



**September 8, 2025**

**To: Board of Supervisors**

**From: Ligon Webb, Planning Director**

**RE: Citizens Working Group (CWG) – FINAL REPORT**

On November 18, 2024, the Board of Supervisors established the Citizen's Working Group (CWG) as an ad hoc advisory body to assist in updating the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map, with a focus on two strategic priorities from the Countywide Strategic Plan: Economic Prosperity and Housing and Residential Options.

The CWG held its initial organizational meetings in December 2024, adopted by laws, and established a meeting schedule designed to maximize transparency and public involvement. Between December 2024 and July 2025, CWG convened 17 public meetings and subcommittee work sessions, all of which were livestreamed, recorded, and documented with posted minutes.

Over the course of this process, members reviewed existing conditions, considered data on housing and the economy, and developed recommendations aligned with the adopted Strategic Plan. The attached report represents the culmination of this work, offering recommendations for targeted updates to the Comprehensive Plan, including the introduction of an Economic Priority (EP) land use area, refinements to housing policies, and new zoning concepts such as a Unified Development District (UDD) and standards for conservation subdivisions and cottage courts.

I humbly believe this has been an excellent exercise in community-based, citizen-led planning. The CWG process brought diverse voices together, helped ground recommendations in local knowledge, and demonstrated the value of constructive dialogue around difficult issues.

**On Monday, September 15, 2025 (4:00–5:30 p.m., Village Center Conference Room)**, members of the CWG will present this final report to the Board of Supervisors at its scheduled work session.

Again, I would like to thank all CWG members for their dedication and thoughtful work.

Regards,

*Ligon*

**Attachment:** Citizen's Working Group – Final Report (September 2025)

# Citizen's Working Group

## Final Report



# **Comprehensive Plan Update – 2025**

**September 8, 2025**

## **Table of Contents**

### **I. Introduction**

*CWG Ad-Hoc Committee Members*

*Organizational Framework*

*Summary of Meetings*

### **II. Data on Existing Conditions**

*Economic Overview*

*Housing Trends*

*What is Considered Affordable Housing?*

*Residential Land Availability*

*Public Utilities and Infrastructure*

*Transportation*

### **III. Economic Prosperity Recommendations**

*Economic Prosperity Overview*

*[EP-1] Creation of an Economic Priority (EP) land use area*

*[EP-2] Update Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 4 (Economic Development)*

*[EP-3] Meet Infrastructure Needs for EP Parcels*

*[EP-4] Support Rural Businesses in the A-10 Area*

## **IV. Housing and Residential Option Recommendations**

*[HRO-1] Expand Housing in the Village Growth Area*

*[HRO-2] Create Alternative Housing in the Route 60 East Growth Area*

*[HRO-3] Explore Alternative Housing within Holly Hills*

*[HRO-4] Support Rural Character in the A-10 Area*

*[HRO-5] Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)*

*[HRO-6] Conservation Subdivisions*

*[HRO-7] Family Subdivisions*

*[HRO-8] Create a Unified Development District (UDD)*

*[HRO-9] Establish Standards for Cluster Housing / Cottage Courts*

*[HRO-10] Support Housing Options for the Elderly*

*[HRO-11] Explore Community Land Trusts*

## **V. Closing Comments**

### **Appendix 1: Economic Priority Parcel Maps**

## **I. Introduction**

On November 18, 2024, the Powhatan County Board of Supervisors established a charter to form a Citizens Working Group (CWG) as an ad hoc advisory body to assist in updating the County's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. This initiative was launched in anticipation of the Board's new Countywide Strategic Plan, which sets forth the county strategic priorities for 2025–2028.



*The CWG was established by the Board of Supervisors to focus on two of the Strategic Plans six core priorities: Economic Development and Housing and Residential Options.*

The CWG has been guided by the Board of Supervisors' charge as defined in both the formal charter and the newly adopted Strategic Plan. Specifically, the Charter (given to the CWG at our December 18, 2024, meeting) states:

*The Board of Supervisors (BOS) has authorized the formation of an ad hoc Citizen Working Group chartered to advise the BOS in its effort to update the County's current Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Map.*

*The Working Group will be strictly guided by the Board of Supervisors 2024-2029 Strategic Plan (final draft anticipated in December 2024) with concentration on two primary strategic areas identified in the Plan:*

- *Economic Growth & Business Development*
- *Housing and Residential Growth*

*While the remaining areas of the Strategic Plan are vital to the county's future and should be given consideration, they are not core contributors to the charter assigned to the Working Group.*

The final version of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 27, 2025. In the adopted plan, the strategic areas: Economic Growth & Business Development and Housing and Residential Growth were replaced by Strategic Priority 2 (Economic Prosperity) and Strategic Priority 3 (Housing and Residential Options) generally

matching the CWG charter. In the Strategic Plan, the role of these two strategic priorities and the specified key strategies are described as follows:

#### Strategic Priority 2 (Economic Prosperity):

*This strategy aims to maintain a business-friendly environment that attracts and sustains commercial and industrial growth. This priority reflects the county's commitment to fostering an economy that supports diverse business opportunities and creates high-value jobs for our residents.*

*The updated 2025 Economic Development Plan will be the primary guiding document in addressing long-term business growth and priorities. By focusing on strategic land use and promoting high-value industries, Powhatan County aims to achieve a balanced and resilient economic base that broadens the local tax base and provides more opportunities for goods, services, and employment.*

#### Strategic Priority 3 (Housing and Residential Options):

*Housing is fundamental to the well-being of our residents and balanced residential growth is key to maintaining a vibrant and thriving community. This strategic priority is to balance our future housing and infrastructure needs with preservation of the Powhatan's rural heritage. This focus ensures that as we plan for and accommodate growth, we remain equally focused on maintaining the natural landscapes that make the county unique.*

*The Comprehensive Plan will provide guidance as we implement policies that will establish housing inventories that meet the diverse needs of the county's residents. There is a growing need for more varied housing options catering to different age groups and economic backgrounds, ensuring everyone from young professionals to retirees can find housing options within the county.*

The CWG was also asked to ensure its process was transparent and inclusive, with all meetings open to the public, live streamed online, and minutes and YouTube videos also posted on the county website and public facing.

#### **CWG Ad-Hoc Committee Members**

The CWG was composed of twelve citizens representing a cross-section of Powhatan's community, including district appointees from each Board member, representatives from

key public bodies, and several at-large members. Staff from Powhatan County and PlanRVA provided non-voting support to the group. The members of the CWG include:

District Appointees: Danny Beran (District 1), David Anderson (District 2), Doug Bradbury (District 3), Bill Melton (District 4), and Bill Donati Sr. (District 5)

Commissioner of the Revenue: Jamie Timberlake

EDA Representative: Matt Schiefer

Agricultural & Forestal Advisory Committee Representative: Bob Reilly

At-Large Members: Roger Richardson, Don Rissmeyer, Chris Shust, and Rudy Gregory (or Sheriff Brad Nunnally)

County Staff (Non-Voting): Ligon Webb, Planning Director, and Roxanne Salerno, Director of Economic Development

PlanRVA Support (Non-Voting): Barbara Jacocks, Community Development Director, and Martha Shickle, Executive Director

### **Organizational Framework**

The CWG held two foundational meetings in December 2024, which served to establish the group's organizational structure, procedures, and initial direction. During these meetings, members reviewed their charter, adopted bylaws, and agreed upon key processes that would guide their work. From the outset, the group acknowledged that its charter was not to rewrite the entire Comprehensive Plan, but rather to conduct a targeted review of specific chapters based on the County's adopted Strategic Plan.

Key outcomes from this organizational phase included:

Election of Officers: Jamie Timberlake was elected Chair; David Anderson was elected Vice Chair. The Planning Director was designated as Secretary, with the Chair responsible for reviewing draft minutes for accuracy.

Voting Procedures: A quorum was set at nine members, with seven affirmative votes required to pass motions. Proxy voting was limited to the public safety representative, and absentee or email voting was not permitted.

Public Input and Transparency: The group agreed that public comments would be routed through County staff or the county website, ensuring compliance with FOIA and encouraging open engagement.

Meeting Schedule: Members initially agreed to meet twice monthly, generally on the second and fourth Tuesdays, with alternating afternoon and evening sessions to maximize public accessibility.

The CWG also began to define its workplan. While the Strategic Plan had not yet been finalized, members agreed to begin with Economic Prosperity and tentatively identified key chapters of the comprehensive plan for discussion: Chapter 4 (Economic Development), Chapter 5 (Housing), and Chapter 8 (Land Use and Community Character). To support this review, the group requested supplemental information, including GIS mapping layers, infrastructure and utility data, parcel inventories, and workforce statistics.

### **Summary of Meetings**

The CWG began its formal work in December 2025 and held a series of public meetings and subcommittee work sessions throughout the spring. The group met on the following dates: December 2, 2024, December 17, 2024, January 7, 2025, January 21, 2025, January 30, 2025 (subcommittee), February 4, 2025, February 14, 2025 (subcommittee), February 18, 2025, March 4, 2025, March 18, 2025, April 8, 2025, April 15, 2025, May 14, 2025 (subcommittee), May 20, 2025 (subcommittee), June 18, 2025, July 9, 2025, and July 29, 2025.

## **II. Data on Existing Conditions**

The CWG worked with Powhatan County’s commercial and residential property tax assessment data, the spatial distribution of commercial and housing development, the spatial availability of water and sewer infrastructure, and with the County’s Thoroughfare Plan to inform discussions on existing conditions as summarized below.

### **Economic Overview**

Powhatan County’s tax base is heavily reliant on residential assessments for local revenue. In particular, the 2024 property tax base was 93.3% from residential parcels and 6.7% from non-residential parcels. The Board of Supervisors’ Economic Prosperity strategic priority therefore includes a key strategy that “the county will move towards an 85/15 tax revenue split over the next five years” to reduce the county’s reliability on a residential tax base.

