LAND USE
How We Will Use the Land

GOAL
Guide growth in a responsible manner that results in quality development and redevelopment consistent with Blacksburg’s character.

Sustainability Goal
Support current and future land uses that contribute to a sustainable community by protecting natural resources, supporting cultural diversity and social equity, and by enhancing economic opportunities.

Citizen Involvement
There are several Council-appointed committees that address land use issues and that involve citizen participation, including: Agricultural and Forestal District Advisory Committee, Board of Zoning Appeals, Greenway/Bikeway/Sidewalk/Corridor Committee, Historic/Design Review Board, and the Planning Commission. There are also opportunities to serve on Town Council Task Forces when created to address specific issues. Citizens are also encouraged to attend and speak at Planning Commission and Town Council public hearings when development review projects are discussed. Citizens are also encouraged to participate in the Blacksburg Citizens Institute to learn more about the Town in general.

OVERVIEW
The Town is committed to sustaining Blacksburg’s university town charm, ensuring that existing development, new development, and redevelopment enhance the quality of life. The Town seeks an appropriate balance between individual property rights and the community’s goals. The Town seeks to ensure adequate public services are provided, good design principles are used, and growth is thoughtfully integrated into the existing fabric of the Blacksburg community.

The University plans to actively grow student enrollment in the next decade. With this growth, faculty and support staff will also expand to meet the needs of increased enrollment. This will stimulate both student and non-student housing and commercial/service needs within Town. The planned growth of the University has accelerated the need for proactive planning in the Town to consider how to best accommodate this growth. The consideration of more urban forms of development – particularly with respect to increased density in redevelopment and infill – will be a strong consideration in the five year update of the Comprehensive Plan scheduled for 2017. Integrating new forms of development into the existing fabric of the town and keeping the overall small-town character of the community will be the key to a successful growth management strategy. This will necessitate review of Community Character Principles, Design Considerations, Future Land Use, and Land Use Objectives and Policies.

Land use decisions should reflect a commitment to all of the principles in the Comprehensive Plan. The specific policies outlined in the previous chapters are all part of the analysis of public and private projects. The land use decision-making process incorporates all of the technical elements with key land use issues such as the context of development and compatibility with
adjacent uses. The land use analysis is also where the many competing ideas and policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan must be reconciled. The outcome of this analysis is the ability to implement progressive ideas that realize the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and keep Blacksburg a vital, sustainable community. Many different groups are involved in land use decision making, and the Comprehensive Plan serves as a tool for all: policymakers, citizens, developers and staff.
The primary components of the Land Use Chapter are the Community Character Principles, Design Considerations and the Land Use Map Series. The ideas embodied in this chapter, along with the Future Land Use objectives and policies, are part of the consideration of Land Use changes and development review as well as matters affecting existing development in the Town. The following outline of the chapter is provided for easy reference:

- Community Character Principles
- Design Considerations
- Land Use Map Series Overview
- Map A: Future Land Use
  - Future Land Use Definitions & Typical Implementing Zoning Districts
  - Mixed Use Area Overlay Descriptions
- Map B: Urban Development Areas
- Map C: Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas
- Map D: Paths to the Future
- Objectives & Policies
COMMUNITY CHARACTER

There are a number of attributes that contribute to a community’s character and uniqueness and that give it a “sense of place.” These factors collectively comprise the Town of Blacksburg’s quality of life. Community character affects how the Town is perceived and valued by anyone who lives, works, plays, or visits in Blacksburg. Ongoing Community Conversations surveys, as well as previous iterations of the Comprehensive Plan, consistently show that the Town of Blacksburg is valued for and aspires to have:

- A small town feel
- A sense of community and belonging
- A walkable place
- An identity as a progressive and sustainable community
- A high level of outdoor amenities
- An appreciation for the beauty of the Town and surrounding mountain landscape
- A place for economic opportunity

The qualities identified above comprise the character of the Blacksburg community. To guide the future of the Town as desired by its citizens, the Comprehensive Plan expresses these qualities as specific implementing principles. The Community Character Principles found on the following pages are an articulation of these enduring qualities. Each principle will be used by policymakers to guide community decision-making to protect the integrity of what makes Blacksburg “Blacksburg.”

