

3 LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the framework for the physical growth and development of the county over the life of the plan. It provides direction and guidance on a range of development, conservation and land use compatibility issues. It also describes the competing priorities that must be taken into account when planning for the future of the County.

The Land Use Element lays out policies to improve economic strength and security, enhance the built and natural environment, and build livable communities. Land use policies seek to accommodate growth and change by enhancing development in existing areas while preserving natural areas. The Land Use Element objectives and policies directly tie to the objectives and policies of all other plan elements. Transportation, economic development, cultural and environmental resources, and community facilities policies must be compatible with the overarching land use policies to ensure that the County develops as envisioned. The Land Use Element establishes policies for the physical development of appropriate uses at appropriate densities in appropriate locations and includes guidelines that describe the character and quality of future development and the preferred future development pattern.



BACKGROUND

This section of the Land Use Element provides background information, analysis, and discussion of challenges and opportunities.

Challenges

Botetourt County is fortunate to have plentiful natural resources that have fueled its agricultural economy and attracted residential growth. While the County has historically been a rural community with its roots in farming, it has become an increasingly attractive location for residential development over the last 10 to 20 years. Recent trends indicate that residential growth is shifting from large lot rural residential growth to low-to-medium density, more suburban style development and increasing pressure for the conversion of farmland to residential use.

The increase in residential development is anticipated to play a major role in the County's economy as there is an expectation that the demand for service-related businesses will increase to serve the growing residential population. Botetourt County recently initiated an *Economic Development Study* to evaluate future demands and provide direction for the County's economic development policies. The information gathered for that study will provide important input to help identify future land use needs and appropriate patterns of development throughout the County.

Transportation has long influenced the development pattern of Botetourt County. Current development patterns in Botetourt County are heavily influenced by existing transportation routes: U.S. Route 220, U.S. Route 11, U.S. Route 460 and I-81. The James River, railroads, and U.S. Route 220 were significant influences that shaped historic settlement patterns. The construction of I-81 provided access to new lands within the County, attracting development around the interchanges, specifically at Exit 150. During the Comprehensive Plan process, residents and stakeholders expressed their views that the County should develop plans to mitigate the rapid growth along U.S. Route 220; to preserve the rural character north of Daleville Town Center and promote more growth around the incorporated towns.

Land Use Analysis

In addition to public input, several factors must be evaluated to prepare appropriate Land Use goals, objectives and policies of this plan and a Future Land Use Map for Botetourt County. These include review of the existing land use pattern, current zoning, existing development densities, population distribution and recent development activity. Additionally, a capacity analysis based on population projections provides an indication of whether or not there is sufficient development capacity to accommodate projected growth.

Existing Land Use

Draft existing land use, zoning and future land use maps were reviewed by the general citizenry of Botetourt County at community meetings held on December 5, 2009 and January 5, 2010 (Map 5 - Existing Land Use, Map 6 - Zoning, and Map 9 – Future Land Use). The final existing land use map, a generalized zoning map, and a future land use map are incorporated into this plan.

The existing land use map indicates that current residential and commercial land uses are clustered in the southern end of the county, where sufficient infrastructure and facilities exist to support development of this intensity. The map (Map 5) depicts seven general land use categories:

Agricultural/Forest Land

This is the largest land use category in the County, comprising approximately 69.1 percent of the County's land area. Agricultural uses in Botetourt are generally located in the central and northern sections of the County. These areas are typically used as cropland and orchards, and raising and grazing of livestock. Buildings associated with these activities (single family dwellings, barns, grain storage, etc.) are considered agricultural uses for the purposes of this map. Forest land consists of privately, corporately owned, or National Forest. Forested areas are typically found in the more mountainous regions of the County, particularly in northern Botetourt and the area along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Federal Lands

This category consists of George Washington National Forest land that is publicly owned and managed by the Federal government. Public forest land comprises approximately 25.9 percent of the total land area in the County. Currently, the Jefferson and George Washington National Forests encompass approximately 90,000 acres of land in Botetourt County, some of which is along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Rural Residential

This category includes clusters of rural residential development in the County, which are typically single family housing. This type of development is located in very rural portions of the county, typically on land previously used for agricultural or forestry. Most of these homes have no public water and sewer service.

Low Density Residential

This category generally represents areas of single family homes in large lot suburban patterns of development. Low-density residential land uses are concentrated in the southern portion of the County. These areas may be served by public water and sewer, but are normally served by individual wells or private water systems and septic systems.

Medium Density Residential

This residential category comprises a small portion of the County's total land area. Medium density areas include all apartment and townhouse developments and small lot single family developments. All medium density residential areas are served by public or private water and public sewer. Most of these medium density residential land uses are found in southern Botetourt; however, this land use category also exists within the incorporated towns and unincorporated communities in other areas of the County, such as Iron Gate, Glen Wilton, and Eagle Rock.

Commercial/Office

The commercial/office land use category consists of areas where the wholesale and retail sale of goods and services is the primary activity. Commercial and office development in the County has historically occurred at Interstate 81 interchanges and along main transportation corridors where public water and sewer are available in proximity to existing and anticipated residential development.

Industrial

The industrial land use category indicates those areas where manufacturing is the primary activity. This includes quarrying, industrial parks, and for the purpose of this plan, sanitary landfilling. The major areas of industrial activity in Botetourt County are the EastPark Commerce Center, the Jack C. Smith Industrial Park, the Roanoke Cement Company, the Botetourt Center at Greenfield and Vista Park, all of which are located in the southern region of the County. Other smaller industrial uses and areas can be found on scattered sites and along highway corridors such as U.S. Route 11 and U.S. Route 220 North.