Prior to beginning the analysis of the tax revenue split, the CWG discussed the following data on employment, household income, and commuting trends that were provided by county staff to the working group, and then updated with sources for this report:

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics as of November 2024, Powhatan’s unemployment rate was 2.3% which tied Arlington County for the lowest unemployment rate of any county or municipality in Virginia. The statewide unemployment rate for November 2024 by comparison, was 2.9% or 25% higher.
- Powhatan County median household income (2019-2023 5-year average adjusted to 2023 dollars) was estimated at \$110,667 by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. It should be noted however that this figure might underestimate future median household income because the pandemic years of 2020-2021 are included in the current 5-year averages (In considering housing affordability in the county, the median household income is the correct statistic to use, as it captures the household income used in a mortgage application, regardless of whether the household has one or multiple wage earners).
- Roughly 11,402 residents are reported by county staff to be commuting out of the County for work daily, while 4,266 non-residents commute in. By comparison to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) 2022 Traffic Counts, the bidirectional traffic volumes at the eastern county line were reported to be 35,000 vehicles (U.S. Route 60) and 8,600 vehicles (Route 711) for a total of 43,600 vehicles. 15,668 commuter vehicles are therefore estimated to be 35.9% of the total traffic volume entering and exiting Powhatan County on an average daily basis.
- County staff reported to the CWG that there were 193 job openings and 729 employers as of December 2024. The U.S. Census Bureau reported a countywide population of 32,392 on July 1, 2024, and the following statistics on population age can be translated into a gross comparison between working age citizens and available jobs, as follows.

US Census Age Distribution	Age %	Population (2024)
Under 5 years old	4.6%	1,490

Under 18 years old	18.5%	5,993
18 to 65 years old	55.7%	18,042
65 years and older	21.2%	6,867

With 2.3% unemployment, the “working age” residents (18,042) are estimated to represent 415 potential employees versus the 193 job openings reported by county staff. While these numbers provide a good basis to match the unemployed ratio to available jobs, the CWG members also focused particular attention on identifying areas where commercial and light industrial development could be realistically supported, based on infrastructure, transportation, and land readiness to create more jobs.

**Housing Trends**

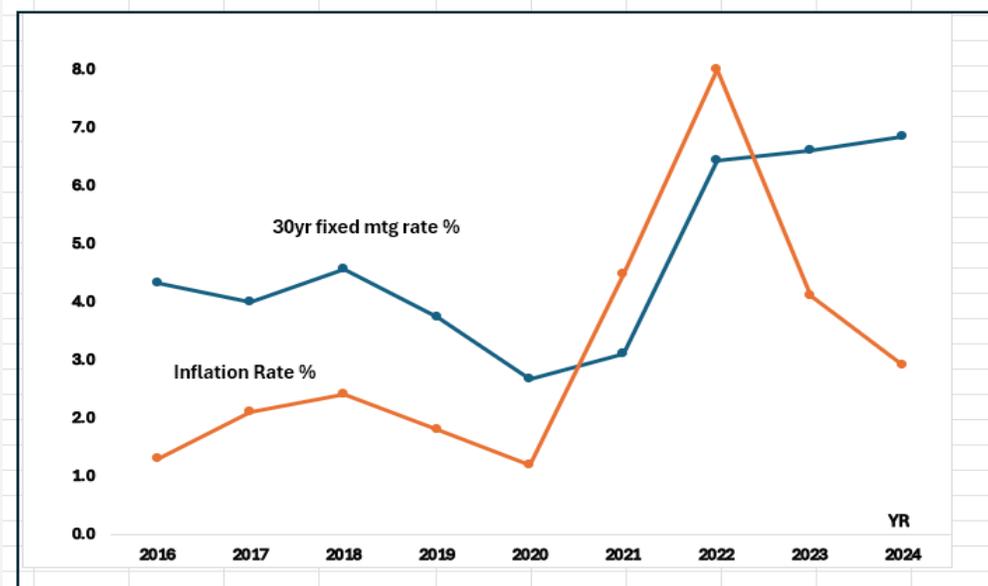
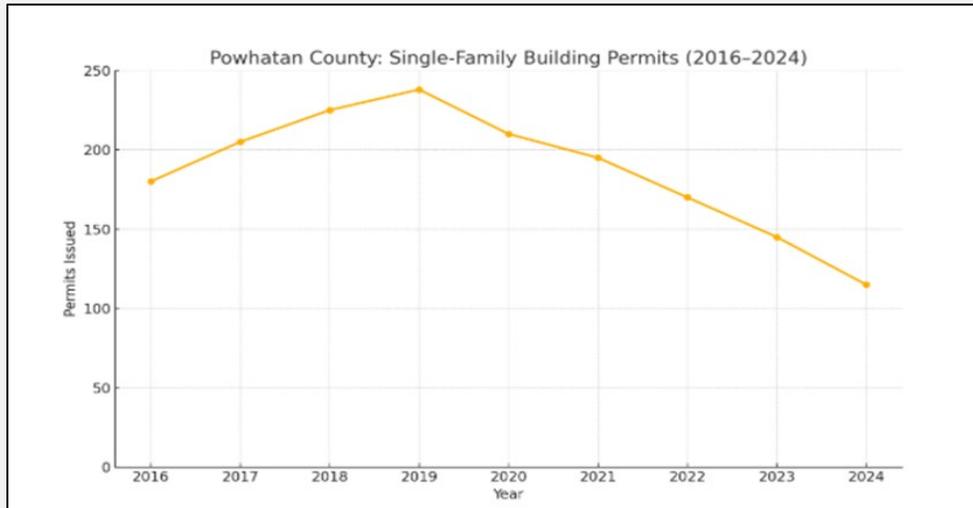
Powhatan’s current housing stock is dominated by large lot single-family detached homes. While the County has experienced sustained residential growth over several decades, the large lot single-family detached home has remained the dominant housing type. Data considered by the CWG include the following information taken from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey:

- The number of housing units in Powhatan County increased from 4,723 in 1990 to 12,362 in 2024, an increase of 7,639 units over 34 years. (An average of 224 per year)
- Owner-occupancy is high at 93.1%, well above the statewide average of 70.5%.
- The median sales price of single-family homes in Powhatan for June 2025 was reported as \$510,000, which is \$49,000 higher than the Richmond Region which was reported as \$461,000 most recently by MLS reporting.
- Demographic trends show a gradually aging population with 21.2% persons 65 years of age or older as compared to the statewide average of 17.2%.
- In 2024, the average wage of a worker employed in Powhatan was \$53,924 which is \$18,136 lower than the statewide average of \$72,060.



*Since 1990, the county has averaged 224 new housing units a year, with the large majority being single-family detached dwellings.*

According to county staff, most homes listed for sale in Powhatan County were priced between \$300,000 and \$630,000, with a significant percentage listed above \$600,000. The CWG also examined permit data provided by county staff, showing a steady decline in single-family housing starts since 2019, dropping from 238 permits in 2019 to 115 in 2024. This reduction raised questions to some CWG members about development constraints, land availability, and market forces that could be limiting new housing production.



Not surprisingly, as the above two graphs illustrate, the decline in housing starts moved inversely with increases in the 30-year fixed mortgage rate (with the latter somewhat lagging the inflation rate).

***What is Considered Affordable Housing?***

During the CWG meeting on May 14, 2025, Susan Winiecki, the executive director of Habitat for Humanity-Powhatan, came to present the raw results of a countywide housing needs

survey. When asked to define affordability, she indicated that spending no more than 30% of gross household income a month is a good ‘rule of thumb’ for determining an affordable cost of housing.

Ms. Winiecki answered questions from the subcommittee. She explained that Habitat works with households that earn between 40 and 80 percent of the Richmond area median income, (for a household of four, that is a range of approximately \$45,400 to \$90,800 in 2025), with no income lower than \$40,000. She explained how Habitat’s program works: A home is built or renovated and then appraised. If the appraisal / sales price is, for example \$360,000, the household pays a monthly mortgage payment that is approximately 30 percent of the household’s gross income, using loans from the USDA and Virginia Housing that are lower than market rate. Habitat for Humanity also holds a “silent” or “soft” second mortgage that is the difference between the appraisal / sales price and the household’s first affordable mortgage amount.

In the same CWG meeting, Mr. Reilly presented a table on the affordability of housing using 28% of gross household income with an assumed mortgage rate of 6.9% and no downpayment, and with assumptions for property taxes and insurance (including PMI) to convert home prices from \$100,000 to \$600,000 to a range of required annual household incomes from \$34,793 to \$204,009 to help explore the issue of affordability.

As an example of affordability, since the county’s median household income is reported to be \$110,667 this would be just below Mr. Reilly’s tabulated \$2,593 mortgage which translates to a home price of \$325,000. The median household income for a \$325,000 home is above the threshold for the Habitat for Humanity program and is below the median home price in Powhatan (2023) of \$381,300 which translates to a median household income closer to \$130,000 based on these ‘rule of thumb’ examples.

Residential home prices are continuing to rise versus median household income in Powhatan County with few programs currently to make housing more affordable, beyond Habitat’s program or the possible addition of a Community Land Trust, which can essentially remove the land costs from the initial home sales price (refer to HRO-11 in this report for more details about a Community Land Trust).

### **Residential Land Availability**

To better understand Powhatan’s residential development capacity under existing zoning, an inventory of vacant residential parcels was compiled using data provided by the Commissioner of the Revenue. This analysis allowed the group to examine how much land

was already subdivided and zoned for residential use—without additional rezonings or land use map changes. Key findings based on tax records include the following:

- 1,454 vacant residential parcels exist countywide.
- 861 vacant parcels are zoned A-10 or RR with 5 acres or less.
- 593 vacant parcels are within higher-density or planned development districts (R-2, R-U, R-5, and PD zones), suggesting the potential for infill development or more compact housing models in those zoning residential districts.

The CWG viewed this inventory as a tool to inform more strategic, efficient, and context-sensitive decisions however some in the group questioned whether these parcels were available for purchase. As a result, additional research was done on MLS listings for 6-acre or smaller parcels in Powhatan County that have been sold as vacant land within the past 5 years. The results are provided in a summary table below for 228 lots and they were also itemized by subdivision name, lot size, and type (residential land or building lot) for those wanting to take a closer look at the data.