**Community Character Principles**

CCP 1. **Well-designed pedestrian and bicycle friendly routes and facilities are essential to the Town’s identity as a walkable and bikeable community.** Pedestrian circulation systems are required to be constructed in all new developments. Connections to the existing Paths to the Future routes should be made where possible through new development or Town programs.

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

CCP 3. **Schools are anchors within the community.** The Town values a high quality of education at all levels. Public and private schools foster a family-oriented atmosphere. Public schools also serve as recreational areas and community gathering places. Neighborhood schools in particular promote walkability.

CCP 4. **Places of worship are important anchors in a neighborhood.** Places of worship should be developed at a scale and intensity appropriate to the surrounding community. These also serve as community gathering places.

CCP 5. **Historic landmarks and properties are an important part of the character of the Town.** Efforts should be made to maintain and protect historic landmarks and properties. Focus should be placed on the use or re-use of historic properties so they
contribute to the Town’s economic base and neighborhood vitality and charm. New
development in the district should be constructed at the same quality in order to be a
valuable contribution to the Historic District in the future.

CCP 6. **Creation of public and private parks and recreation amenities is an important part of land use development decisions.** A variety of gathering spaces should be
available to citizens throughout the Town. Recreation areas should be thoughtfully
designed to meet the needs of the development, neighborhood or broader community.

CCP 7. **Commercial development should be street-oriented.** Pedestrians, bicyclists and
transit riders are better served by buildings that meet the street with meaningful street-oriented entrances and vehicular parking located to the side or rear. Parking should not be a dominant feature of the development. There should be clearly defined safe pedestrian routes to buildings and to the public sidewalk system across vehicle travel ways.

CCP 8. **To ensure economic viability over time, commercial structures should be constructed with quality building materials and maintained.** Quality construction and materials should be used so that new buildings withstand the test of time and are not designed for obsolescence. Architectural style should be sensitive to the character of surrounding properties. The conversion of existing residential property to small scale commercial or office uses should use the existing residential structure on-site or construct the new building in a scale and design that does not detract from the character of the neighborhood.

CCP 9. **With limited availability of commercial land, efficient use of the land is critical to provide services to a growing population.** Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet this need. Residential development should not encroach in these areas unless incorporated as part of a well designed mixed use project.

CCP 10. **Offices are part of the desired mix of uses in the Downtown but should contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of Downtown throughout the day and night.**

CCP 11. **Work with Virginia Tech and the Virginia Tech Foundation on future projects to recognize the economic value from these entities’ developments in the context of maintaining the integrity of commercial and residential areas in Town.**

CCP 12. **To serve the needs of the community, support opportunities for commercial development and redevelopment in appropriate locations.**

CCP 13. **Increasing the safety and efficiency of traffic flow on arterial and collector roads is important in maximizing the functionality of the transportation network.** For commercial developments: minimize curb cuts and driveways, add internal connections between adjacent properties and optimize signal timing. For residential developments: design an internal connected street grid system as well as connections to the external street system, along with traffic calming measures.
CCP 14. **Transit connections and bus stop facilities are important components to support transit as a viable transportation option in Town.** These elements should be part of the design of new developments and be coordinated with Blacksburg Transit regarding service availability.

CCP 15. **Blacksburg is a responsible headwaters community for Southwest Virginia.** Developments within the Town should minimize short and long term impacts on surface waters (streams and ponds), groundwater, karst features, and wetlands.

CCP 16. **Responsible site design and development practices will minimize environmental impacts within the Town.** Any residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural development or redevelopment should meet and exceed federal, state, or local regulations to minimize impacts of soil erosion, stormwater run-off, and non-point source pollution.