Existing Zoning

The existing zoning map (Map 6) shows how parcels are currently zoned with respect to the 13 zoning districts included in Botetourt County's Zoning Ordinance. Table 31 provides more specific zoning information about parcels that are currently developed with at least one dwelling unit. Based on this information, 6,433 dwelling units are located in areas of the zoned Agricultural A-1, and 3,962 dwellings are located in areas zoned Residential R-1.

Table 31 – Land Use Analysis (Parcels With Dwelling Units – DU > 0)

Current land use per zoning (parcels with dwelling units)				
ZONING	Number of Parcels	Dwelling Units (DU)	Total Acres	Average of DU/Gross Acres
A1	6242	6433	75,814	0.0849
B1	34	35	47	0.7475
B2	37	39	62	0.6305
B3	10	10	31	0.3242
FC	360	371	16,250	0.0228
M1	7	7	93	0.0754
M2	2	2	3	0.7198
M3	9	10	242	0.0414
R1	3948	3962	3,601	1.1001
R2	211	213	124	1.7192
R3	260	262	64	4.1202
RR	1260	1280	2259	0.5666
SC	1	1	2	0.6474
TOWN	986	1002	789	1.2703
Total	13,367	13,627	99,379	

Source: Botetourt County GIS Parcel Information, 2009

Table 32 provides information about parcels that are either undeveloped or not developed with a residential dwelling. These tables indicate that most of the land in the County is zoned A-1, agricultural, followed by Forest Conservation (FC) and that there are areas zoned for residential development that have not been improved to date.

Table 32 - Land Use Analysis (Parcels With Dwelling Units – DU < 0)

Current land use per zoning (parcels with no dwelling units)			
ZONING	Number of Parcels	Average Acres	Total Acres
A1	5333	31	164,189
B1	78	2	178
B2	190	2	469
B3	52	2	115
FC	471	156	73,540
M1	80	7	527
M2	75	13	988
M3	92	45	4,109
POP	2	152	304
R1	931	1	1,235
R2	153	0	70
R3	71	1	71
RR	899	1	959
SC	28	4	102
TND	1	118	118
TOWN	929	1	1,006
Total	9,385		247,980

Source: Botetourt County GIS Parcel Information, 2009

Implications of Existing Zoning

The following tables and graph (Table 33, Table 34, Table 35, and Table 36) describe how the current population of the County is distributed by zoning category and provide an assessment as to whether or not the County can accommodate projected population growth based on current zoning patterns. This assessment is based on three assumptions: the current number of persons per household of 2.4 is maintained in the future, the average number of dwelling units per acre remains consistent with current development patterns and existing densities in each zoning category, and that no additional land is zoned for residential use. The estimated persons per household figure is based on the most recent estimate of population available from the Weldon Cooper Center, divided by the County's estimate of total dwellings based on GIS and tax assessment information. Table 33 provides the analysis of how the person per dwelling unit has been estimated.

The 2.4 persons per dwelling unit figure and the zoning information included in Table 34 can be used to develop a rough estimate of population distribution by zoning category (Table 34 and Table 35). Table 35 demonstrates the capacity of the County to accommodate projected population increases based on existing zoning. This simplified capacity analysis indicates that Botetourt County has sufficient amounts of residentially zoned land to accommodate the additional 6,000 anticipated by VEC forecasts by the year 2030. Table 36 provides an estimate of total population distribution in each residential zoning category by decade to the year 2030.

Table 33 – Population Per Dwelling Unit Estimation Method

Estimation of Population Per Dwelling Unit (DU)	
Population 2008 (provisional Weldon Cooper Center/US Census)	32,261
Percent Change 2007-2008	1.5%
2009 Estimated Population	32,745
Current Dwelling Units (Source: Botetourt GIS Parcel Database)	13,689
Average persons per household (DU) 2009	2.39

Sources: US Bureau of the Census; American Community Survey, 2008

Figure 7 – Current population distribution per zoning (based on 2.4 Persons/DU)

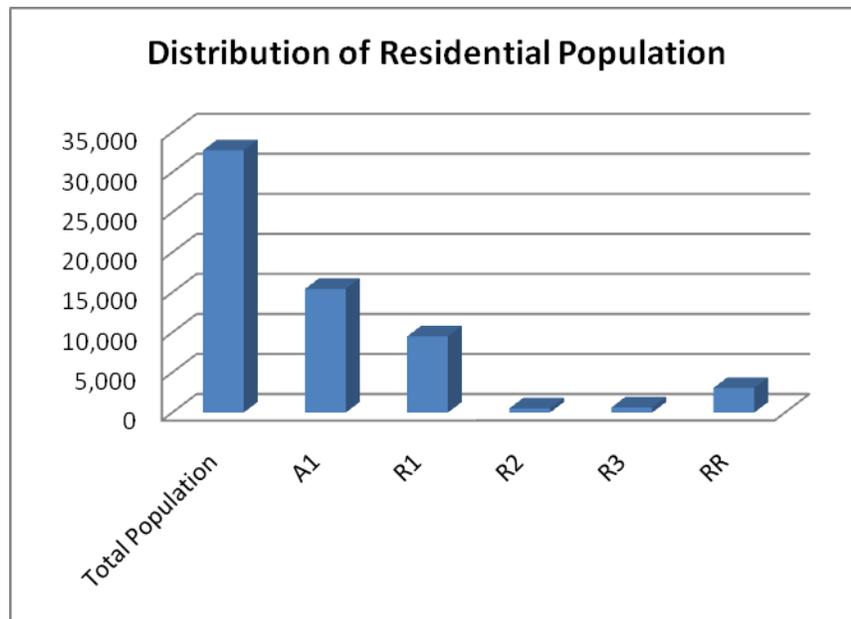


Table 34 - Current Distribution of Population per Zoning Category

Current Distribution of Population Relative to Residential Zoning Categories (based on 2.4 Persons/DU)		
Zoning District	Population	Percentage
Total Population	32,745	100.0%
A1	15,439	47.1%
R1	9,509	29.0%
R2	511	1.6%
R3	629	1.9%
RR	3,072	9.4%

Source: Botetourt County GIS Parcel Information, 2009

Table 35 - Available Population Growth Capacity per Zoning Category

Potential Population Capacity based on existing Zoning (based on 2.4 Persons/DU)		
Zoning	Available Population Capacity	Percentage
A1	N/A*	N/A*
R1	2,963	9.0%
R2	167	0.5%
R3	169	0.5%
RR	2,302	7.0%

*While still allowed where appropriate, it is assumed that if the policies set forth in this plan are implemented, that little or no additional growth would occur in the Agricultural zoning category.