Number of Lots Sold	Size Range	Purchase Price
228	0.31 to 6.0 acres	\$9,000 to \$528,000 (Median \$105,000)

### ***Public Utilities and Infrastructure***

Public water and sewer availability are among the most significant determinants of where and how higher-density development can occur in Powhatan County. While much of the County remains rural and dependent on private wells and septic systems, public utilities are currently provided in three Utility Service Areas (USA's).

- Route 60 Corridor East
- Courthouse Village
- Route 711 Village

These areas largely align with the designated growth areas in the 2021 Comprehensive Plan.

To further inform infrastructure-related concerns, the Board of Supervisors commissioned a Utility System Master Planning Report, completed by Dewberry in early 2025. This report provided a technical evaluation of existing utility capacity, identified infrastructure

constraints, and proposed a phased approach to system maintenance and improvements. Key findings from the Dewberry study include:

- The Route 60 Corridor East has the most extensive utility infrastructure, but a new regional wastewater pump station south of Route 60 is needed to support future growth and attract business investment. In this area, potable water is supplied by Chesterfield County and wastewater is treated at the Dutoy Creek Plant.
- The Courthouse Village has moderate service levels, but future development may require pump station upgrades, additional wells, and selected line extensions. Drinking water in the courthouse area is supplied through commercial wells without water treatment requirements, and wastewater is treated at the Fighting Creek Plant.
- Route 711 Village is the smallest of the three utility service areas and has minimal water and sewer coverage, limiting its future development potential unless significant infrastructure investment occurs. Water and sewer systems are connected to Chesterfield County utilities in this area.

CWG members reviewed these findings alongside staff-provided maps and reports and agreed that infrastructure availability must be a central factor in determining where growth is directed. The group emphasized the need to align zoning, land use designations, and capital improvements within the designated Utility Service Areas (USA's) to avoid ineffective, premature, or speculative development in unserviceable areas.

### **Transportation**

Due to commuter traffic and continued residential and commercial growth in the county, the capacity of our roadways has become stressed. As this plan gets implemented, traffic congestion will likely increase unless we improve capacity along U.S. Route 60 and other key routes. The CWG discussions about designated growth areas included some thoughts about improving our roadways through a corresponding update to the county's long range transportation plan which is part of Plan RVA's broader regional transportation planning efforts. While we did not coordinate with county staff and consultants about the current long-range transportation plan and its projects, we did discuss the following challenges facing the county.

- With the continued development and growth along U.S. Route 60, there are concerns about the unsignalized and skewed intersection at Page Road, including increased traffic volumes from projects on Page Road that are anticipated.

- The continued extension and completion of Carter Gallier Boulevard is vital to providing a parallel roadway to U.S. Route 60 within the designated growth area to accommodate local traffic and relieve peak hour traffic on U.S. Route 60.
- The extension of Old Church Road behind the high school to Batterson Road was discussed. It would cross Judes Ferry Road near the high school and could reduce traffic at the unsignalized intersection of Judes Ferry Road and Batterson Road, creating a parallel roadway connection from Page Road to Carter Gallier Boulevard and Old Church Road, and then Batterson Road to the Flat Rock shopping center.
- The village expansion should include better transportation routes between Rocky Ford Road, Old Buckingham Road, and U.S. Route 60 to handle increased traffic in the village from future development. This could also help reduce safety concerns at the existing unsignalized intersection for Old Buckingham Road at U.S. Route 60 near the Valero gas station / Food Lion shopping center.

### **III. Recommendations: Economic Prosperity**

CWG recommendations aim to support growth where it makes sense—where infrastructure is available, where land is realistically developable, and where housing and jobs may be provided without undermining the County’s rural character. These recommendations are grouped into two core categories aligned with the Strategic Plan: Economic Prosperity and Housing and Residential Options.

#### **Economic Prosperity Overview**

Powhatan County’s economy is anchored by a strong residential tax base, high household incomes, and low unemployment. However, it is fiscally imbalanced and highly dependent on residential property taxes, with relatively less commercial and industrial development as a non-residential tax base.

To address this concern, the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan sets a target of achieving an 85/15 tax revenue split, with 15 percent of local revenue derived from commercial and industrial (non-residential) sources. This goal, while aspirational, is achievable—provided the County focuses its land use, zoning, and infrastructure policies on areas where non-residential development is feasible, encouraged, and sustainable.

Commercial and industrial development provide both direct and indirect tax revenues that support the overall economic viability of the County. Direct tax revenues are derived from real estate, business personal property, machinery and tools and transient occupancy

taxes. Indirect tax revenues come from income tax revenues from employees, increased residential property values and economic spillover from commercial investment.

Industrial development historically provides for higher tax revenues due to higher values of commercial real estate, business personal property and machinery and tools as well as higher salaried skilled jobs, higher company revenues and less community impact. Commercial development provides slightly lower overall revenue deriving mostly from real estate, business personal property and sales tax although it does provide needed services that citizens and workers utilize on a daily basis (i.e. restaurants, retail, gas stations, personal services).

To attain an 85/15 tax revenue split, industrial development is a far greater return on investment to increase the commercial tax base. Industrial development generally has a longer tenancy and greater opportunity for future expansion in the community with added jobs for long term economic prosperity.

**[EP-1] Creation of an Economic Priority (EP) land use area to be shown on the Future Land Use Map.**

To spur economic development, the CWG recommends adoption of a new future land use area called the Economic Priority (EP) Area. Working closely with the county's director of economic development, Roxanne Salerno, the CWG recommended EP designated parcels were chosen based on the following factors.

- Proximity to key transportation corridors such as U.S. Route 60.
- Availability of public and private utilities (water, sewer, broadband, etc.).
- Larger parcel sizes and parcels with adjacent non-residential uses.
- Manageable environmental or topographic constraints on the parcel.
- Strategic alignment with long-term infrastructure and fiscal plans.

Economic Priority (EP) is not a zoning mechanism but a new recommended future land use area—to inform updates to the Comprehensive Plan and to guide decision-making around rezoning cases, infrastructure investment, and attracting business interests with a recommended direct link to Light Industrial zoning applications.

The Economic Priority area is not intended to encourage retail commercial development which is better aligned to the Gateway Business future land use area, and it does not promote any type of residential or mixed-use development. The Economic Priority area strategy also includes connecting smaller parcels to larger ones through master planning, so that flexible, contiguous land areas can meet the needs of a range of business and light industrial use types.

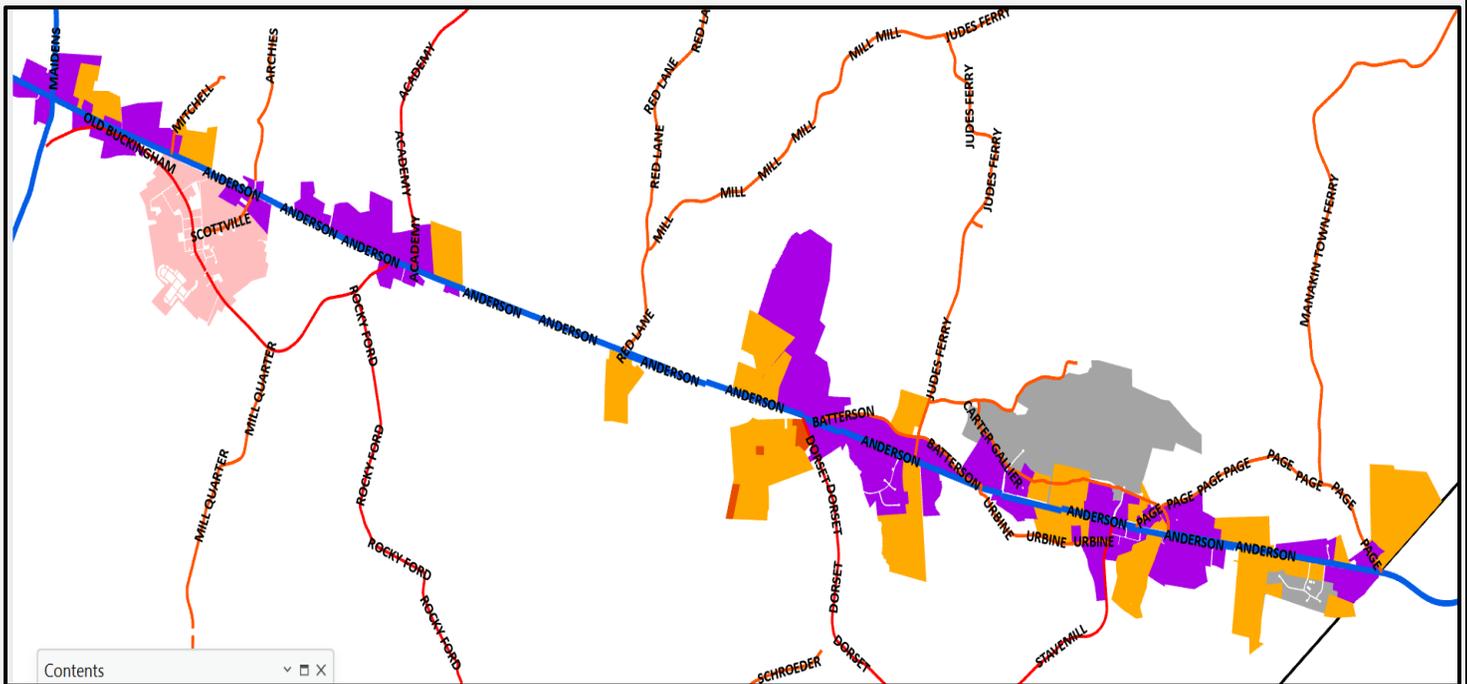
#### Proposed Economic Priority Maps

The Economic Priority Map (depicted on next page) shows gold shaded Economic Priority areas which includes 72 parcels totaling roughly 1,400 acres in land area that have been identified and recommended for a change in their future land use designation. These parcels include areas currently designated for Gateway Business, Economic Opportunity, and Rural Area on the future land use map.

The remaining area for Gateway Business is shown in purple shaded areas on the map below, for comparison of non-residential land use areas as a balanced approach to retail (Gateway Business) versus light industrial (Economic Priority) in developing a future land use map recommendation.



