enhancing the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that link these densely populated areas with Downtown and the University core campus can reduce car dependency.

- There are limited opportunities for the development of multi-family residential uses in Town. The Town encourages the redevelopment of aging, existing multi-family complexes. In particular, proposals for purpose built student housing should be guided by Town Council resolution 2-F-19.

- New developments and redevelopments should:
    - Provide open areas and recreational opportunities within their developments to serve residents.
    - Provide buffered and landscaped pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure for students commuting to campus and for residents commuting to employment areas.

  - Provide high-quality property management and maintenance.

- Lifestyle conflicts may occur in the neighborhood interfaces where higher density student developments are adjacent to non-student neighborhoods. Property management, education, and code enforcement can mitigate some of these conflicts.

- New multi-family developments in these areas should de-emphasize parking areas, maximize the use of transit, be walkable and bikeable, connect to other developments, have a street presence, and use other principles as detailed in the Residential Infill Guidelines.

- It is not the Town's burden to provide all of the residential housing needs to accommodate growth in the University's undergraduate enrollment. At a minimum, the University should retain on-campus housing to serve at least 30% of undergraduate students. The University should be encouraged to provide on-campus housing to accommodate ongoing and future growth, particularly because the University owns the lands most suitable for new undergraduate housing. With locations on or proximate to campus, infrastructure and land use impacts to the Town can be minimized.

Suburban Residential Neighborhoods

Suburban residential neighborhoods are commonly made up of detached single-family homes on quarter acre or larger sized lots. Many of these neighborhoods are located near parks and recreational amenities. These low density neighborhoods are located on the edges of town, and many abut agricultural land and open space. There is limited transit service to single-family neighborhoods in these areas. Many of these areas do not have sidewalks and streetlights on all streets. Most of these areas have cul-de-sac layouts, do not have a gridded street pattern, and lack connectivity to adjacent developments. While commuting by biking and walking is possible, residents in these neighborhoods predominantly use personal vehicles to travel. As transit services expand, additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is constructed, and neighborhood scale commercial services are provided, some of these suburban neighborhoods may transform into urban/walkable neighborhoods. The North Main Street gateway entrance to Blacksburg is in this category.

Suburban Residential Neighborhood Issues and Opportunities for the Future

- Parks are an integral part of these neighborhoods. Maintaining the high quality of parks requires the cooperation and support of the neighborhood residents and the Town. New developments in these areas should be encouraged to provide pocket parks.

- Neighborhoods in these areas should increase connectivity to other neighborhoods, Town parks, and commercial services. In particular, cul-de-sac layouts prevent neighborhood connectivity, undermine a rich transportation grid system, lead to greater neighborhood isolation, and longer emergency service response times. New developments should connect to the existing street system and existing neighborhoods. This should include the construction of stub-outs to property boundaries to set expectations for connectivity as part of the development process. Where street

connections have not historically been provided, there are still opportunities to provide sidewalk and trail connections through retrofitting and redevelopment.

- These areas interface with higher density residential neighborhoods and commercial and employment areas. Connectivity should be provided between these areas and thoughtful buffering and landscaping can ease these transitions.

- All modes of transportation should be supported in these predominantly vehicular-oriented neighborhoods. These neighborhoods should include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and accommodate future transit service.

- Small-scale commercial services will be needed in some of these areas as residential communities grow. These uses should be considered in large planned residential developments, should be pedestrian-oriented, and should not be substantial vehicular traffic generators.

Rural/Undeveloped Areas

These areas contribute to the rural feel of Town and create a natural boundary between the higher density areas of Town and the more rural County. Scenic views of mountains, forests, and farmland in these areas are highly valued and part of the community's small town feel. Most of this area abuts the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. The pattern of future development in this area is critical to the preservation of open space, protection of water resources and agricultural land uses within the Town. Due to the low density and rural character, these areas are less walkable and bikeable and have less access to transit.

Rural/Undeveloped Area Issues and Opportunities for the Future

- As demand for residential uses in Town increases, this area will face increasing development pressures. Housing types, such as cluster housing, that minimize environmental impacts and preserve open space in perpetuity, can be a mechanism to address these development pressures.