Table 36 – Population Forecast Per Zoning Category, VEC Forecasts

Projected Population by Zoning District – Virginia Employment Commission Projection						
	Total Population	A1	R1	R2	R3	RR
2009*	32,745	18,676	9,525	125	2,926	1,494
2010	33,156	18,910	9,644	126	2,963	1,513
2020	35,756	20,393	10,401	136	3,195	1,631
2030	38,437	21,922	11,180	146	3,434	1,754

Based on housing growth trends during past five years

*Estimate based on 2008 census estimate and growth from 2007 to 2008

Residential Development Activities

The following tables provide an overview of housing activity since 1999. The information is divided into three tables: residential development between 1999 and 2004, residential development after 2005 and residential development for the entire period from 1999 to 2009. Growth since 2005 has shifted slightly to Residential R-1 which might indicate a preference for a conventional suburban development pattern. Whether this trend will continue in the future will depend on factors that are beyond the County's control such as land values, the economy, lending regulations, and the price of gas as well as factors such as whether or not the County wants to implement policies that encourage other development patterns.

Table 37 – Housing Units Built Per Zoning Category (1999 to 2004)

Housing Units Built Per Zoning (1999 to 2004)					
Zoning	Number of Parcels	Total Acres	DUs	Average DU/Acre	Percentage of Growth
A1	885	7,693	900	0.12	61.3%
R1	368	2,574	375	0.15	25.5%
R2	16	1,077	16	0.01	1.1%
R3	76	52	76	1.46	5.2%
RR	102	576	102	0.18	6.9%

Table 38 – Housing Units Built Per Zoning Category (2005 to 2009)

Housing Units Built Per Zoning (2005 to 2009)					
Zoning	Number of Parcels	Total Acres	DUs	Average DU/Acre	Percentage of Growth
A1	277	2,458	300	0.12	57.0%
R1	153	127	153	1.20	29.1%
R2	2	5	2	0.38	0.4%
R3	47	11	47	4.17	8.9%
RR	24	42	24	0.58	4.6%

Table 39 – Housing Units Built Per Zoning Category (1999 to 2009)

Housing Units Built Per Zoning (1999 to 2009)					
Zoning	Number of Parcels	Total Acres	DUs	Average DU/Acre	Percentage of Growth
A1	1,162	10,151	1,200	0.12	60.2%
R1	521	2,702	528	0.20	26.5%
R2	18	1,082	18	0.02	0.9%
R3	123	64	123	1.94	6.2%
RR	126	617	126	0.20	6.3%

Map 7 (Recent Residential Growth Since 1999) and Map 8 (Residential Densities) provide information about where residential development has occurred over the past 10 years. Generally, new residential development has been scattered along rural roads and in some instances, adjacent to areas of existing development.

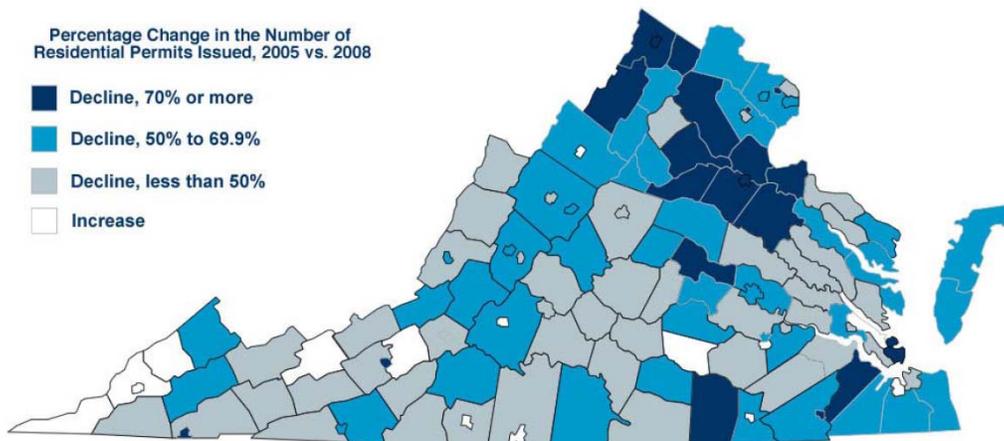
Building permit data for the County (Table 40) indicates that there has been a decline in residential construction activity since 2005, and that development levels in 2009 were at a 20 year low. This trend was evident Statewide as shown in Figure 8.