*The Economic Priority designation targets key areas for light industrial and business development to strengthen the tax base and support long-term economic growth. Residential and retail uses are discouraged to preserve land for job-creating industries.*



The resulting Economic Priority Area shown on the map comprises roughly 1,189 acres within the 2021 Comprehensive Plan strategic growth areas and 211 acres (15%) lying outside the strategic growth areas, but still within the county’s designated utility service areas. The ~1,189 acres within those areas constitute approximately 23% percent of the designated 5,160 acres in the strategic growth areas on the 2021 Future Land Use Map, totaling less than 1% (0.83 percent) of the total county land area.

More detailed GIS-based maps showing all adjacent future land use designations and parcel details can be found in the report appendices, and individual parcels and adjacencies can be evaluated in detail using the county’s online mapping tool for the CWG recommendations on the Future Land Use Map.

### The 85/15 Tax Split

The evidence-based potential 85/15 tax split for the Economic Priority land use designation was generally developed through the following steps:

1. Examine and categorize the 2024 assessment data for all commercial and residential parcels (using the standard tax split practice of including vacant land as a residential parcel). Government-owned land was excluded.
2. Assemble assessment data on all fully developed I-1 parcels along the Route 60 corridor from the eastern county line to Maidens Road.
3. Compute per acre average 2024 assessments on parcels identified in 1 and 2 above.

4. Work closely with the Director of Economic Development (Roxanne Salerno) to identify a recommended set of Economic Priority parcels along the U.S. Route 60 corridor that could achieve the desired 85/15 split. This was determined using per acre projections of the increase in assessments resulting from fully developing these parcels consistent with the Economic Priority area guidelines.

A summary table of the projected outcomes is shown below, and the full calculation of the Economic Priority area workbook for all 72 parcels can also be reviewed through the YouTube videos of the CWG meetings and subcommittee meetings or by contacting the planning department for more details.

	<b>2024</b>		<b>2024</b>		<b>2024</b>
	<b>ALL COMMERCIAL (C)</b>		<b>ALL RESIDENTIAL (R)</b>		<b>ALL ASSESSMENT PARCELS (C+R)</b>
	<b>\$406,254,000</b>		<b>\$5,661,832,900</b>		<b>\$6,068,086,900</b>
$\frac{C}{C+R}$	<b>6.7%</b>		<b>93.3%</b>		<b>100.0%</b>
<hr/>					
	<b>ALL COMMERCIAL (C)</b>		<b>ALL RESIDENTIAL (R)</b>		<b>ALL ASSESSMENT PARCELS (C+R)</b>
	<b>with Economic Priority Parcels</b>				
	<b>\$998,978,149</b>		<b>\$5,645,568,195</b>		<b>\$6,644,546,344</b>
$\frac{C}{C+R}$	<b>15.0%</b>		<b>85.0%</b>		<b>100.0%</b>

#### **[EP-2] Update Chapter 4 (Economic Development) of the Comprehensive Plan**

The CWG recommends that Chapter 4 (Economic Development) of the Comprehensive Plan be updated to reflect the EP land use strategy for an 85/15 split and to incorporate lessons from other recent studies. Specific updates should consider:

- Support for employment-focused businesses that create higher wage jobs, such as logistics, clean tech, health care services (including elder care), and advanced manufacturing for light industrial uses.
- Support for businesses that provide jobs in the county that help reduce the currently estimated daily commuter trips and road miles on workdays to provide congestion relief and to avoid pressure to widen and improve U.S. Route 60 or Route 711 to better accommodate peak hour (commuter) traffic.
- Expanded efforts to promote shovel-ready sites with established infrastructure capacity and to create business-ready sites that can be certified through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and marketed.

- The addition of the role and responsibilities of the county’s Economic Development Authority (EDA) in the comprehensive plan.

The rewrite of Chapter 4 was not included in the CWG charter and is expected to be done through a process involving county staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors.

### **[EP-3] Meet Infrastructure Needs for EP Parcels**

Recommendations from the recently completed 2025 Utility System Master Plan strongly support utility investments to facilitate the growth of non-residential development within the utility service areas. The Dewberry study emphasized the importance of extending utility infrastructure only in areas designated for targeted growth, especially along the U.S. Route 60 Corridor East and near the Courthouse Village. The study also recommended the following priority needs:

- Construction of a regional pump station south of Route 60, which would unlock additional capacity for commercial and light industrial users connecting to the Dutoy Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Focused investment in upgrading and refining system performance for existing utility service areas.
- Leveraging public-private partnerships to build infrastructure that aligns with the Powhatan’s economic priorities through voluntary proffers and other means that may help minimize tax revenue expenditures.

Together, the Economic Priority area and the utility master plan recommendations offer a unified vision for infrastructure-led, fiscally sound, and strategic growth. Ideally, projects that offer voluntary proffers to expand and improve public infrastructure in a manner consistent with the recommendations will provide utility connections and revenue (service connection fees, monthly utility bills) that can then be used for routine system maintenance through non-residential connections which typically require lower flow capacity allowing for more connections that do not exceed existing plant capacity or exceed source water availability limits.

The CWG did not evaluate utility costs and budgets or make any specific recommendations on how to manage public utility infrastructure to meet anticipated demands for Economic Priority (EP) parcels, although it did designate EP parcels primarily within Utility Service

Areas (USA's). The CWG also did not evaluate any private utility deficiencies within the EP parcels such as broadband, electric and communication needs.

For some uses, such as Data Centers, literature supports the need for further study of existing infrastructure to be sure a specific parcel or use does not utilize too much capacity, leaving the planned development waiting for infrastructure upgrades to be implemented.

All of this is recommended for further study by the county staff with utility providers to be sure the EP parcels can be fully serviced, business ready, and supportive of the Economic Prosperity goals for the EP parcels and the Comprehensive Plan with an aspirational 85/15 tax split at full buildout of the EP parcels or by combination with Gateway Business and other non-residential sources of tax revenue that can also be pursued.

#### **[EP-4] Support Rural Businesses in the A-10 Area**

While the CWG's primary economic development focus was on infrastructure-ready growth areas (EP parcels) the CWG also discussed how rural-based enterprises throughout the county are an essential component of Powhatan's local economy. Agriculture, forestry, home-based businesses, and land-based services all contribute to both economic prosperity and the preservation of the County's rural character.

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan and the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan each emphasize the value of rural economic activity, especially in areas zoned A-10, which cover most of the County's land area. These plans support small-scale business growth that is compatible with Powhatan's rural identity, particularly businesses that:

- Supplement farm and forestry operations (e.g., equine services, sawmills, veterinary, farm equipment repair, and other needs)
- Add value to agricultural production (e.g., canning, distilling, cut flowers, on-farm processing, and distribution)
- Promote agritourism (e.g., farm stays, pick-your-own operations, seasonal festivals)
- Operate from home-based workshops or studios, including construction trades, artisans, and rural services.

CWG members discussed the importance of retaining flexibility within the A-10 zoning area to accommodate these types of enterprises. Several members noted that overly restrictive zoning can unintentionally suppress economic resilience in rural communities, where many residents rely on a mix of land-based income sources, to this end the CWG makes the following recommendations:

- Maintain and support allowances for agricultural-compatible commercial uses in the A-10 zoning district through appropriate standards including Conditional Use Permits (CUP) where applicable.
- Encourage agribusiness and value-added production, especially those businesses that diversify family farm income or provide products and services to the local community including ‘Proudly Powhatan Produced’ and ‘Farm to Table’ programs.
- Continue to support home-based businesses by keeping regulations clear and accessible while protecting neighboring landowners from unnecessary impacts.
- Promote Powhatan’s rural character and agricultural identity through branding, marketing, and tourism initiatives, in coordination with regional partners such as the Virginia Tourism Corporation.



*The A-10 district supports rural enterprises like farming, forestry, home-based businesses, and agritourism. The CWG recommends maintaining flexibility to allow these while preserving Powhatan’s rural character.*

This recommendation aligns with the Strategic Plan’s vision of preserving Powhatan’s rural character and heritage while promoting sustainable economic opportunity. This can be accomplished through comprehensive plan updates and then by supporting agricultural businesses through county staff. This recommendation is to refine and utilize the vision in the 2021 comprehensive plan to align with the current strategic vision for the county.

#### **IV. Housing and Residential Option Recommendations**

The Citizens Working Group (CWG) spent the latter part of their meetings focusing on the county’s current housing patterns and land use framework, recognizing that the County’s existing housing stock—predominantly large-lot single-family homes—will not meet the

needs of a diverse and growing population. A broader range of housing options would support young adults, working families, teachers, public safety personnel, and retirees who might be working within a fixed income and would be less prepared for increases in county taxes and other cost of living increases to county residents.

The CWG agreed at the start that new types of residential development should be concentrated in areas already served by public infrastructure—specifically, the Village Growth Area and the Route 60 East Growth Area, which together represent the County’s best targeted growth opportunities. While the Village Growth Area was broadly seen as the most appropriate location for residential expansion, discussions around housing in the Route 60 East Growth Area were more measured.