CCP 17. **The preservation of open spaces is an important part of community identity.** Provision of private and public open spaces on both a small scale and large scale can be achieved by protecting environmentally sensitive areas and scenic vistas, and promoting agricultural and forestal lands. Dedicated open space, passive recreational open space and community gardens within developments are ways to preserve open space.

CCP 18. **Minimize light pollution, balancing dark skies with a safe pedestrian and vehicular experience at night.** The design and placement of new lighting for buildings, parking areas, or streets should have minimum impact of light spillover and glare on surrounding uses with special attention given to lighting when transitioning from higher intensity to lower intensity uses. Lighting should be the minimum necessary to have a safe environment.

CCP 19. **For safety, appearance, and maintenance reasons, new developments are required to place utilities underground.** Where feasible and financially possible through developer contribution, Town subsidization, or other financial sources, existing above-ground utilities should be relocated underground.

CCP 20. **The Town is committed to the co-location of utilities in order to minimize impacts and maximize efficiency of infrastructure serving the public.**

CCP 21. **The Town is concerned about the impact of the height, mass, and placement of buildings, cell towers or other features of considerable height on viewsheds.**

CCP 22. **Gateway entry corridors are the first impression for visitors and residents and should reflect the care and quality of the Town.** The Town will provide landscaping and maintenance, and entry and wayfinding signage within the right-of-way at key gateways. Development proposals in gateway corridors should be designed with aesthetic features such as parking areas, landscaping, and signs, all of which affect the visual quality of entrance areas and corridors.
DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

Design considerations, whether in new development or rehabilitation of existing developments in the Town, are ways in which the Community Character Principles are implemented. More and more, communities throughout the country, including Blacksburg, are realizing that site design and design details have a significant impact on the look and feel of a community. Both public and private investments should be made with the importance of these design details in mind.

Residential Infill Development Guidelines

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

Residential “infill” development can range in size and scale, varying from construction of one home on a single lot up to a larger subdivision development. Infill encompasses both new construction and redevelopment. Compatible infill development can help reinforce community character. In many cases, residential infill will require planning approvals, and the guidelines will serve as useful tools in the review and approval of planning applications.

The following is a summary of the residential infill design principles identified in the Town of Blacksburg Residential Infill Development Guidelines. For additional information on these principles, see the full text, which is available at www.blacksburg.gov.

- **Building Orientation:** Orienting buildings toward the street contributes to a pedestrian-friendly street environment, provides a visually rich street edge, and contributes to resident safety by placing “eyes-on-the-street.”
- **Setback:** Consistent front building setbacks create a uniform appearance along the street.
- **Building Frontage/Entries:** Landscaping in front of buildings and entry features, such as porches or steps, create visual interest and give the neighborhood an identifiable character.
- **Off-street Parking:** Parking for residential areas that plays down the visual impact of cars and parking garages respects the character of an existing neighborhood and creates pedestrian-friendly streets.
- **Planning for Parking:** Shared structured parking can accommodate more parking than surface parking lots and can be designed so that the structures do not dominate street frontage of a building.
- **Alleys:** Alleys are a part of the Town’s historic street structure, and they are a way to provide off-street parking without impacting the pedestrian friendliness of a residential street.
- **Screening/Landscaping:** Hedges, trees, shrubs, and fences can provide privacy, a transition between spaces, and can help buffer pedestrians from vehicle traffic.
- **Open Space:** Comfortable outdoor places in multifamily developments can provide a place for people to sit, rest, and interact, fostering a sense of community.
- **Connectivity:** An interconnected street network and compact blocks provide the framework for a greater diversity of building types close to one another and promote...
pedestrian and bicycle activity by making connections between destinations accessible and convenient.

