

URBAN AREAS

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CURRENT CONDITIONS

The Urban Area of Frederick County includes those areas anticipated for higher intensity development within the Urban Development Area (UDA) and Sewer and Water Service Area (SWSA). Utilizing the UDA and SWSA as urban growth boundaries, Frederick County seeks to focus growth in strategic areas where community facilities and public services are more readily available and can be provided in a more economical and sustainable manner. It is expected that the land uses within the UDA and SWSA will be served by public water and sewer.

The UDA and SWSA provide a clear boundary between the Urban Areas and the Rural Areas. They are designated to direct growth in a compact and highly efficient form within the Urban Areas, thereby reducing development pressures in the Rural Areas. Within the Urban Area there is a higher expectation in design standards to create a quality urban community that successfully and sustainably accommodates the growth of the community. The principles of Neighborhood Design are supported within the Plan.

The Urban Development Area defines the general area in which more intensive forms of residential development will occur. Commercial, industrial, and institutional land uses are also encouraged within the Urban Development Area. The Sewer and Water Service Area is consistent with the Urban Development Area in many locations. However, the Sewer and Water Service Area may extend beyond the Urban Development Area to promote commercial, industrial, and institutional land uses in areas where residential land uses are not desirable.

Future land uses are specifically depicted on the various Area Plans which are compiled in Appendix I. These Area Plans have been created over time, through a community planning process, and have been incorporated as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The aim of the Area Plans is to provide a more in depth, detailed plan that will guide the growth of each unique part of the County's Urban Area. As a whole, the individual Area Plans make up the Eastern Frederick County Long Range Land Use Plan.

Historically, the average gross residential density of suburban type developments within the Urban Development Area has been between two and three units per acre. More recently, the densities of development in Frederick County have been increasing. The County should continually monitor the intensity and density of new development and its associated impacts. Residential densities higher than those previously experienced within the UDA would be appropriate for future development with the highest densities located within specifically designated areas within the UDA, known as Strategic Growth Areas.

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Frederick County established the initial Urban Development Area boundary in 1987. In 2007, recognizing the importance of utilizing urban growth boundaries such as the UDA, the Virginia General Assembly adopted legislation requiring certain larger and higher growth jurisdictions to incorporate Urban Development Areas into their Comprehensive Plans. Frederick County continues to meet, and strives to exceed, those requirements of the Code of Virginia that pertain to Urban Development Areas.

The boundary of Frederick County's Urban Development Area should be examined regularly to ensure that it is adequately sized to accommodate future growth, and offers a diversity of housing types and locations which provides for a competitive land market and fosters consumer choice. The size of the Urban Areas (both UDA and SWSA) will also be affected by the ability to provide water and sewer service to accommodate future development

Historically, Frederick County has sought to achieve a balanced ratio between commercial/industrial and residential growth in terms of both available areas of land use and taxable value of the land uses. The target ratio for the Urban Area shall be 25 percent commercial/industrial within the Urban Areas to 75 percent residential and other land uses throughout the County as a whole. The purpose of this target is to achieve fiscal balance through land use planning. Maintaining a healthy and balanced ratio will help the County maintain its low tax rates while continuing to enhance the services provided to the residents. To encourage commercial and industrial (C & I) uses to help achieve the targeted ratio, Frederick County has designated certain areas solely for C & I type uses such as the Route 11 North corridor, Kernstown area, Round Hill, and in the vicinity of the Winchester Regional Airport.

In 2010, Frederick County adopted a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program which allows for dwelling unit rights to be transferred from parcels located in the rural areas to designated properties within the Urban Development Areas. This policy tool provides landowners within the rural areas the ability to obtain development value of their farm land without having to subdivide and sell the land. The density rights from the land can be severed and utilized within the Urban Development Area where community facilities and public services can be provided more efficiently. Policy tools such as the TDR program are key elements in maintaining a harmonious relationship between the Urban Areas and Rural Areas.

FUTURE FOCUS

The UDA Study of 2006 for Frederick County evaluated current land use patterns, comprehensive policy plan language, development trends, and contemporary planning practices. Using the UDA Study, Frederick County has identified locations which promote higher urban densities and a more compact form of development. These strategic growth areas within the Urban Areas are known as Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers.

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Neighborhood Design principles are intended to be effective growth management tool for the County's Urban Areas.

These principles provide for a more sustainable form of development focused on creating a sense of community. Future development within the Urban Areas will be based upon the following:

- *Mix and integration of a variety of uses*
- *Mix and diversity of housing opportunities*
- *Increased density in an urban form*
- *Walkability*
- *Connectivity*
- *Traditional neighborhood structure*
- *High quality architecture and urban design*
- *Sustainability and environmental quality*
- *Smart transportation*
- *Community focal points*
- *Enhanced design and planning*

The application of these development principles throughout the Urban Areas, and most importantly within strategic growth areas, seeks to ensure that the UDA of the County will be made up of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. These areas should feature a variety of housing choices, high quality retail, community facilities as focal points, employment opportunities, and provide for land uses that are connected by an attractive, efficient, multimodal transportation system. The mixing of uses provides a greater choice in mobility. Further, focusing development around walkable centers affords people the opportunity to work, live, shop, and play in locations that are near each other.

Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers will be the building blocks of the urban fabric of Frederick County's urban areas.

Neighborhood Villages

Neighborhood Villages are envisioned to be compact centers that focus and complement the surrounding neighborhoods, are walkable, designed at a human scale, and supported by existing planned road networks.