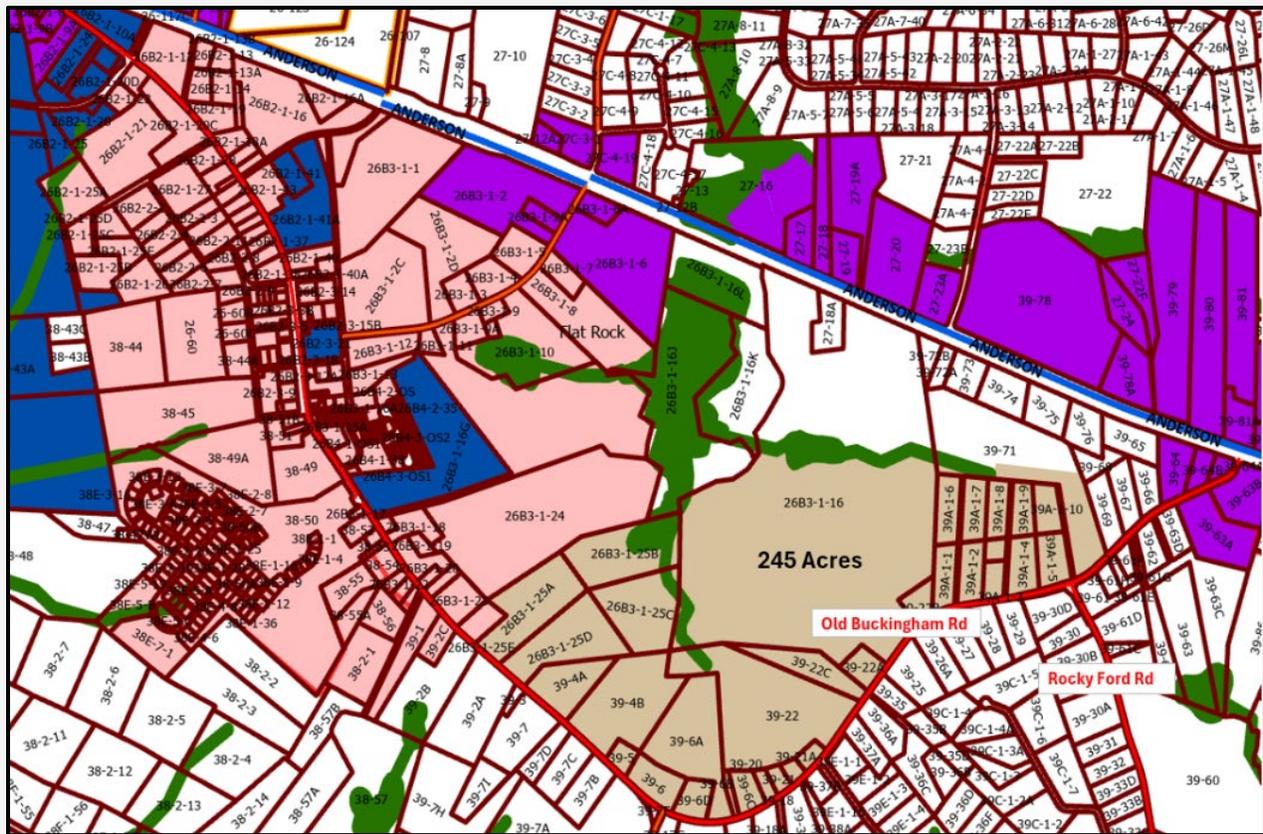
As part of its work, the CWG supported expansions to both growth areas: including a ~245 acre extension east of the existing Village Growth Area to accommodate future mixed-use and housing development, and a ~109-acre designation of Economic Opportunity (EO) on the future land use map near the intersection of Route 60, Carter Gallier Parkway, and Page Road in the Route 60 East Growth Area to accommodate future mixed-use and housing development near the proposed Route 60 East Economic Priority parcels and to allow for an infrastructure-supported, mixed-use node within that utility service area (USA). These two CWG housing recommendations encourage housing diversity in appropriate, utility-serviced areas while avoiding strategies that might promote residential expansion into rural areas.

### **[HRO-1] Expand Housing in the Village Growth Area**

The CWG initially evaluated ~300-acres to the east of the existing Courthouse Village for the strategic expansion of the Village Growth Area, with the intention of keeping the character of the existing Village, allowing mixed-use development, staying within a walkable distance of the courthouse square (~1-mile), and expanding existing infrastructure to accommodate additional needs while staying within the designated utility service area (USA) for the village, and anticipating transportation infrastructure in the development plans for internal circulation and traffic needs while also improving connectivity from U.S. Route 60 to Old Buckingham Road including the Rocky Ford Road intersection.

The CWG also discussed avoiding multi-modal connections to U.S. Route 60, keeping bicycle and pedestrian traffic within the Village, leaving a rural viewshed on U.S. Route 60 by setting the Village limits back from the main thoroughfare, with vegetative buffers,

shielded lighting and other development strategies to make the Village connected and successful internally while discouraging expansion into the U.S. Route 60 corridor.



### **Powhatan Village Growth Area Expansion (tan colored area)**

Within the Village Growth Area, the group supported a more expansive range of housing options, continuing the area’s identity as a hub for compact, mixed-use development opportunities that are connected and walkable. The Village already provides walkable neighborhoods with sidewalks, connections to the trails at Fighting Creek Park (and the YMCA), civic amenities including parades, concerts, and festivals, and village-scale design patterns including encouraging senior living, and other types of diverse housing which can be supported by master planned neighborhoods including 55+ living, assisted living and other options for our aging population.

The CWG recommendation is a ~245-acre extension east of the existing Village Growth Area to accommodate future mixed-use and housing development, which is shown on the map above in tan shading. This village expansion area can also be viewed online in the CWG recommended Future Land Use Plan and through corresponding updates to the comprehensive plan.

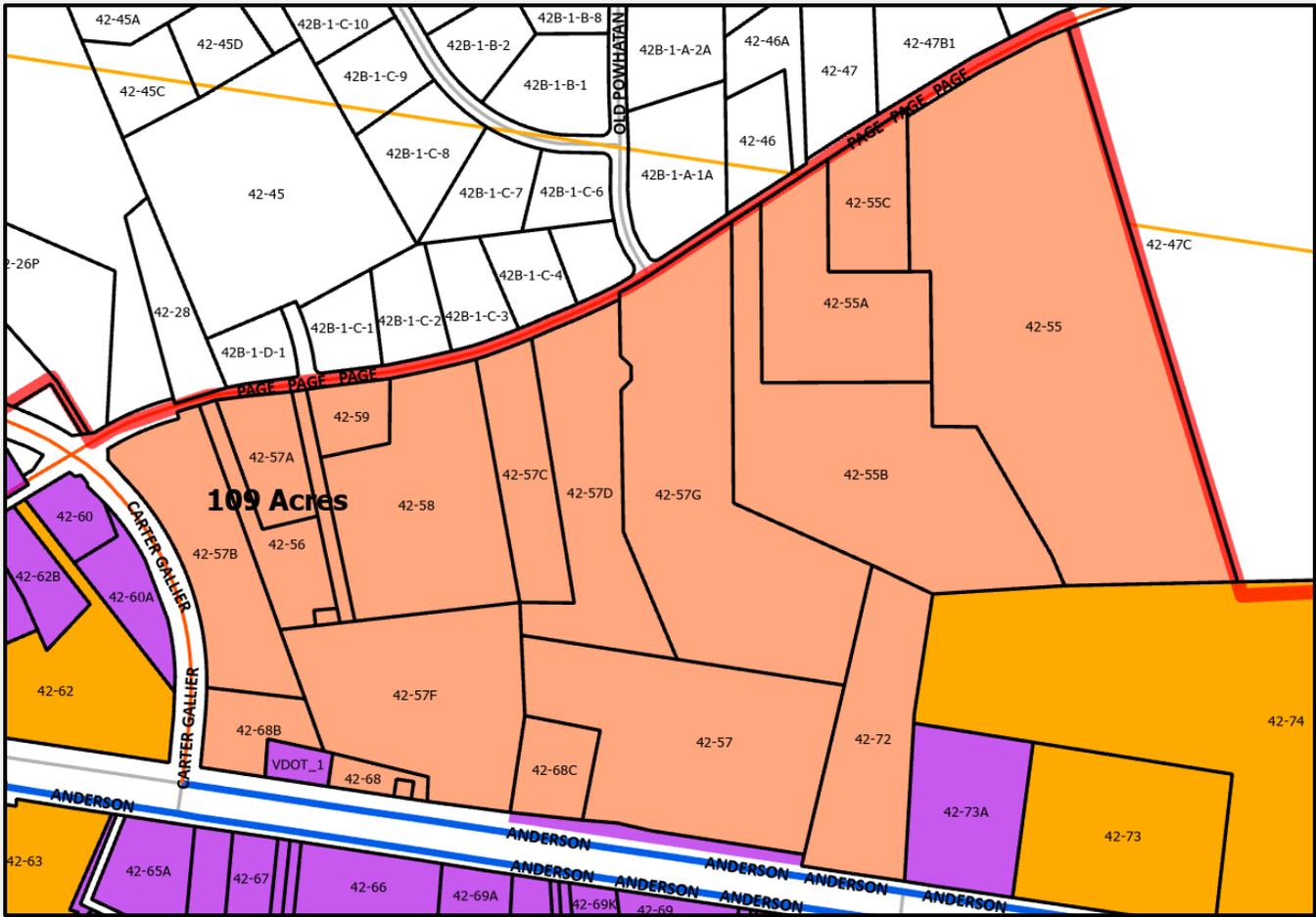
A closer look at how the village growth area fits into the Courthouse Square Center CHSC District, and other types of zoning options should also be considered including refining the comprehensive plan definition for Courthouse Village in terms of future land use and zoning districts for future development.

***[HRO-2] Create Alternative Housing in the Route 60 East Growth Area***

The Route 60 East Growth Area, encompassing ~2,850 acres, is envisioned as a major corridor for economic development, expanded employment opportunities, and targeted infrastructure investment to sustain economic development. By contrast to the village expansion [HRO-1], the CWG was more reserved in its discussions about residential expansion in the Route 60 East Growth Area.

While some members supported limited mixed-use nodes in proximity to infrastructure and targeted economic sites, there was less support for broader residential development in this corridor, due in part to concerns about traffic, land use compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods (larger lots), availability of existing homes nearby on Page Road and elsewhere, and the primary focus for expansion in the area being economic development and county jobs.

As a result, the CWG is recommending a ~109-acre contiguous portion of this growth area near the intersection of Page Road and Carter Gallier Boulevard to support housing goals in the strategic plan by being changed to Economic Opportunity (EO) on the Future Land Use Map. This map change is entirely within the Utility Service Area (USA) and it provides an opportunity for mixed-use development of what was previously a combination of Gateway Business (no residential uses) and low density residential (A-10). By combining these prior land use designations into Economic Opportunity (EO) the current comprehensive plan description could remain mostly unchanged as a denser mix of residential and commercial uses with recommended master planning and internal connectivity that supports combining parcels into a larger plan of development. While it may be challenging to combine parcels based on land ownership, there are very few opportunities for Economic Opportunity (EO) development that remain in the county, due to the success of recent development in the Route 711 East corridor and in other areas designated as Economic Opportunity (EO) in the 2021 comprehensive plan.