- **Walkways:** Internal walkways within larger residential developments promote pedestrian movement by connecting users from the public sidewalk network and parking areas to ultimate destinations within a site.
- **Scale and Massing:** Buildings designed to fit within the context of the surrounding structures help reinforce neighborhood character and create visual interest for pedestrians.
- **Architectural Features:** Structures that are designed with architectural features similar to existing homes contribute to a sense of place and add to the character of the neighborhood.
- **Character and Context:** Infill designs that are sensitive to the vernacular and traditional architecture found in Blacksburg and Southwest Virginia help to preserve community character.
- **Streetscape:** Streetscape designs that include trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, drinking fountains, newspaper boxes, or other pedestrian-oriented amenities help encourage pedestrian activity and promote safety and security.
- **Sidewalks:** Well-connected and maintained sidewalks contribute to the character of neighborhoods by providing safe places for people to travel and interact with one another.
- **Crosswalks:** Crosswalks provide higher visibility to pedestrians at logical crossing points and can be basic white striping or can include other elements such as raised surfaces or aesthetic materials.
- **Bicycle Facilities:** Streets that have been optimized for bicycle travel and bicycle parking facilities can help support bicycle activity in a community.
- **Complete Streets:** Complete Streets provide an efficient and interconnected network for bicyclists, pedestrians, autos, and transit users of all ages and abilities.

**Non-Residential Development Design**

Equal and careful attention should be paid to the design details of non-residential new development, redevelopment and retro-fitting projects. The two goals of any non-residential development are:

1.) Attractive, high quality projects that are compatible with surrounding areas and contribute to the Town’s character.

2.) Projects that are economically viable and allow the developer to meet his or her client’s objectives.

These two goals are not mutually exclusive.

The Town and the development community need to work together on these goals. It is of mutual benefit for Blacksburg to be a progressive community with development and services that meet citizens’ needs and expectations. Many of the desired design details of non-residential developments are the result of the developer’s vision for his or her project. Development is also subject to the Town’s regulatory structure that contains many development design standards affecting how development occurs. At the Comprehensive Plan level, Community Character Principles and Mixed Use Area descriptions articulate important design considerations to be incorporated in non-residential projects. Additionally, many of the Residential Infill Design guidelines are also important design details to incorporate in non-residential projects.
The majority of the design standards, applicable to both public and private non-residential development proposals, are contained in the Town’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. For the Town’s Historic District, additional direction is given through the Blacksburg Historic District Design Guidelines. Several of these regulatory documents should be reviewed and further evaluated to determine if the existing regulations are adequate to implement the Comprehensive Plan. More detail and guidance may be needed to achieve the desired non-residential development forms and keep Town regulations current with changes in land use planning and development practices.

LAND USE MAP SERIES OVERVIEW
The Town of Blacksburg’s Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map Series is a series of four maps depicting Future Land Use classifications, Urban Development Areas, Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas, and Paths to the Future. All four maps will be referenced in conjunction with the text of the Comprehensive Plan when reviewing development applications and planning Town capital improvement projects.

Map A: Future Land Use
Map A, the Future Land Use Map, illustrates how the Town is envisioned to develop, grow, and mature through 2046. It delineates where residential uses are to be found, where road connections are planned, and where commercial centers are to be located. The Future Land Use designation of a property is a major tool that Planning Commissioners and Town Council members use when evaluating development requests.

Map B: Urban Development Areas (UDA)
Map B, the Urban Development Areas Map, depicts the areas that have been so designated. UDA ensure that local governments are planning for needed residential and commercial growth in the next 10 to 20 year period to meet growing population demands. UDA address both density and intensity of uses, as well as development form.

Map C: Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas
Map C, the Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas Map, illustrates different styles of land use that can be found throughout the Town of Blacksburg. This map replaces the Planning Sectors found in previous versions of Blacksburg 2046. How a development request supports and addresses the needs of a particular neighborhood style, employment or service area will be considered during the development review process and will also guide Town project priorities.