Table 40 – Annual Building Permits, Botetourt County

Number of Annual Building Permits							
Year	New Res. Const. Units	Commercial Incl. Add. & Alter.	Residential Add. & Alter.	Misc.	Electric, Plumbing & Mech.	Number Inspections	Const. Costs \$\$\$\$ Value
1984	169	8	124	123	952	2002	\$ 11,444,426
1985	176	14	169	95	1033	2704	\$ 12,881,769
1986	205	19	215	125	1576	3679	\$ 17,563,823
1987	189	57	119	231	1318	3245	\$ 21,219,672
1988	201	38	173	366	1396	3755	\$ 21,127,164
1989	156	43	250	229	2075	3529	\$ 19,523,163
1990	230	42	335	269	2289	3825	\$ 24,300,130
1991	235	55	321	215	2324	4160	\$ 28,533,244
1992	257	45	315	191	2292	3893	\$ 28,677,924
1993	281	27	387	236	2486	4503	\$ 30,555,162
1994	290	13	361	341	2608	5446	\$ 39,633,084
1995	249	20	348	336	2525	4874	\$ 49,205,658
1996	226	46	282	355	2306	4814	\$ 50,321,772
1997	216	21	341	326	2428	5119	\$ 45,149,167
1998	228	43	360	269	2374	5858	\$ 43,877,716
1999	230	26	404	223	2377	6058	\$ 76,217,138
2000	253	45	390	93	1401	5911	\$ 53,015,291
2001	275	79	304	31	1288	5636	\$ 53,499,117
2002	208	84	281	77	1238	6697	\$ 41,761,938
2003	276	66	232	140	1477	6302	\$ 71,541,928
2004	237	85	175	239	1840	7536	\$ 88,126,958
2005*	277/32	59	191	119	1819	7791	\$ 84,644,900
2006	194/33	82	201	165	1813	7735	\$ 89,191,822
2007	142/33	90	142	177	1405	6867	\$ 48,594,897
2008	102/25	109	184	131	1131	5826	\$ 58,311,790
2009	63/19	76	170	118	942	4885	\$ 25,595,941

*Starting 2005 the tabulations depict new residential units/manufactured units
 Source: Botetourt County Building Department, 2009

Figure 8 – Building Permit Percentage Change Statewide (2005 vs 2009)



Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map (Map 9) depicts areas of the County that have been designated for future residential and commercial growth as well as areas for agriculture and conservation. The Future Land Use Map serves as a general guide for both public and private sector decision-makers who will shape future development of Botetourt County. The map serves as a guide for the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors when planning public facilities, or evaluating land development applications. The map also serves as a guide to investors, businesses and citizens to indicate what areas of the County are appropriate for development.

This map presents a generalized overview of desired land use patterns within the County. The map is not intended to be parcel specific. The specific location of future land uses and the appropriate mix of uses in any given area will be determined as part of the development review process, subject to the standards of the Zoning Ordinance, at such time as the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors review specific land use requests. Such review will consider the compatibility and benefits of the use, and the land use impacts of a specific use on the surrounding neighborhood and larger community.

Seven future land use categories are shown on this map. They are:

Federal Lands

This category designates National Forest lands.

Conservation/100 Year Floodplains

This category includes steep slopes, lands protected by conservation easements, 100-year floodplains, and properties that are within the Carvins Cove watershed. Future development in these areas should be prohibited or extremely limited.

Agricultural

This category includes land areas in the rural portions of the County where agricultural and forestal uses are the dominant land use. Large lot single family development may now exist within some of these areas. Future development of these properties at densities higher than allowed by the current agricultural zoning is not encouraged.

Rural Low Density Residential

This category includes areas where larger lot residential development is encouraged, as a transition between the County's agricultural and medium density residential areas. Such development generally lacks public water and/or sewer.

Medium Density Residential

This category includes areas where suburban patterns of residential development have occurred and are encouraged to occur in the future. Although single family homes are the predominant land use in this category, higher density residential development such as townhomes and apartments may also be suitable. Allowable future densities in these areas should be based upon the availability and adequacy of public facilities and the compatibility of the proposed land use with surrounding properties. Public water and/or sewer typically serve or are planned for these areas. Most of these areas are and will be located in the southern portions of the county.

Commercial

This category designates areas where commercial developments have occurred and where future commercial developments are encouraged. Public water and sewer is generally available or planned for these areas.

Industrial

The industrial land use category is designated to show those areas where major industrial activities exist and/or are planned.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Land Use Goals

- To achieve a balanced land use system that provides sufficient and compatible land areas for all community land use needs, while protecting sensitive natural environments, and important local historic and cultural resources.
- To promote Urban Development Areas in the place or places where a variety of land uses, facilities, and services exist and are planned to support the County's future growth, with emphasis placed on infill development.
- To enable well-planned, coordinated, and sustainable development to occur throughout the county.

Land Use Objectives

- Minimize adverse impacts of growth on rural character.
- Promote a strong and diversified tax base through diverse zoning.
- Protect rural residential areas and prime agricultural lands from future growth.
- Protect sensitive environmental areas and historic and cultural resources.
- Discourage scattered development patterns which are incompatible with the County's ability to provide adequate and cost effective public services and facilities.
- Enhance the rural character of the County through the preservation of agricultural and forestal lands.
- Implement appropriate policies and procedures to provide reasonable protection to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail.
- Adopt and maintain appropriate land use ordinances and voluntary programs designed to guide and implement the provisions of this comprehensive plan.
- Coordinate review of joint development plans and concepts with incorporated towns.
- Promote and encourage commercial, residential and limited light and small industrial growth in areas in close proximity to the towns, where appropriate services and infrastructure are available.

Land Use Policies

- Consider the intent and policies contained in this comprehensive plan, and the plan's future land use map when evaluating development proposals requiring a public hearing.
- Continue to develop the County's economic base so that tax rates can be maintained and desired services can continue to be provided to all property owners.
- Zone appropriate areas for industrial, commercial and office growth.
- Large residential, commercial and industrial development proposals should only locate in areas planned for such use, where there are adequate public facilities, and where the transportation system can accommodate the demands of the new development.
- Encourage commercial and office uses around existing incorporated towns and villages.
- Infill development should be encouraged in south County areas, so that existing infrastructure can be more efficiently used, and rural and agricultural lands can be deferred from development.
- Encourage infill development where infrastructure exists, as well as in and around incorporated towns.
- Direct growth toward areas designed to accommodate such growth.
- Periodically review the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure that they are relevant tools to achieve local land use objectives and are in conformance with policies contained in this plan.
- Work with the National Park Service and Blue Ridge Parkway staff to develop local procedures and standards to protect critical Parkway viewsheds and achieve an appropriate development character at Parkway interchanges.