Urban Centers

The Urban Center is larger than the Neighborhood Village and is envisioned to be a more intensive, walkable urban area with a larger commercial core, higher densities, and designed around some form of public space or focal point. Urban Centers should be located in close proximity to major transportation infrastructure.

A goal of the Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers is to create new neighborhoods with a balance between residential, employment, and service

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uses. A balance of uses for new developments should be achieved through a horizontal and vertical mix of uses that are integrated with one another.

Potential locations for Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers are strategically located to take advantage of existing development patterns and infrastructure locations.

The highest densities for the County are envisioned within the Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers; therefore, special care should be taken in ensuring these areas provide a complete multimodal transportation system. The County's efforts towards implementing Complete Streets policies should be integrated with the on-going land use planning efforts to ensure a nexus between these important elements of community growth and development. For additional information on Complete Street policies, see the Transportation chapter.

The Urban Area should be carefully planned to take advantage of unique natural features and settings, protect and preserve natural and historic resources and features, identified Developmentally Sensitive Areas (DSA's) and enhance the natural, scenic, and cultural value of the urban areas of the County.

In order for new areas of urban uses to be established within the Urban Areas, adequate roads and public facilities with sufficient capacities to accommodate the new uses should be provided. For any proposed rezoning to be approved, applicants will be expected to contribute a reasonable portion of the costs of new or expanded infrastructure needed to serve the proposed development. It is important that anticipated impacts of proposed developments are mitigated to ensure that they are not placing an undue burden on the community and to further implement the goals of the Comprehensive Policy Plan. Special care must be taken to ensure that the necessary infrastructure improvements, community facilities, and transportation improvements are available and provided to support the Urban Areas and Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Establishment of the urban areas, utilizing the Urban Development Area and the Sewer and Water Service Area as urban growth boundaries, has focused growth away from the rural areas of the County and into areas that can be provided more readily, and efficiently, with public services and infrastructure. The plan envisioned for the future of the urban areas focuses on increased density and intensity in strategic locations within the urban areas where a greater sense of community and better public services may be provided.

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The benefits of focusing new growth within the urban areas are numerous. When residential growth occurs outside of the designated growth boundaries and into the rural areas, the County has to extend public services such as schools and emergency services out into those areas. These expanded service areas increase the costs of operation for these services and facilities while decreasing effectiveness. Focused growth limits development pressures within the rural areas, thereby helping to preserve the environment and promote agribusiness and tourism. The compact form of development envisioned within the Urban Areas allows these services to be provided as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Incorporating Neighborhood Design principles within the urban areas will help to improve the sense of community and promote close knit, walkable communities where residents have greater opportunities to live, work, and play in the same area. The multimodal transportation systems encouraged by this plan de-emphasizes the automobile, allowing residents to walk or bike to destinations. These transportation options improve public health and allow for the automobile transportation network to operate more efficiently due to decreased traffic volumes.

Dedicated areas for commercial and industrial development helps to ensure a strong tax base to provide public services and community facilities and also provide for retail opportunities for the benefit of local residents.

In general, these principles are more efficient, more sustainable, and ultimately more economical for the community.

POLICIES/IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY: **AS FREDERICK COUNTY CONTINUES TO GROW, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE VISION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE URBAN AREAS BE IMPLEMENTED IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE GROWTH IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER. GROWTH SHOULD PRIMARILY BE FOCUSED WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Focus new residential growth within the Urban Development Area.
- Monitor size of UDA and SWSA to ensure appropriate land area is made available to accommodate residential growth as well as commercial and industrial opportunities.
- Ensure adequate water and sewer service capacity is available to accommodate new growth.

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- Provide for various densities within the Urban Areas to encourage concentrated growth while also accommodating consumer choice for a variety of housing options.

POLICY: **PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN PRINCIPLES WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Ensure land use applications incorporate principles of Neighborhood Design as appropriate.
- Closely monitor newly adopted zoning ordinances which enable mixed use development to ensure the effectiveness of the ordinances and the ability for development to implement the ordinance requirements. Revise the ordinance if necessary to increase the effectiveness or to enable better implementation.
- Develop the Neighborhood Village and Urban Center concepts which promote strategic growth areas within the Urban Areas. Community Area Plans could be utilized to identify potential locations for these concepts.
- Promote the location of community facilities as focal points within identified strategic growth areas.

POLICY: **PROVIDE FOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Ensure the Bicycle Plan included as part of the Comprehensive Plan provides for trail facilities in the desired locations.
- Encourage new developments to provide interconnected trail networks and on street shared travelways.
- Connect “missing links” across existing developments to the extent possible.

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POLICY: **OBTAIN 25/75 RATIO OF COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL USES TO RESIDENTIAL AND OTHER LAND USES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Ensure adequate services, including water and sewer infrastructure, are available to obtain target business users in a competitive market.
- Monitor location of SWSA and consider expansions when necessary to accommodate demand or a highly desirable business user, and to implement the Long Range Land Use Plan.
- Continue to evaluate the availability of land that will specifically accommodate desired amount of commercial and industrial land uses and incorporate sufficient acreage into Area Plans.
- Seek to attract uses that will generate the desired tax revenue and employment opportunities for the County.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- Business Community
- Chamber of Commerce
- Top of Virginia Building Association
- Community Groups Homeowner Associations
- Winchester – Frederick County Economic Development Commission

SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- 2006 UDA Study
- Planning Area Analysis