- Options for development are becoming more limited in these areas as acreages are used for large lot subdivisions under the current future land use and zoning designations. Consideration should be given to the broader areas to determine what portions should be preserved in agricultural use, what portions may remain open space for protection of viewsheds and natural resources, what portions should be planned for future development. Public infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer service and the transportation network, is limited in these areas and should be considered in the planning process.

- As the community continues to grow, there will be more pressure for the development of lands currently shown as very low density designated areas on the future land use map. The Town should proactively study these areas and consider the desired land uses and potential for future public infrastructure to support these land uses.

- The conversion of agricultural land to large lot subdivisions can limit connectivity and result in the loss of rural character and irreplaceable farmland that is important to our regional economy and food system.

- Commercial services are not as readily available in this area as elsewhere in Town. Very limited small-scale neighborhood commercial uses to serve residents may be appropriate, but these should be carefully integrated into the development pattern and fit in the context of the area.

- Multimodal transportation options, such as transit, are limited or non-existent in this area. There may be opportunities for non-traditional transit services or ridesharing to reduce vehicular travel.

- Recreational amenities in these areas tend to be lower intensity than those found closer to the urban core. These include larger open space parks and natural areas, such as Heritage Park. These areas should be preserved and connected to other recreational and residential areas through off-street trails.

- Scenic views of the mountainside and the rolling, open terrain of this rural area are desired by both residents and visitors and provide an attractive entrance to the community.
    - Key viewsheds should be identified and consideration should be given to how design can retain key viewsheds through the development review process.
    - Both public and private efforts to preserve agricultural and open lands through land trusts, open space easements, purchase of development rights, and fee simple acquisition is strongly encouraged in this area.

- The University and the Virginia Tech Foundation own several large parcels west of the U.S. Route 460 Bypass including areas adjacent to the University and the Moore Farm. The Town should coordinate with the University and the Foundation on the future use of these parcels.

MAP D: PATHS TO THE FUTURE

Map D: Paths to the Future Map illustrates connectivity in the Town of Blacksburg for non-motorized modes of transportation. The map shows on-street and off-street infrastructure that create a more walkable and bikeable community.

The Paths to the Future Map depicts the link between transportation and land use. Land use decisions impact transportation networks, and, at the same time, transportation systems can influence nearby land use patterns. It is very important that these elements are coordinated to create an environment where people are able to choose any mode of travel to access goods, services, and amenities.

The map illustrates desired future connectivity for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Implementation of the proposed infrastructure can be achieved through Town projects as well as private development and redevelopment. The map is used during the development process to

evaluate if the proposed project adequately addresses desired connectivity. More information about this map can be found in the *Transportation Chapter*.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

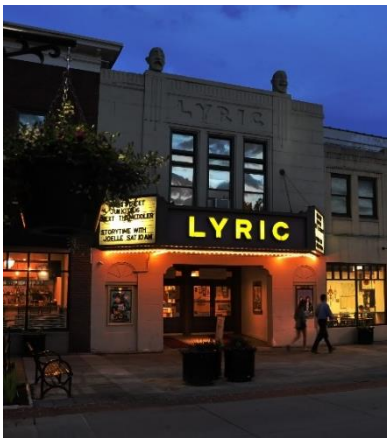
While we use the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map to guide future growth and development, we cannot underestimate the impact of development in the past. Communities grow over time and every community bears the legacy of choices made by different decision makers over decades regarding land use and infrastructure.

Many valued aspects of Blacksburg can be attributed to its early historical development pattern. Small storefronts with sidewalks connecting to pedestrian-scale neighborhood blocks are part of the history of the Town. While the Town has evolved over time, the historically significant core is vital to Blacksburg's small town feel.

Historic Preservation

Blacksburg has been shaped, in part, by its historical pattern and form of development beginning with its establishment in 1798. The plan arranged the Town in a four-by-four grid, creating sixteen blocks with civic buildings placed strategically throughout the grid. This layout became known as the Sixteen Squares and is the foundation on which Blacksburg has grown. The Town recognizes the value of historic development patterns in creating an authentic sense of place. Historic buildings can be iconic in the community and contribute to the Town's charm.