- Encourage the conservation and preservation of major historic and archeological sites. Continue to provide comment on potential new sites within the County.
- Continue to incorporate innovative development techniques into zoning and subdivision ordinances, such as cluster developments and conservation subdivision design.
- Discourage scattered development patterns through zoning incentives.
- Review existing and potential incentives and development standards to ensure that opportunities for rural preservation and compact development are used effectively.
- Encourage the use of conservation easement programs at the discretion of private land owners to promote preservation of key rural areas in perpetuity.
- Allow and encourage residential cluster development to maintain larger tracts of open space in rural areas; amend the county's current subdivision and zoning ordinances to provide incentives for clustering in rural areas. A common incentive for clustering is a density bonus or bonuses (residential and non-residential) which provide an increase in density correlating to the amount of open space set aside.
- Encourage mixed-use centers that should be comprised of well-mixed and integrated developments that avoid segregated uses and have well planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for active living and interaction.
- Promote the development of mixed-use activity centers with multi-modal transportation connections to provide convenient and accessible residential and employment areas.
- Coordinate with the towns to create more uniform zoning regulations in the towns and surrounding county areas.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The land use policies of this plan are based on two key strategies: directing growth to appropriate areas and reducing development pressures to convert farmland to higher intensity uses. The County's desire to maintain a balance between development and preservation objectives is obvious in the way the Future Land Use Map has been drawn.

The Future Land Use Map should be used as a general guide for future county development patterns. More specific guidelines for development or programs and strategies for encouraging alternative development types, encouraging preservation of farmland and managing the timing and location of growth can be pursued by the County as deemed appropriate subject to the framework of this Comprehensive Plan. Some examples of programs that the County might wish to explore after adoption of this plan include:

Farm Land Protection and Environmental Preservation Initiatives

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR's)

A purchase of development rights (PDR) program enables a locality to purchase conservation easements from property owners to promote limited development. PDR programs offer key advantages to both the landowner and the community. The landowner gets to keep the land, and receive financial compensation for foregoing development. The advantage to the community is reduced development in priority preservation areas.

The goal of the program is to preserve and protect farm and forested lands through perpetual easements. The protected land base will help to ensure that farm and forested lands will be available for future generations to maintain a viable agricultural industry for Botetourt County. By preventing development in the rural areas of the County, tremendous savings are realized by offsetting infrastructure costs. PDR prevents the need for new roads and improvements, public services such as police, fire and EMS, new schools, libraries, and trash collection. The American Farmland Trust Cost of Community Services studies conducted over the past two decades show working lands generate more public revenues than they receive back in public services. Their impact on community general funds is similar to that of other commercial and industrial land uses. Agricultural lands require very few city services and generate positive tax revenue, thus they actually subsidize the residential development. Several localities in Virginia have adopted PDR programs.

A local PDR program can be funded through a variety of mechanisms. These include a line item in the local budget, general revenue, roll-back taxes, a specific local tax, grants, and dedication of a particular windfall.

Agricultural/Forestral Districts

An Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) is enabled by State law and subject to provisions of the State Code. An AFD is a voluntary agreement between farmers and the local government to maintain land in farming for a set term. When a district is established, landowners agree not to convert their farm or forest land to development for a period of between 4 and 10 years. In return, the locality offers reduced tax rates, protection from nuisance suits, and consideration of the district in local land-use planning. The Commonwealth also agrees not to take actions or make infrastructure investments that will place increased pressure on landowners to convert land.

Basic criteria for AFD's are as follows: 1) they are initiated by landowners voluntarily; 2) a district must have a core of at least 200 acres in one or more contiguous parcels, 3) parcels can be included in the district if their closest boundary is within one mile of the core, or if they are adjacent to a parcel that is in the district, and 4) part or all of a parcel can be enrolled.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Although not well known to many local government officials, this program is the federal government's single largest environmental improvement program. It is administered by the United State's Department of Agriculture's (USDA) commodity credit corporation (CCC) through the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Established in 1985, the CRP encourages farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas of grass and trees on land that needs protection from erosion, to act as windbreaks, or in places where vegetation can improve water quality or provide food and habitat for wildlife. The farmers must enter into contracts with the CCC lasting between 10 and 15 years. In return, they receive annual rental payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost share assistance to establish this protective vegetation.

Riparian Easements

A riparian easement is a special type of conservation easement that applies only to a streamside or riparian zone mutually agreed upon by the landowner and the easement holder(s). Like all easements, a riparian easement is a legal agreement in which the landowner retains ownership and full control of the property, yet conveys certain specified rights to the easement holder(s). Specifically, the landowner agrees to restrict uses that would harm the riparian zone and works with the easement holder to develop a management plan to ensure riparian zone protection. Typically this is done by establishing and maintaining vegetation and limiting livestock access to the stream. Each easement is tailored to the property and the desires of the individual landowner. Again, depending upon the terms and timing of the riparian easement, significant tax savings can accrue to the owner granting the easement.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP is a voluntary initiative using state, federal, and non-governmental funding to help solve environmental problems. The objective is to share costs and resources to address specific local environmental problems in a designated target area. Specific financial incentives encourage farmers to enroll land in targeted areas in CREP contracts for designated environmental practices such as riparian buffers, grass filter strips, or wildlife habitat. Incentives can include cost-share assistance for establishing the designated practices, special rental rates, or one-time payments. A landowner may establish both a CREP contract and a riparian easement on his/her property, reaping the benefits of both programs.