**Route 60 East Growth Area with Proposed Economic Opportunity (EO) Land Use**

This future land use designation as Economic Opportunity (EO) is intended to: (1) encourage landowners to consider combining housing and commercial development into a village type setting for eastern county businesses in this location; (2) provide work force housing, with complimentary retail or commercial development; and (3) be complimentary to other supporting needs for the businesses anticipated by the Economic Priority (EP) designations in the Route 60 East growth area.

This land use designation would also allow for strategic land use transitions in the development plan. While denser, mixed-use development is considered appropriate adjacent to Carter Gallier Boulevard and U.S. Route 60 with direct access, areas farther east and north along Page Road—are expected to accommodate lower-density residential development on larger lots that will transition into the character of nearby neighborhoods such as Old Powhatan Estates.

The CWG recommendation for a ~109-acre contiguous portion of the Route 60 East growth area to be designated Economic Opportunity (EO) to accommodate future mixed-use development is shown on the map above. It can also be viewed online in the CWG recommended Future Land Use Plan and through corresponding updates to the comprehensive plan.

The CWG also recommends refinement of the Economic Opportunity (EO) land use descriptions to no longer require larger land tracts and instead, to also encourage the combination of smaller land tracts to create a mixed use or master planned development approach to this unique crossroads of Route 60, Carter Gallier Boulevard, and Page Road for a sensible location to explore alternative housing options.



*This is an example of a mixed-use development that could be appropriate in Economic Opportunity areas. The designation encourages a blend of housing, employment, and services in walkable, master-planned settings with access to infrastructure.*

### **[HRO-3] Promote Infill Development within Existing Neighborhoods**

As part of its work, the Citizens Working Group (CWG) recommended modest adjustments to the boundaries of Powhatan County’s two primary growth areas: the Village Growth Area and the Route 60 East Growth Area, with a focus on expanding housing options in strategic locations. These changes impacting ~354-acres are not intended to signal immediate development plans, but to clarify where future growth could be appropriate, if pursued thoughtfully and in alignment with public infrastructure. The CWG emphasized that private property rights and market conditions ultimately shape when, how, and where land develops. At the same time, there are other areas within the existing 2021 growth boundaries that remain suitable for new and expanded residential neighborhoods, mixed-use centers, and light industrial investment. These CWG recommendations are intended to support long-range planning efforts by providing a more complete picture of where the County is most prepared to accommodate growth—while continuing to support other aspects of the future land use plan and while protecting Powhatan’s rural landscapes outside of these designated areas.

This recommendation is to promote infill development within existing neighborhoods throughout the county. There are buildable lots on existing roads that could easily compliment the homes around it, including some existing neighborhoods that offer affordable housing options.

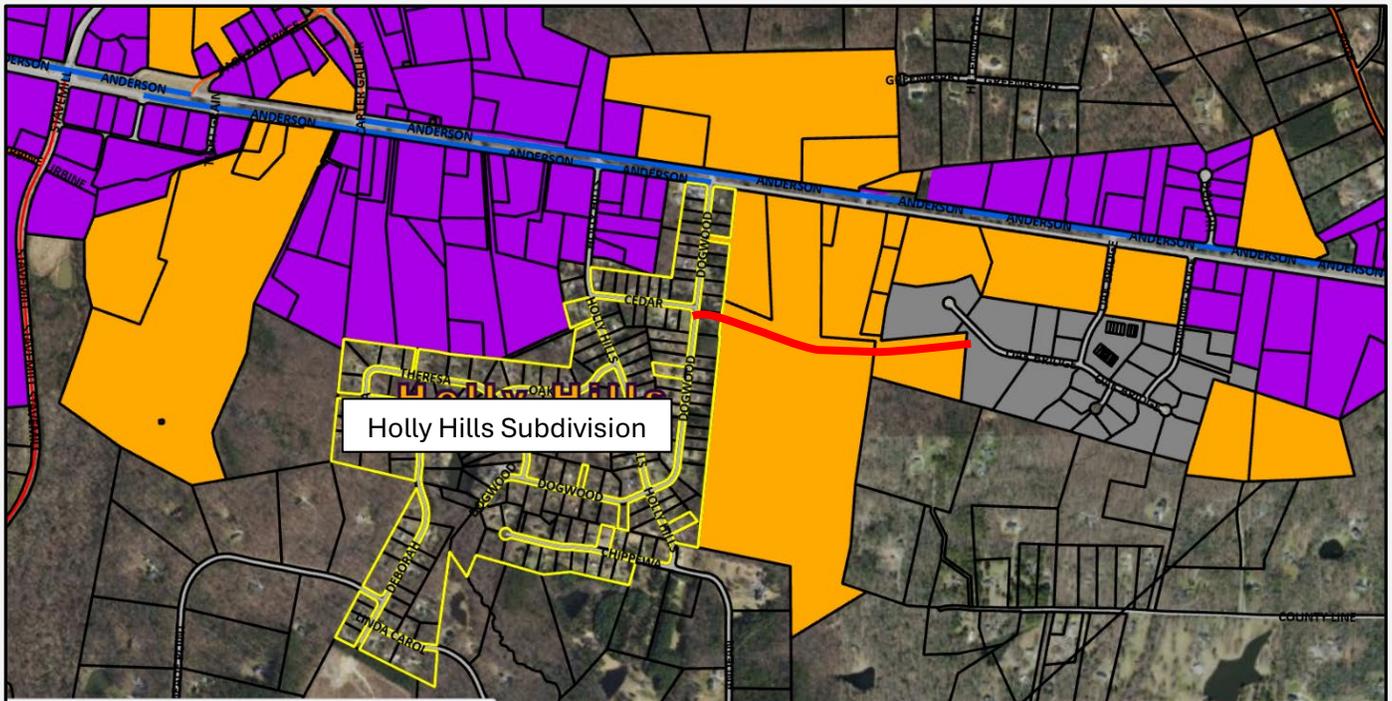
A good example of where an existing neighborhood could provide an opportunity for “by right” and affordable development is within the Holly Hills Subdivision. Situated on ~147-acres with 185 total lots or parcels zoned R-U, this existing neighborhood includes 34 vacant parcels for possible infill development (all one acre or less). With average parcel sizes at 0.79 acres, Holly Hills is somewhat unique for the housing stock that is available currently in Powhatan County. The nine homes sold within the last three years range in sales prices from \$250,000 to \$391,000. Online real estate websites show another home currently for sale at a list price of \$202,000. These home prices are well below the median sales price of owner-occupied homes in Powhatan (\$510,000 in 2024).

The CWG recommends that county staff work with local stakeholders including non-profit organizations and volunteer groups to evaluate strategies to encourage infill development of the vacant parcels in existing neighborhoods including the Holly Hills neighborhood to provide an affordable option for home ownership to those living in the eastern portion of the county. As economic priority (EP) strategies create local jobs near Holly Hills and other well-established neighborhood, the CWG hopes that those new jobs provide wages that make living in Holly Hills possible.

Additional planning for transportation routes is also recommended for Holly Hills. For example, it is a ~1-mile drive from Holly Hills to the center of the Oakbridge Business Park; however, if the Economic Priority (EP) development parcels recommended by the CWG to the east of Holly Hills were to provide a non-motorized transportation route by voluntary proffer, we could envision a multi-use paved trail or greenway connecting Holly Hills directly to the Oakbridge Business Park at the end of Oakbridge Terrace, so Holly Hills residents can walk or bike to work. The estimated distance to the center of the Oakbridge Business Park would then be around 0.6-miles by this new route.

The map below shows the Economic Opportunity parcels adjacent to Holly Hills in gold, the Oakbridge Business Park in grey, and the Gateway Business parcels in purple with a generalized location of a general alignment for a shared use path in red, to consider for the county’s long range transportation plan to support the infill development of the Holly Hills

neighborhood and to envision a housing option for affordable, work force housing that could work within the existing community fabric of Powhatan by infill development.



### **Infill Development Example in the Holly Hills Subdivision**

#### **[HRO-4] Support Rural Character in the A-10 Area**

Outside of the designated growth areas, the CWG emphasized the need to protect the County’s rural landscapes, farmland, and environmental resources including conservation areas designated on the Future Land Use Map which are not recommended for changes by the CWG at this time.

While the group recognized that residential growth by right will continue to occur in more rural areas throughout the county, CWG members stressed that such development should be sensitive to rural landscapes, low-impact, and regulated where it is proposed. Tools like conservation subdivisions—with strengthened review criteria—and clustering were discussed as ways to accommodate limited housing while maintaining open space and rural viewsheds. The CWG was unified in its view however that widespread residential expansion in under-served or agricultural areas is inconsistent with the County’s long-range planning goals and would undermine efforts to focus growth where infrastructure already exists and to maintain our rural character as stated in the comprehensive plan.

Larger housing projects that occur in the A-10 Area and do not adequately mitigate impacts to adjacent homeowners, transportation routes, viewsheds, and the surrounding

agriculturally based economy should be carefully reviewed and kept within the established legal boundaries of by right development to the extent possible, to avoid expanding housing options into the A-10 area and eroding our rural character as a result.

### **[HRO-5] Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)**

Powhatan County already has a relatively permissive accessory dwelling unit (ADU) ordinance, which allows one accessory unit per lot by right, if it does not exceed 50% of the total square footage of the principal dwelling. The CWG affirmed that this current standard offers appropriate flexibility for most property owners while maintaining consistency between neighborhoods. However, the group also recommends a modest refinement: to allow for a larger ADU to be approved by Conditional Use Permit (CUP) on a case-by-case basis in certain cases.



*ADUs offer flexible housing for families, aging residents, and long-term tenants. The CWG supports allowing larger ADUs by CUP while prohibiting short-term rentals to maintain neighborhood stability.*

ADU's can provide a viable option for accommodating extended family, aging relatives, and children looking for a place where multigenerational housing can be accommodated. Multigenerational housing is affordable in that the land and principal residence is already built with a driveway, well and septic, reducing the ADU project to mostly building construction costs, which helps make this housing option more affordable.