The Town's early beginnings are preserved in many of the historic buildings of Downtown. The Blacksburg Historic Overlay District was established as a local district in 1999 and subsequently amended in 2011, 2015, and 2020. Along with the district, the Historic or Design Review Board and Blacksburg Historic District Design Guidelines were also created in 1999. This local District protects historic structures, contributes to the architectural integrity of the area, seeks to educate community members on preservation techniques, and guides redevelopment through the use of binding plans. There are also many nationally recognized historic buildings and landmarks within Town, primarily located in the local Blacksburg Historic Overlay District and the Miller-Southside neighborhood. The Town also recognizes the importance of historic and cultural landmarks that are outside of designated Districts including Smithfield Plantation.

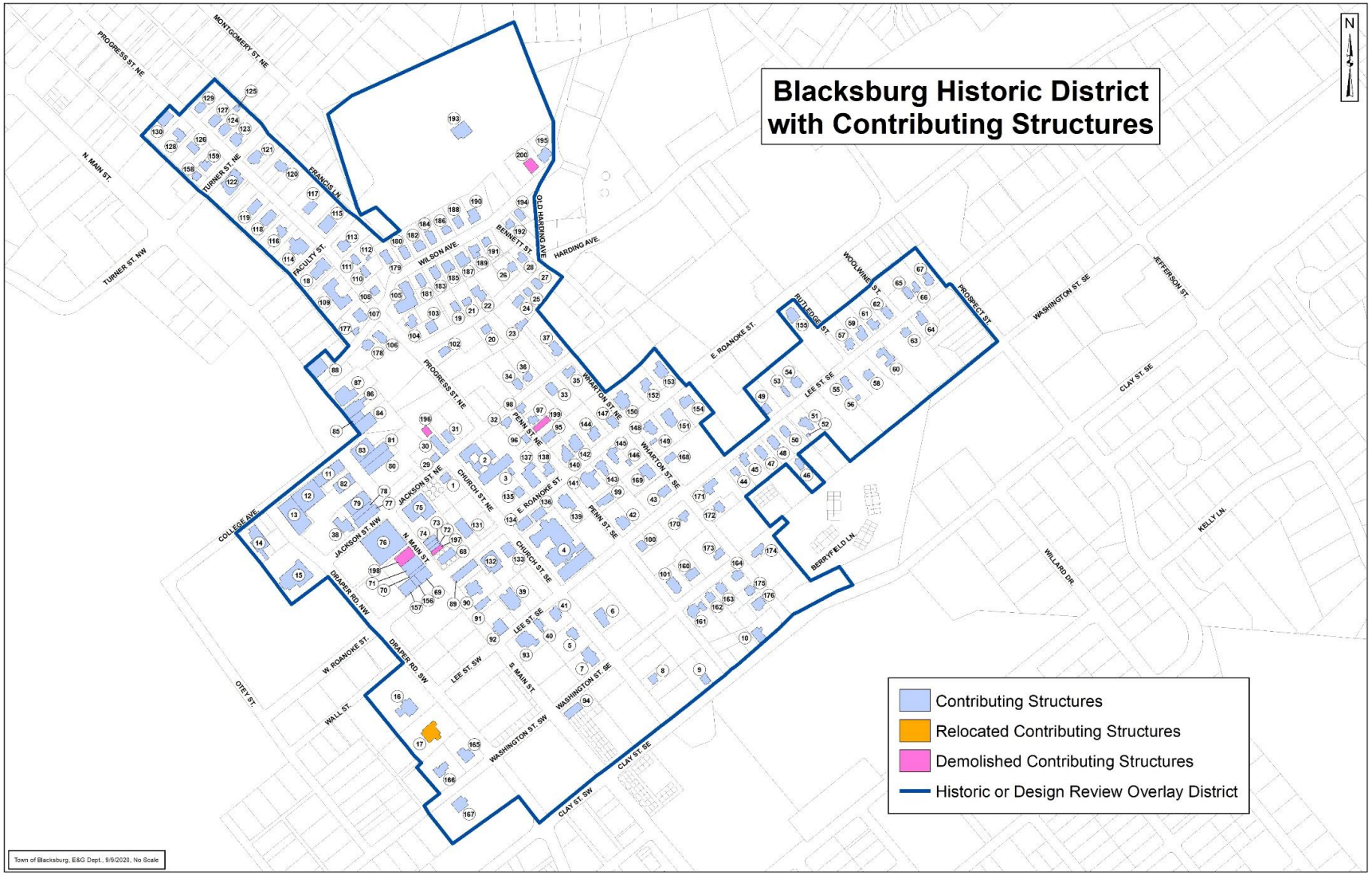


The Lyric Theatre and the Bennett-Pugh House, well-preserved historic buildings

Many historic structures and sites are in relatively good condition throughout Blacksburg. However, some structures are threatened by lack of owner maintenance often called demolition by neglect. Many structures are also under threat from pressure for redevelopment. The Downtown Strategic Plan recommends preserving the community's most valuable historic assets while fostering appropriate redevelopment of less valuable structures to facilitate broader community goals. The Town recognizes that demolition and redevelopment of a large number of historic structures can significantly change the feel of the Downtown.

The Town has demonstrated commitment to preservation by acquiring historic buildings, rehabilitating and renovating these buildings, and keeping the buildings in public use. These historic buildings include Old Town Hall, the Price House, the Blacksburg Motor Company, St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall, the Alexander Black House, the Thomas Conner House, Five Chimney's, the Bennett House, and the Armory. The Town has also implemented programs and policies to encourage preservation including a residential density bonus for rehabilitation of historic structures, expanded uses around arts, culture, and tourism, and a partial tax exemption for rehabilitation.

The Alexander Black House


Blacksburg Historic District
with Contributing Structures
N
Contributing Structures
Relocated Contributing Structures
Demolished Contributing Structures
Historic or Design Review Overlay District