Voluntary Conservation Easements

In 2010, over 15,423 acres of land in Botetourt County were protected by voluntary conservation easements (Map 10 – Conservation Easements). A conservation easement is a legal agreement by which a landowner retains ownership of property while conveying certain specified rights to the easement holder. Conservation easements are usually given to a non-profit, charitable land conservation organization or a public entity. Easements can be tailored to meet the owner's wishes regarding the future use of his/her land. They can be for a specific time period, or can be granted in perpetuity. Typically a conservation easement restricts development or uses that would destroy natural, scenic, or historic areas while at the same time allowing other traditional uses such as farming. Depending upon the terms and timing of the easement, significant tax savings can accrue to the property owner granting the easement. The County should continue to develop its easement program in conjunction with other rural land preservation efforts.

Design and Development Patterns Initiative

1. Land Use and Transportation Coordination

Outside of the town cores, the majority of Botetourt County population lives, works, and socializes within an auto-dependent land use framework. To reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve the quality of land development, Botetourt County should implement land use and transportation coordination policies that focus on shortening trips and encouraging more pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-friendly communities within and adjacent to mixed-use centers and corridors or accessible to them via sidewalks, trails, or transit. It also directs growth to areas with development capacities that are less congested.

- **Coordinate Transportation Investments with Land Use**
Ensure that transportation decisions, strategies, and investments are coordinated with and support the County's land use objectives.
- **Transportation in Support of Walkable Neighborhoods**
Make the design and scale of transportation facilities compatible with planned land uses and with consideration for the character anticipated by this Comprehensive Plan for the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Directing Transportation Investments**
Target transportation facilities, services, and investments to promote and accommodate the growth this Comprehensive Plan anticipates in mixed-use centers, commercial corridors, and residential neighborhoods while reducing reliance on single occupancy vehicles.
- **Reducing VMT Through Mixed Use**
Promote mixed-use development that provides a range of services within a short distance of residences as a way to reduce the growth of vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- **Connectivity**
New development and redevelopment should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between individual development sites to provide alternative means of access along corridors.

Growth Areas and Urban Development Areas

The key to Botetourt County's future growth management will be accommodating population growth in a way that avoids sprawl. Growth areas are a way that the County can address reducing low-density development, both residential and commercial. Identifying growth areas helps a locality align both its development regulations and its capital improvements program toward guiding new development into specific locations. The underlying principle is to limit infrastructure improvements to growth areas. This lessens the likelihood of sprawl and increases demand for the land that the locality is prepared to serve with utilities. Growth areas may be jointly designated by a town and county in the form of joint development areas. Potential detriments to Growth Areas involve artificial escalation of property values in targeted areas while prices fall elsewhere. Keys to delineating successful growth areas include:

- Water and sewer limited to designated boundaries
- Zoned for density
- Priority for infrastructure funding
- Detailed plan for growth (i.e., streetscapes, parks, roads, joint developments plans)

As part of the Transportation Act of 2007, Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia was expanded to include new requirements that certain fast growing localities, including Botetourt County, must include at least one Urban Development Area (UDA) within their boundaries. According to the new legislation, a UDA is an area located close to a city, town or other developed area that is designated as appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities and to public or community

sewer and water systems. The language further states that development within the UDA shall provide for reasonably compact development with residential densities of “at least” four units per gross acre and commercial densities of “not less than” 0.4 F.A.R (floor area ratio) per gross acre. Finally, the UDA or UDAs must be of sufficient size to accommodate projected commercial and residential growth for at least 10 years but not more than 20 years.

The State code allows comprehensive plans to include incentives for development in UDAs and state and local funding for transportation improvements, housing and economic development shall be directed to UDAs to the extent possible. Localities subject to the new legislation are now also required to incorporate new urbanism design principles such as pedestrian friendly roads, interconnected road and pedestrian networks, stormwater management, preservation of natural areas, mixed use neighborhoods with a mix of housing types and reduced yard setbacks and street widths in their comprehensive plans.

Design Standards

Many localities are moving toward comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances that emphasize the physical form of development over use, reflecting planning trends like Neo-traditional design and New Urbanism. This approach incorporates traditional land use concepts like use type, density and intensity but relates them to physical form and character. Virginia has even embraced and mandated the use of these principles in the new UDA legislation described above. These concepts may be beneficial to Botetourt County as a means of further refining the Future Land Use Map included in the Comprehensive Plan and to ensure that the County satisfies the new UDA legislation.

Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable, and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning. Design standards influence the physical form of the County and how residents experience public spaces such as streets, parks, or civic spaces. While individual buildings may be attractive in themselves, there are numerous other design elements that contribute to the organization of a space including architectural design, building placement, height, scale, and open space. The cumulative interaction of these design elements and adjacent buildings in organizing public space is vital for achieving an environment that supports and promotes social interaction and protection of community character. As discussed throughout this plan, Botetourt County has many of the physical components that contribute to a successful and vibrant community, but it continues to grapple with issues of maintaining its identity and attractiveness. General design guidelines that help promote coordinated and high quality development and enhance the public realm and the County's image. Listed below are some strategies that the County and private developers can implement to largely determine the physical form of the County.

- **Identity through corridors:** Ensure community identity by enhancing the aesthetic qualities of Botetourt County's corridors with a high-quality built environment, greenway network, and preserving its natural landscapes and scenic resources.
- **Identity through places:** Eagle Rock, Town of Fincastle, Town of Troutville, and the Town of Buchanan are just some examples of communities with unique identities that are impacted by growth of the County. The recent historic survey contains many buildings that offer a window into the architectural heritage of the County's various communities. By identifying characteristics that make the communities distinctive could help in establishing Botetourt County's identity.
- **Creating Attractive Facades:** Well-designed building facades, storefront windows, and attractive signage and lighting should be used to create visual interest. Monolithic or box-like facades should be avoided to promote the human quality of the place and street.
- **County Gateways:** Create more distinctive and memorable gateways at points of entry to the County, and points of entry to incorporated towns, individual neighborhoods and neighborhood centers. Gateways should provide a sense of transition and arrival, and should be designed to make a strong and positive visual impact. This type of approach is exemplified by the need for a more designed and attractive gateway at I-81 Exit 150.