ADUs also provide a viable option for long-term tenants— in areas served by public infrastructure or in agricultural areas where the tenant rent can provide the landowner an alternative source of income.

The CWG also expressed clear agreement that ADU's should not be permitted for use as short-term rentals, such as those listed on Airbnb or VRBO. The group viewed ADUs as a tool to support multi-generational living, aging in place, and workforce housing, not transient or vacation lodging. Limiting ADUs to long-term occupancy helps maintain neighborhood stability and ensures the ADU tenant contributes meaningfully to the County's broader housing goals.

## ***[HRO-6] Conservation Subdivisions***

Under the current zoning ordinance, conservation subdivisions are permitted “by right” in Powhatan County’s A-20 (Agricultural), A-10 (Agricultural), Rural Residential (RR), Rural Residential - 5 (RR-5), and Single Family Residential (R-2) districts, provided the parcel is at least 50 acres in size. The ordinance allows for density bonuses of 20% or 25% for the number of permissible dwelling units when 60% or 70% of the property, respectively, is placed into permanent open space through deed restrictions or conservation easements.

While conservation subdivisions aim to balance housing with land preservation, the CWG expressed concern that the by-right approval process (i.e., with no review by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, or the public) does not provide successful conservation outcomes such as preventing harm to the County’s ecologically sensitive lands, minimizing the crossing of environmentally sensitive lands, or providing larger buffers to adjacent landowners when delineating the lands to be held in conservation. Also, the CWG had concerns about the use of non-buildable land (which is designated as natural conservation areas) in the calculation of how much additional, heretofore unprotected lands would be preserved by creation of a conservation subdivision.

As a result, the CWG makes the unanimous recommendation that the current ordinance be changed to remove lands designated as Natural Conservation Areas on the Future Land Use Map (e.g., wetlands, streams, floodplains, 15% steep slopes) from the acreage used to calculate the density bonus. This helps ensure that ecologically sensitive lands will be protected in the creation of a conservation subdivision, first and foremost.

The CWG also recommends creating a new pathway with much higher density bonuses for proposed conservation subdivisions, through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application process. The principal characteristics of the recommended CUP requirements are:

- Utilize a public-facing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process to allow for more flexibility in minimizing impacts on ecologically sensitive lands and for providing appropriate buffers through developer engagement with county staff and the public.
- Significantly increasing allowable density bonuses under a CUP for a minimum conservation set-aside of 60% of the buildable land (land outside the natural conservation areas). Under a CUP, the Board of Supervisors may permit a housing density bonus (up to 85%) on a case-by-case basis that prioritizes the conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.

- Include the revised buildable land calculations excluding conservation areas.
- Keep the minimum lot size at 40,000 square feet (approximately 1-acre) and keep the minimum subdivision size at 50-acres.

Specific recommendations for this new CUP pathway to higher density bonuses in conservation subdivisions are also presented in the example below, using a 100-acre parcel with the assumption of 25-acres of unbuildable land (same as above).

<b>Buildable Land Conservation Set-Aside Required 60% under CUP</b>	<b>Density Bonus Conferred up to an 85% bonus under the CUP, as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis</b>	<b>with a maximum 85% density bonus calculation</b> =1.85 * 0.10	<b>#du/acre</b> <b>0.185</b>	<b>Conservation Set-Aside Acres</b> <b>45</b>	<b>Cluster Area Acres</b> <b>30</b>	<b>Raw # Dwelling Units</b> 13.875 <small>based on 75 acres</small>	<b># Dwelling Units Allowed (rounded down)</b> <b>13</b>	<b>Dwelling Units per acre in Cluster Area</b> 0.43
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The CWG also discussed how good conservation subdivision outcomes have been unsuccessful in the past due to their use in more remote locations within the county, using relatively low-density bonuses “by right” and resulting in significant, negative impacts on ecologically sensitive lands, due to the lack of flexibility and public engagement in the development process. For these reasons, several committee members wanted to eliminate the “by right” pathway altogether.

However, following the CWG discussion, the CWG recommends that a CUP process be required for all proposed conservation subdivisions lying wholly or partially within the County’s Priority Conservation Areas (as designated on MAP 2 of the current comprehensive plan) and that a “by right” option could be available outside of those designated priority conservation areas for those choosing to avoid the CUP process. The “by right” option recommended by the CWG is a 20% density bonus for 50% conservation set aside from the buildable land. The calculations for the same 100-acre example with 25-acres of unbuildable land, are shown below.

<b>Buildable Land Conservation</b>	<b>By-right</b>	<b>20% density bonus calculation</b>	<b>#du/acre</b>	<b>Conservation Set-Aside Acres</b>	<b>Cluster Area Acres</b>	<b>Raw # Dwelling Units</b>	<b># Dwelling Units (rounded down)</b>	<b>Dwelling Units per acre in Cluster Area</b>
<b>Set-Aside Required: 50 % By-right</b>	<b>Density Bonus</b>	=1.20 * 0.10	<b>0.12</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>37.5</b>	9	<b>9</b>	0.24
<b>By right 50% for proposals lying wholly outside the Priority Conservation Areas</b>						<small>based on 75 acres</small>		

The decision as to whether to eliminate the “by right” option altogether for conservation subdivisions is a very important one and is respectfully passed along to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors by the CWG members, for further consideration with input from the broader community.

It is also the unanimous view of the CWG that the CUP requirement for all conservation subdivisions lying wholly or partially within the priority conservation areas can provide the desired protection of ecologically sensitive lands and at the same time provide a pathway offering higher density bonuses (up to 85% on a case-by-case basis) that achieves better conservation subdivision outcomes.

***[HRO-7] Family Subdivisions***

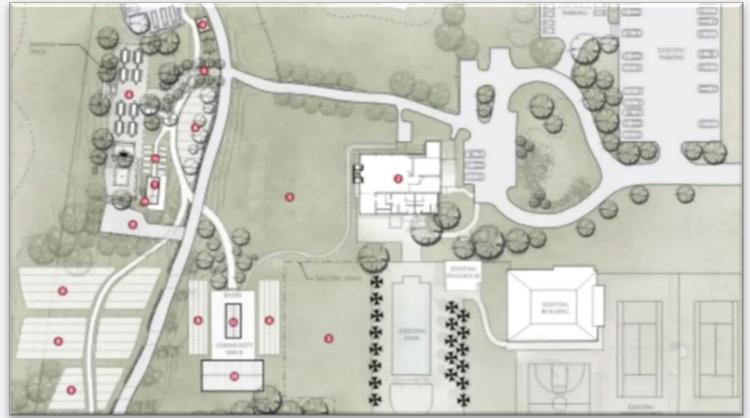
The CWG recommends refining the family subdivision ordinance requirements to expand this housing alternative, so that existing multi-generational families can stay in the county at an affordable price, through a broader family land subdivision option.

Currently, family subdivisions are allowed in the A-10, RR, R-2, and RU zoning districts. In the A-10 and RR districts, a family parcel must be at least 3 acres, and the residue (remaining) parcel must be at least 5 acres, meaning a minimum lot size of 8 acres is required. In the R-2 and RU districts, both the new family parcel and the residue (remaining) parcel must be at least 2 acres each, for a total of at least 4 acres. The CWG recommends reducing the A-10 and RR requirements to 2 acres for the new family parcel and 4 acres for the residue (remaining) parcel for a total of at least 6 acres (previously 8 acres). There were no recommended changes to the lot sizes for the R-2 and RU zoning districts.

In revising the ordinance, we also discussed the following recommendations: (1) making sure the family subdivided land remains in the family for at least 5 years and does not allow rentals in a family subdivision during those 5 years; and (2) that the family definitions be made clearer in the written ordinance refinements (children, grandchildren, parents and spouse or partner).

## ***[HRO-8] Create a Unified Development District (UDD)***

The CWG recommends consolidating and simplifying Powhatan County's current Village Growth Area zoning framework by replacing five, overlapping districts — Village Residential (VR), Village Center (VC), Village Residential Planned Development (VR-PD), Village Center Planned Development (VC-PD), and Commerce Center Planned Development (CC-PD)—with a single, modernized zoning category called a Unified Development District (UDD).



*The Unified Development District (UDD) replaces multiple zoning districts with a single, flexible tool for master-planned residential, mixed-use, or light industrial development. This graphic shows how UDD can guide coordinated growth in line with the Comprehensive Plan.*

This new UDD zoning designation would eliminate confusing overlapping districts and provide a consistent regulatory framework for development within the County's two strategic growth areas: the Village Growth Area and the Route 60 East Growth Area.

In the case of commercial, residential, and mixed use, the UDD would function as a flexible, master-planned zoning district that could facilitate a range of development types—such as mixed-use villages with or without commercial use types, and employment centers including light industrial campuses and business parks—depending on the context. Any rezoning to the UDD would require the submission of a Unified Development Plan (UDP) that clearly demonstrates how the proposed project aligns with the Comprehensive Plan, including infrastructure availability, transportation access, and community-based goals. The UDD zoning could apply to Economic Priority, Economic Opportunity, and a broad range of other residential and commercial uses through the master planning process.

To reinforce the County's growth management framework, the CWG recommends that the total area proposed for a UDD rezoning must be located within a designated growth area. This ensures that the UDD is applied in places where public infrastructure is available or planned and where development aligns with the County's long-range land use policies.

The CWG also emphasized that the UDD is not intended to override or replace the Future Land Use Map, but rather to implement it more effectively through master planning. The

UDD should serve as a delivery mechanism for realizing land use goals already articulated in the Comprehensive Plan.

While the specifics of the UDD ordinance would be developed through future action by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, the CWG anticipates that it would include:

- A maximum allowable residential density tailored to infrastructure and location, with no more than 6 units per acre, and oftentimes less.
- Mixed-use considerations, successful buffering, and open space standards including common areas and public space where applicable.
- Connectivity requirements, including inter-parcel access and multi-modal infrastructure such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails.
- Clear expectations for architectural and site design including a proffered plan of development (master plan) that guides development.