Town of Blacksburg, E&G Dept., 9/9/2020, No Scale
PROGRESS ST. NE
MONTGOMERY ST. NE
N. MAIN ST.
TURNER ST. NE
TURNER ST. NW
FRANCIS LN.
FACULTY ST.
WILSON AVE.
BENNETT ST.
OLD HARDING AVE.
HARDING AVE.
PROGRESS ST. NE
WHARTON ST. NE
PENN ST. NE
WHARTON ST. SE
E. ROANOKE ST.
RUTLEDGE ST.
WOOLWINE ST.
PROSPECT ST.
WASHINGTON ST. SE
JEFFERSON ST.
LEE ST. SE
CLAY ST. SE
KELLY LN.
WILLARD DR.
BERRYFIELD LN.
JACKSON ST. NE
CHURCH ST. NE
JACKSON ST. NW
N. MAIN ST.
COLLEGE AVE.
DRAPER RD. NW
CHURCH ST. SE
PENN ST. SE
LEE ST. SE
W. ROANOKE ST.
DRAPER RD. SW
LEE ST. SW
S. MAIN ST.
WASHINGTON ST. SE
OTEY ST.
WALL ST.
WASHINGTON ST. SW
CLAY ST. SW
CLAY ST. SE

LAND USE

OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

LU.1. Clearly articulate and communicate the Town's Future Land Use goals, development standards, and requirements to the development community and the general public.

LU.2. Educate the public about the land use decision-making process and tools to encourage community engagement at all levels of the process.

LU.3. Review the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance, as well as other parts of the Town Code, to determine if these regulations adequately implement the Town's Comprehensive Plan and update to ensure these standards will result in the community's vision.

LU.4. Continue amendments to update the Town's Zoning Ordinance to reflect the vision of the Comprehensive Plan based on Town Council priorities. Determine the Zoning Ordinance amendments necessary to:

- Implement the Residential Infill Design Guidelines by incorporating specific standards in the residential zoning districts
- Modify commercial zoning district standards to create better design and more predictable outcomes
- Re-evaluate the implementing districts for the Mixed Use areas
- Facilitate aging in place and other uses needed for an aging population
- Modify the Planned Residential zoning district to resemble a more traditional planned unit district (PUD) with more clarity on flexibility and development/design standards to meet community expectations

LU.5. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses. Utilize strategies such as landscaping or other buffering techniques along with modification of site design to minimize impacts and facilitate compatibility.

LU.6. Through the development review and decision-making process, ensure that new development and redevelopment enhances the transportation network with improvements to the street grid, addition of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and incorporation of transit stops and amenities.