- **Zoning to Achieve Design Goals:** Explore zoning and other regulatory techniques to promote excellence in the design of new buildings and public spaces. Zoning should include incentives or requirements for facade features, buffering, and other exterior architectural elements that improve the compatibility of structures, while promoting a consistent architectural character.
- **Mixed Use:** Mixed-use developments are the future of dense planning in rural communities. They are efficient in terms of land use and service delivery. There are several design standards associated with promoting mixed use land development.
 - o **Building Orientation:** Buildings in mixed-use developments should be oriented along streets, plazas, and pedestrian ways. Their facades should create an active and engaging public realm.
 - o **Multi-modal Design:** Mixed-use developments should accommodate all modes of transportation to the greatest extent possible.
 - o **Parking Location and Design:** New single purpose surface parking lots should be avoided within mixed-use centers. Instead, shared parking facilities with landscaping visible from a public right-of-way should be used.
 - o **Public Open Space:** Usable and well-appointed public open space should be provided within mixed-use centers to serve as focal points and community gathering spots.
- **Corridors:** The appearance of Botetourt County's commercial corridors, specifically U.S Route 220 (including U.S. Route 220 Alternate), U.S. Route 460 and Route 11, has been detrimental to the larger community's image. As primary entry corridors for visitors to the County, it is essential that these roadways convey a positive impression. At many points along these corridors, there is also a need to mitigate air and noise pollution. The creation of boulevards with landscaped medians, street trees, and sidewalks will greatly improve the appearance of Botetourt County's corridors, mitigate air and noise pollution, and address the needs of users.
 - o **Gateway Corridor Design Quality:** Promote high quality development along gateway corridors to improve aesthetics and encourage higher levels of investment. Design of new development should contribute to the overall visual quality of the corridor and define the street space.
 - o **Highlighting Important Intersections:** Promote the use of gateways and landmarks to highlight access points and important intersections along key corridors.
 - o **Strip Shopping Centers:** Ensure that zoning and parking standards discourage strip commercial shopping centers and auto-oriented building designs (designs that encourage use of automobile as the only possible mode of access).
 - o **Screening of Unsightly Uses:** The visibility of trash storage, loading, and truck parking areas from the street, sidewalk, building entrances and corridors should be minimized.
 - o **Parking Lot Design:** Encourage efficient site design, shared parking between complementary uses, and reduced amounts of impervious surface in parking lot design.
 - o **Planting Requirements:** Enhance and expand the required planting and tree coverage for parking lots by incorporating design standards that promote long term tree growth and health. Planting standards should improve permeability and reduce the heat island effect.

Streetscape Design Standards

Streetscape design refers to those elements of roadway design that affect street users and nearby residents. Streetscapes can have a significant effect on how people perceive and interact with their community. If streetscapes are designed in a way that is safe and inviting to pedestrians, people are more likely to walk, which can help reduce automobile traffic, improve public health, stimulate local economic activity, and attract residents and visitors to a community. Applied to I-81, at Exit 150, streetscape design standards can greatly improve the aesthetics and sense of safety for the area surrounding the interchange. This would improve the gateway into the Botetourt community from the south, and help change the overall character of land uses. Visually cohesive streetscapes use a variety of techniques including landscaping, undergrounding of utilities, and other streetscape improvements along street frontages that reflect adjacent land uses.

Residential Cluster Development

Cluster development promotes the preservation of open space by allowing smaller lots to be grouped on a portion of a larger parcel. The remainder is set aside as 'open space.' For example, a 100-acre parcel at a base density of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres and a minimum lot size of 1½ acres would result in 30 developed acres (putting 20 residences on 1½ acre lots) and leaving an undeveloped residual of 70 acres. The residual acreage can be available for continued farming, or it can be incorporated into the development as common open space.

Localities can set different standards to achieve goals through cluster development. For example, in agricultural zones, the emphasis might be on maintaining a sizeable contiguous area to enable continued farming or forestry. Other ordinances may specify that environmental features be protected. Also, provisions might address the suitability of the reserved open space to ensure that it is usable and appealing for common open space. All of these strategies recognize that the open space and key vistas on-site should be 'designed' in their own right, to serve specific purposes, rather than merely be the 'leftover' portion after house sites are chosen.

One variation for open space design involves instituting minimum open space requirements. Some communities have varying minimum open space requirements for various zoning districts, including multi-family and commercial. The benefits of clustering include the opportunity to protect natural areas, scenic views, and other assets during development as well as somewhat reduced land consumption.

Scenic Resource Initiatives

Preserving scenic views and vistas is particularly important for Botetourt County. The County's scenery is critical to the rural character and is one of its most distinguishing features. The Blue Ridge Mountains are a national attraction and derive their popularity from spectacular views. Tourism and nature-based leisure draw on the beauty of the region and have significant economic impact. Furthermore, County residents value the beauty of their natural surroundings on a daily basis.