The CWG's support for the UDD is conceptual and forward-thinking, based on the belief that a simplified, master-planned zoning district would provide greater clarity, flexibility, transparency, and better alignment in the designated growth areas than the County's current fragmented zoning district structure that is described for the five overlapping zoning districts listed above.

## ***[HRO-9] Establish Standards for Cluster Housing / Cottage Courts***

The CWG recommends creating a zoning mechanism—through a new district such as UDD or through amendment to existing districts—that would allow small-lot cluster housing or cottage court development within the designated growth areas, subject to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). This type of development, typically comprised of smaller, more modest homes arranged around shared open space, are intended to serve retirees, workforce households, and residents seeking lower-maintenance, lower-cost, and community-oriented housing types on a smaller footprint.



*Cluster housing and cottage courts offer smaller homes arranged around shared open space to support retirees, workforce housing, and community-oriented living. The CWG recommends allowing this housing type by Conditional Use Permit in growth areas, with strong design, buffering, and infrastructure standards.*

Key design principles supported by the CWG include:

- Compact building footprints balanced by functional open space.
- Compatibility with available infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband, transportation)
- A focus on walkability and connections to nearby non-residential parcels.
- Appropriateness for aging in place, workforce housing, and other types of community-oriented housing goals in the comprehensive plan.

While this recommendation is not part of the County’s existing zoning framework, it is noted that the current regulations have “manufactured home parks” allowable by CUP in the A-10 zoning district and that are subject to a set of defined use standards. Although the CWG did not recommend converting or redefining manufactured home parks as cluster housing, staff has identified a potential pathway for implementation that could involve amending the existing manufactured home park provisions to better accommodate high-quality, design-sensitive forms of small-lot housing.

Any such revision would need to:

- Include strong buffering, landscaping, and architectural standards.
- Address building quality and permanent foundation requirements
- Limit eligibility to designated growth areas where infrastructure can support it
- Be clearly distinguished from traditional mobile or manufactured home parks
- Establish maximum unit density and minimum lot size requirements.

This approach, if pursued, would require further study and a clear separation between legacy manufactured housing allowances and intentional, community-oriented cluster development models. The CWG strongly emphasized that any new housing typology introduced into the ordinance should meet high standards of design and compatibility while helping to address identified housing needs in Powhatan.

### **[HRO-10] Support Housing Options for the Elderly**

In Powhatan, the median age of residents in 2000 was 37 years, whereas in 2023 it had increased to 45.3 years. By comparison, the median age of residents in Virginia for 2023 was 38.8 years, or 6.5 years younger. As the County's population grows older, the CWG recognized the need to support residents who wish to age in place or downsize without leaving the broader community of Powhatan County. This includes encouraging the development of single-level homes, with more accessible housing, and encouraging development for active living, assisted living and healthcare housing within the Village Growth Area and other utility-serviced areas.

These housing types for the elderly are especially valuable when located near healthcare providers (doctors, pharmacies, etc.), civic facilities, and community amenities. This CWG recommendation is to intentionally plan for an aging population in the upcoming updates to the comprehensive plan. This recommendation aligns with the Strategic Plan emphasis on expanding housing options for seniors while maintaining affordability.

The elderly oftentimes do not have school age children, reducing their tax burden on the community. They also include a large percentage of retirees in their age group, which provides flexibility for some community seniors to serve in key volunteer roles with our civic organizations, neighborhoods, churches, non-profits and others.

### **[HRO-11] Explore Community Land Trusts**

The CWG recommends an openness to explore voluntary partnerships with community land trusts (CLT's) — which are nonprofit entities that hold land in perpetuity and facilitate long-term affordable housing by separating land costs from housing costs. They typically lease their properties to income-qualified households within the framework of a detailed program that typically caps profits and strictly controls participation in their land trust program for those with a demonstrated financial need for assistance. Two examples of CLT's gaining popularity in other local communities are the Central Virginia Land Trust and the Maggie Walker Land Trust.

For use in Powhatan, the CWG recommends adding broad policy language to the housing options in the updated comprehensive plan. This does not require the county to adopt new ordinances or take administrative action, and should not require county funding, since our recommendation for CLT's in Powhatan County is entirely through voluntary proffers.

Through this mechanism, zoning applicants can voluntarily offer to set aside lands by percentage or acreage to be donated to a bona fide land trust as part of their subdivision that is contingent on a zoning approval. Zoning applicants may be a developer looking for higher density residential lots, or a nonprofit and mission-driven housing organization, such as Habitat for Humanity who works in the community.

Regardless of the applicant's name or background, the zoning application would only consider voluntary proffers as one factor in considering housing options created through a voluntary donation to a CLT. Donations to the CLT simply provide another mechanism for housing affordability through a successful tool being used in other communities.

## **V. Closing Comments**

The Citizens Working Group (CWG) was established not to draft a full rewrite of the County's Comprehensive Plan, but to serve as a citizen-led advisory group, helping to make recommendations that reflect Powhatan's evolving needs while remaining grounded in its values. As a citizen-led initiative, the CWG brought together diverse perspectives, local knowledge, and a shared commitment to community stewardship. The process was shaped by open dialogue, data review, and an examination of the County's past growth patterns, infrastructure, and transportation limitations, as well as future needs.

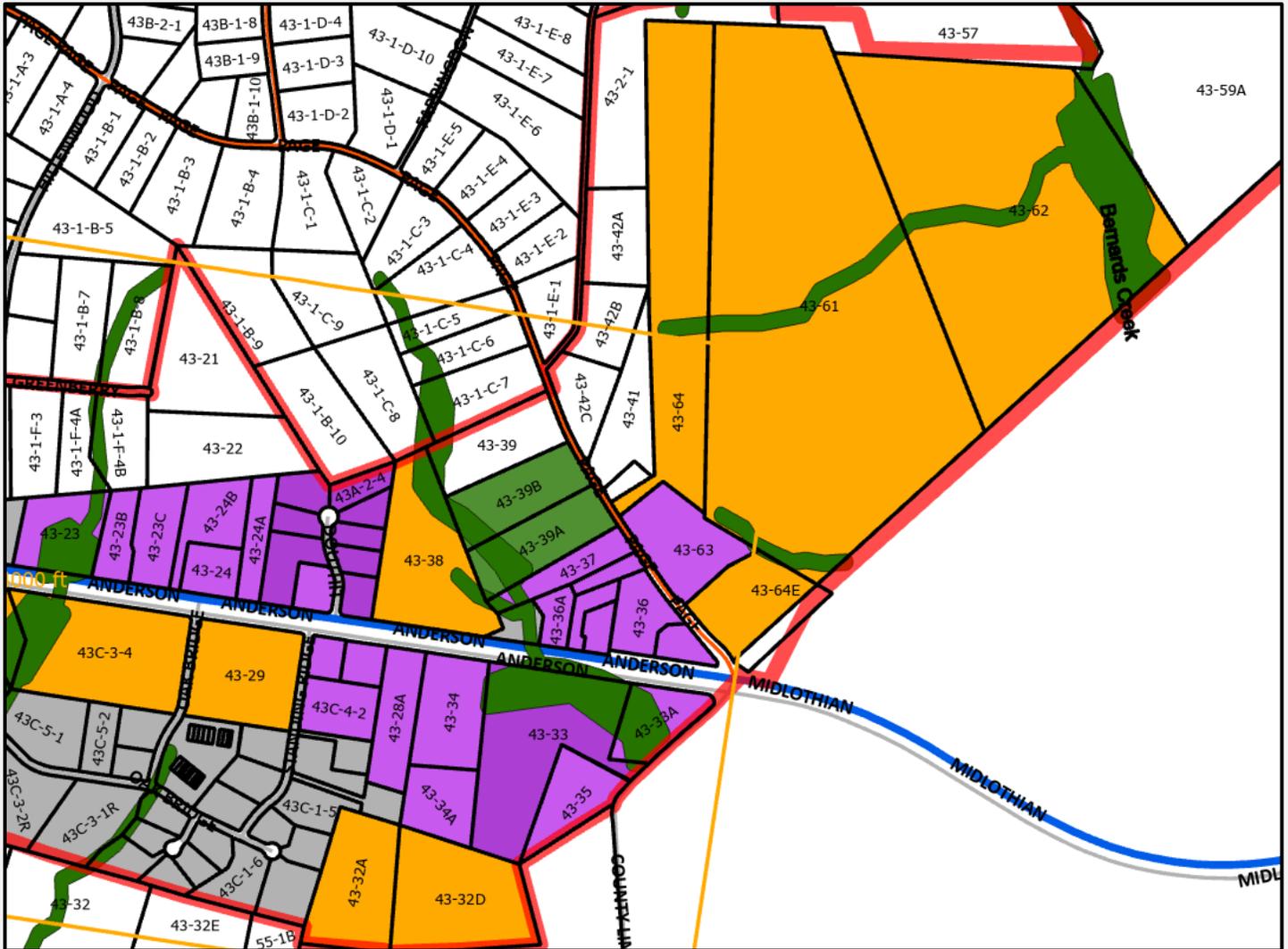
Like any public planning effort, the CWG process required navigating competing interests and differing priorities—the realities of a growing community with deep rural roots. Over the course of many meetings, members worked to strike a delicate balance: honoring Powhatan's rural character and a commitment to land conservation, while also recognizing the County's responsibility to accommodate future residential, commercial, and light industrial development in areas that are appropriate and supported by infrastructure and transportation.

The CWG appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important planning effort and respectfully submits these recommendations as a foundation for broader public dialogue and policy development as the County moves forward with its strategic plan through the Comprehensive Plan updates, ordinance revisions, and broader policy development by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

**Attachment: Appendix 1 – Economic Priority Parcel Maps (next page)**

## Appendix 1 – Economic Priority (EP) Parcel Maps

EP parcels are designated by orange color in the below maps. Purple is Gateway Business and Green is Conservation Areas. Other future land use designations are shown in a variety of other colors as described in the comprehensive plan and future land use map without changes, and the designated growth area is depicted by a thick, red line. See below 6 maps.



Economic Priority Area – Map #1 of 6