LU.7. Support opportunities for commercial development and redevelopment that is context sensitive, supports multimodal transportation, and uses sustainable, high quality building materials. Ensure commercial land is not converted into residential use.

LU.8. Adopt programs to incentivize construction that meets sustainability standards such as EarthCraft and U.S. Green Building Council's LEED.

LU.9. Encourage developers to work with surrounding property owners and tenants to resolve community concerns prior to formalizing development plans.

LU.10. Continue the policy not to extend Town water and sewer to areas unless within Town boundaries and subject to the Town's land use regulations.

LU.11. Work with Virginia Tech on the implementation of the Virginia Tech Master Plan, specifically with the timing and impact of proposed improvements. Encourage Virginia Tech to provide student housing on campus to accommodate growth in undergraduate enrollment.

LU.12. Create a corridor planning initiative for key transportation corridors to address redevelopment opportunities, streetscaping and gateway entrances.

LU.13. Encourage residential infill at a greater density in the Downtown area to implement the Downtown Housing Study. Support the addition of a mix of uses and services that will attract and support a Downtown residential population.

LU.14. Work to reduce parking needs Townwide through shared parking and increased multimodal infrastructure, educate the community on the availability of parking, and ensure parking areas are sufficiently buffered to reduce the visual impact.

LU.15. Continue to support childcare and adult day care services for all residents.

LU.16. Consider proposed technology infrastructure as part of the development review process.

LU.17. Encourage the creation of new parks and recreation amenities, both for active and passive uses, through the development review and land use decision-making process. As the Town grows, consider where additional parks may be needed.

LU.18. Review the existing conditions and consider the desired land uses and potential for future public infrastructure in the Rural/Undeveloped areas of Town.

LU.19. Use cluster development as a means to preserve meaningful open space that enhances the natural environment and is not primarily used for development infrastructure such as stormwater management facilities.

LU.20. Through the development review and decision-making process, encourage grouping open spaces together and creating interconnectivity in sensitive areas such as ridgelines, steep slopes, wetlands, flood-prone areas, and critical wildlife habitats.

LU.21. Reduce the development of ridgelines to preserve mountain viewsheds.

LU.22. Protect the integrity and quality of forested areas as buffers, wildlife habitats, and pollutant removal systems. Ensure the retention of existing specimen trees and valuable woodlands, and the planting of new trees during land development.

LU.23. Regulate the amount of noise and light produced by land uses to minimize impacts on nearby properties.

LU.24. Explore the creation of a Government Use Zoning District.

LU.25. Protect the integrity and quality of water resources in the Town.

LU.26. Investigate metrics for Dark Skies and have community engagement in determining any regulatory changes. See *Environment chapter*.

LU.27. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions on land use and infrastructure planning using strategies such as joint planning agreements.

Historic Preservation

LU.28. Educate the public about the value of the Blacksburg Historic District in preserving the history of the Town and contributing to the look and feel of the community.

LU.29. Balance redevelopment with the protection of key historic structures to preserve the look and feel of the Downtown. With redevelopment, history of the area should be acknowledged and documented.