Keys to Preserving Scenic Views

- Maintain farmland and forestland
- Develop corridor plans and overlay districts
- Minimize the visibility of wireless communication towers and other tall structures
- Use scenic designations (like Virginia Byways and Virginia Scenic Rivers)
- Site rural buildings to their context
- Use viewshed easements around particularly important sites
- Limit ridgeline development
- Use open space development designs

Mixed Use

The resurgence of mixed-use downtowns, employment centers, and retail centers is a national development trend that is evident in recent developments like Daleville Town Center. Mixed-use centers bring together medium- to high-density residential and non-residential uses within a walkable, bicycle-friendly, and/or transit-accessible development framework. Uses can be mixed vertically, within buildings; or horizontally, when tightly clustered in a pedestrian-friendly arrangement. Due to the diversity of uses and activities, mixed-use centers are typically vibrant destinations that attract attention due to their level of activity. Fundamentally, a mixed-use center should provide a full service environment and diverse land uses (residences, offices, retail, service, entertainment, civic, and open space) for residents, employees, and visitors. Further, mixed-use developments and mixed-use target areas (Map 11- Future Mixed Use Target Areas) should be coordinated with the implementation of water and waste water infrastructure. While mixed-use developments help reduce overall infrastructure costs, such as less demand of daily traffic on the road network, the demand for water resources does not change with a diversity of land uses. Botetourt County should coordinate the approval of mixed-use developments with the provision of water resources.

Some effective mixed use aspects are listed below.

- **Composition of Mixed-Use Centers**
Mixed-use centers should be comprised of well-mixed and integrated developments that avoid segregated uses and have well planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for active living and interaction.
- **Complementary Uses and Urban Vitality**
A complementary integration and mixture of land uses should be provided within regional, county, and community mixed-use centers to maintain the County's livability, manage future growth, and provide walkable and transit accessible destinations. An example of this is the potential future development of I-81 Exit 150.
- **Mixed-Use and Multi-Modal Transportation**
Promote the development of mixed-use activity centers with multi-modal transportation connections to provide convenient and accessible residential and employment areas.
- **Zoning Standards for Mixed-Use**
Revise the Zoning Ordinance to modify setback and buffering to the site design requirements within designated mixed-use centers and mixed-use zoning districts to ensure compatibility and encourage dynamic communities.

Future Mixed Use Target Areas Mapping Categories

Listed below are some possible future mixed use categories that may be identified on a future land use map (Map 11- Future Mixed Use Target Areas) that indicate areas desirable for mixed use development.

Town Edge Mixed Use

This category applies to shopping and pedestrian-oriented retail districts located near at the edge of existing incorporated towns, such as commercial growth just south and north of Fincastle. The service area of these districts is generally about a two-mile radius or less. Typical uses would include corner stores or convenience stores, restaurants, bakeries, supermarkets (other than super-stores/centers), drug stores, dry cleaners, small professional offices, retail banking, limited light industries and similar uses that serve the immediately surrounding neighborhood. While this is primarily a commercial category, mixed-use projects with mixed residential types are also supported by this designation.

Multiple zoning districts could be developed for this category in the future, recognizing that some of the designated areas are connected with established "main streets" and others are auto-oriented shopping plazas or strip centers.

Mixed use centers have not been identified for the town edges of Buchanan and Troutville. Because this plan only identifies land use strategies for the areas within the county boundaries, it does not include recommendations for the incorporated towns. If the county was to identify mixed use target areas at the town-county edge of Buchanan and Troutville it would encourage a form of “leap frog” development that skips developing within the town limits. This would create a disconnection within the incorporated towns, as well as be counterintuitive to the purpose of mixed use. Mixed use at the edge of these towns should only occur once the towns believe they have reached development capacity within the town limits. Further, each town should consider including mixed use target areas within the town limits that encourages similar mixed-use development encouraged in the county.

Community Mixed Use

This category applies to medium-sized shopping centers and larger pedestrian-oriented retail districts, such as the Daleville Town Center. Typical commercial uses include supermarkets, medium sized department stores and variety stores, clothing stores, banks, offices, restaurants, and similar uses that draw from multiple neighborhoods. Development intensities could be higher than in Town Edge areas, with mid-rise buildings as well as low rise buildings. Where residential development occurs, ground floor retail would be encouraged and minimum density standards might be applied. Multiple zoning districts could be developed for this category in the future, recognizing that some of the designated areas are established neighborhood “main streets” and others are corridor auto-oriented shopping plazas or strip centers. Although housing would be allowed in all cases, there could be greater incentives for “vertical mixed use” that adjoin future transit nodes (such as service from an express route), or are on traditional “walking” streets.

Regional Mixed Use

This category applies to potential regional nodes, like I-81 Exit 150, where future land development targets regional retail markets. The intent is to identify the major retail and service hubs that draw customers from across the county and adjoining counties. These areas may include high-density housing, office development, hotels, movie theaters, and region-serving retail uses such as department stores and specialty stores.

Railroad and Land Use Access Study

The cost-effective movements of incoming material to be processed and the outgoing finished products destined for domestic and international markets are vital to the industries in Botetourt County. A key component to providing manufacturers with low cost freight transportation access is rail service. A study of the potential land available for industrial use and railroad access would offer a general assessment of a rail line connection between the mainline track and potential or existing industrial locations. The study should include three main goals: (1) Identify feasible industrial land use locations that can be served by active railroad alignments; (2) an estimate of potential rail shipment capacity; and (3) infrastructure considerations for land uses not yet identified in the comprehensive plan for industrial purposes. Some steps to be considered for the study include:

1. Property Study – Perform a traffic and business development study of the entire railroad alignment in Botetourt County. This includes existing industries and the potential for new railroad traffic development with those industries.
2. Industrial Site Locations – Develop a list of industrial sites, reload/transload sites and industrial buildings on and near the railroad alignments. This list will include local zoning assessment, water and waste water infrastructure assessment, and proximity to highways and rail access.
3. Transload/Reload – Identify and prepare a study of transload/reload operators and/or potential distribution clients.
4. Non-Rail Users - Perform traffic and business development study of area non-rail users. Included would be a detailed breakdown of the existing inbound/outbound traffic, existing rail structure and the potential for rail traffic development opportunities.