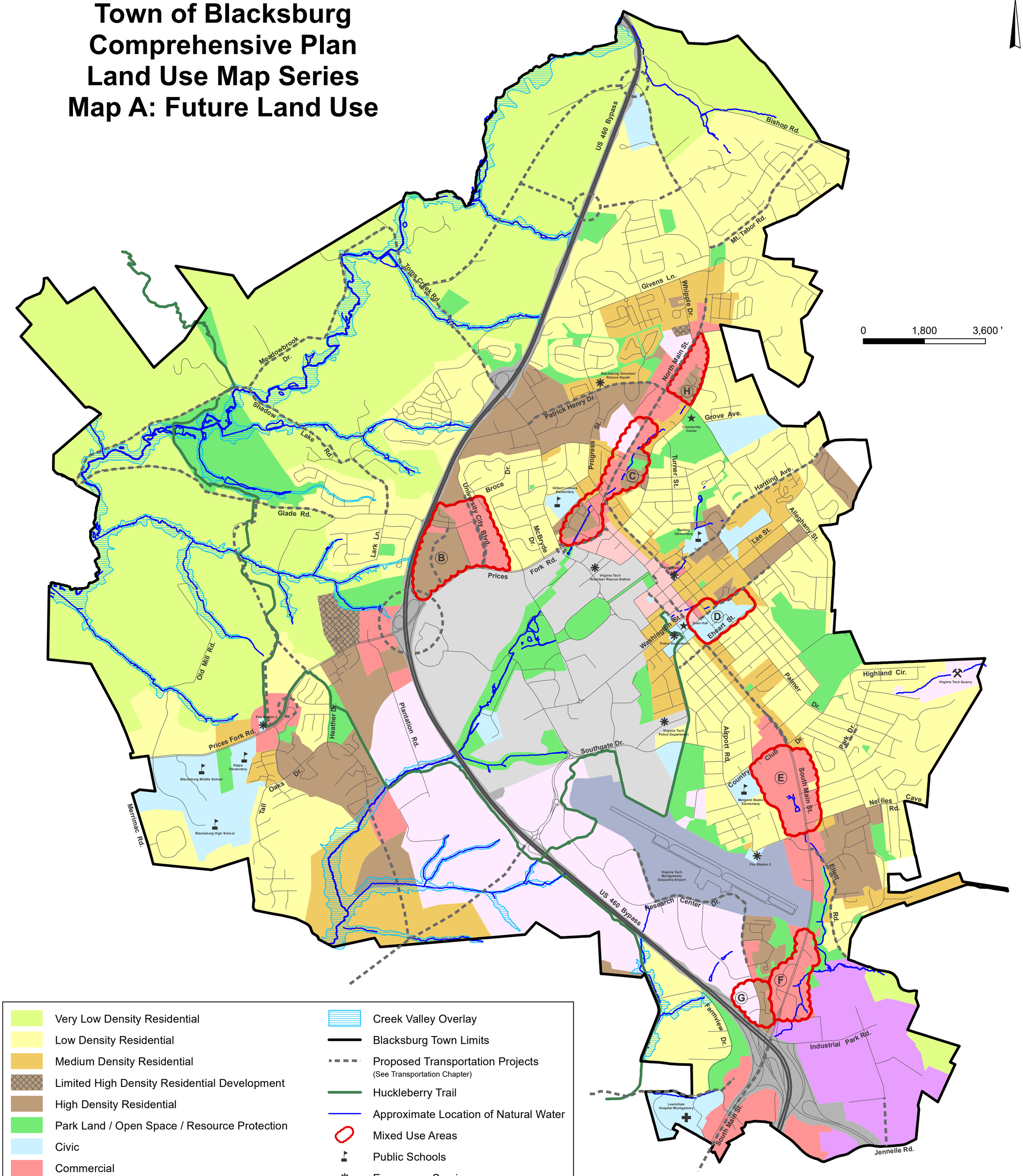
LU.30. Help educate property owners in the Blacksburg Historic District about preservation using the Blacksburg Historic District Design Guidelines.

LU.31. Work with property owners to upgrade and renovate buildings in the Historic District, including adaptive reuse options that support the goals of the Historic District.

LU.32. Educate property owners within the District regarding the financial benefits available to support renovation and maintenance such as the residential density bonus for preservation, incentives in the Arts and Cultural District, and tax credit programs. Remind property owners of the impact of lack of maintenance and demolition by neglect on the community as whole.

LU.33. Continue Town investment in the renovation and upkeep of Town-owned buildings in the Historic District.

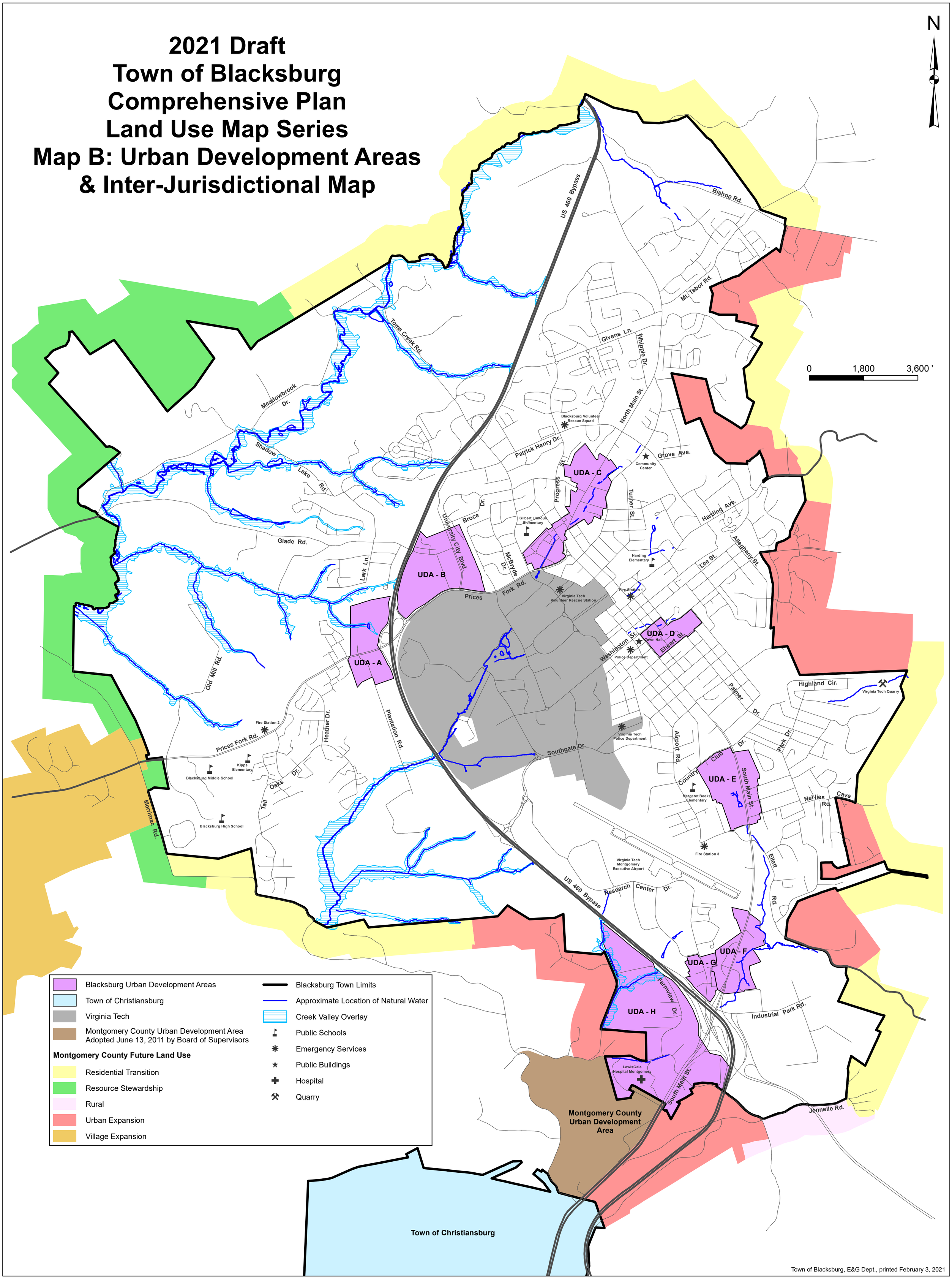
2021 Draft
Town of Blacksburg
Comprehensive Plan
Land Use Map Series
Map A: Future Land Use



- Very Low Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Limited High Density Residential Development
- High Density Residential
- Park Land / Open Space / Resource Protection
- Civic
- Commercial
- Downtown Commercial
- Research / Development
- Industrial
- University
- Airport
- US 460 Corridor
- Creek Valley Overlay
- Blacksburg Town Limits
- Proposed Transportation Projects (See Transportation Chapter)
- Huckleberry Trail
- Approximate Location of Natural Water
- Mixed Use Areas
- Public Schools
- Emergency Services
- Public Buildings
- Hospital
- Quarry

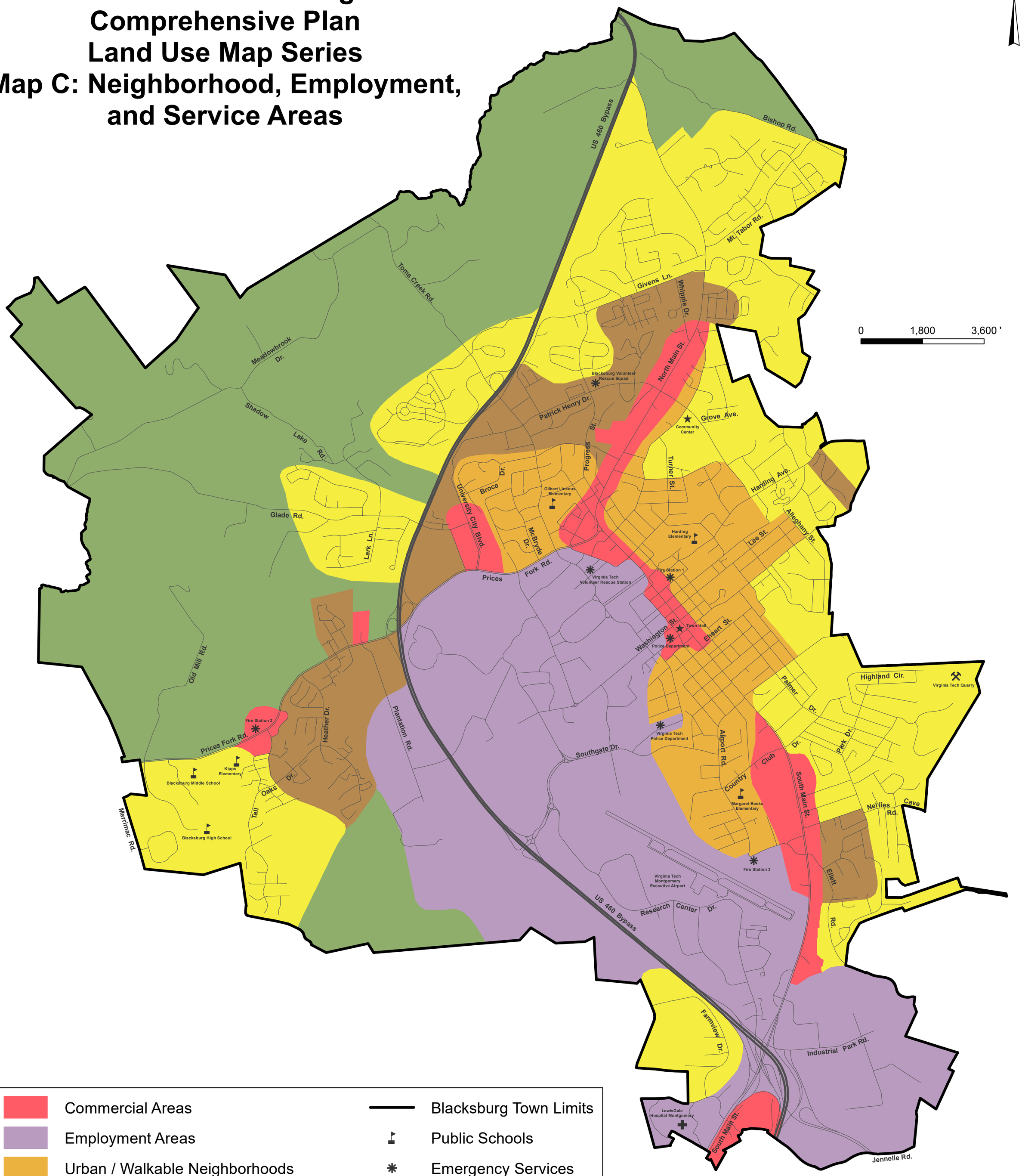
Town of Blacksburg, E&G Dept., printed February 3, 2021

2021 Draft
Town of Blacksburg
Comprehensive Plan
Land Use Map Series
Map B: Urban Development Areas & Inter-Jurisdictional Map



Town of Blacksburg, E&G Dept., printed February 3, 2021

2021 Draft
Town of Blacksburg
Comprehensive Plan
Land Use Map Series
Map C: Neighborhood, Employment, and Service Areas



Commercial Areas	Blacksburg Town Limits
Employment Areas	Public Schools
Urban / Walkable Neighborhoods	Emergency Services
Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods	Public Buildings
Suburban Residential Neighborhoods	Hospital
Rural / Undeveloped Areas	Quarry

Town of Blacksburg, E&G Dept., printed February 3, 2021