Map D: Paths to the Future
Map D, the Paths to the Future Map, illustrates transportation and connectivity in the Town of Blacksburg. The Map shows trails and connectivity elements that contribute to the Town’s quality of life. This map is used during the development review process and in Town project planning to ensure that route connections are created. More information about this map can be found at the end of this chapter and in the Transportation Chapter.
MAP A: FUTURE LAND USE
Future Land Use is often confused with current land use or zoning designations. Future Land Use generally depicts how the Town envisions different land uses will be distributed in the future. Current Land Use is how a particular parcel is currently developed or being redeveloped at any given time. A Current Land Use map provides a baseline reference for how the Town exists today that can be compared to how Blacksburg is envisioned in 2046 on the Future Land Use Map (Map A). Zoning Districts are how the various Future Land Use classifications are implemented, and they regulate specific uses and associated development standards. A copy of the Current Land Use map, Zoning map, or Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance regulations can be obtained at the Town of Blacksburg’s Planning and Building Department.

The Future Land Use map is general in nature, due to the scale of the maps required to illustrate the future land uses in the entire Town. For example, the Future Land Use map may illustrate that a road is desired in a particular location to connect two specific areas of Town, but does not show the exact engineered road alignment. The Future Land Use map illustrates where public parks are located, but does not show the required open space areas within a subdivision. Basic definitions of the designations listed on the Future Land Use map are listed below. The typical implementing zoning district(s) is(are) listed with each Land Use Classification Definition.

Future Land Use Map Classification Definitions

**Park Land/Open Space/Resource Protection**
Public recreational space or dedicated public or private open space.
*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts*: Can occur in any zoning district.

**Very Low Density Residential**
Net density of one dwelling unit per acre and some low intensity agricultural uses.
*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts*: Rural Residential 1 (RR-1), and Rural Residential 2 (RR-2) and Planned Residential (PR).

**Low Density Residential**
Up to four dwelling units per acre.
*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts*: Low Density Residential (R-4) and Planned Residential (PR).

**Medium Density Residential**
Up to and including ten dwelling units per acre; or up to 20 bedrooms per acre, whichever is less.
*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts*: Transitional Residential (R-5), Old Town Residential (OTR), Planned Residential (PR), and Planned Manufactured Home (PMH).

**High Density Residential**
More than ten dwelling units per acre; or more than 20 bedrooms per acre.
*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts*: Low Density Multiunit Residential (RM-27), Medium Density Multiunit Residential (RM-48), and Planned Residential (PR).

**Limited High Density Residential**
More than ten dwelling units per acre; greater than 20 bedrooms per acre, but less than 30 bedrooms per acre.

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

**Civic**

Schools, government offices and buildings, service organizations, and other institutional uses.

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

**Low Impact Commercial**

Small-scale commercial and office developments that do not need high visibility and have a limited impact on the surrounding environment, including but not limited to factors such as lighting, noise, parking, traffic and hours of operation. Examples include professional offices, retail establishments and restaurants that are smaller in scale and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.

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

**High Impact Commercial**

Small or large commercial developments with a need for high visibility and have a high impact on the surrounding environment, including but not limited to factors such as lighting, noise, parking, traffic and hours of operation. Examples include large retail establishments, restaurants, hotels/motels, and auto related uses.

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

**Research and Development**

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

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

**Industrial**

Industrial uses that may produce moderate to significant external effects. Uses include raw materials processing, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution centers, and other large-scale operations.

Typical Implementing Zoning District: Industrial and Planned Industrial.

**Airport**

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


**University**

The core of the Virginia Tech campus, including academic buildings, residence halls,
administrative offices, recreational fields, dining facilities, retail establishments, and parking to support the activities of the University. The Virginia Tech Hokie Stone Quarry is also included in this classification.

*Typical Implementing Zoning District:* University and College.

**Mixed Use Areas**
Developments containing a mix of both residential and non-residential uses. Refer to the Mixed Use Descriptions below for more detail of each designated area.

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

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

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

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

Regardless of zoning classification, all properties within a Mixed Use Area should complement adjacent properties with vehicular connections, coordinating pedestrian amenities, and complementary architecture and site design features. The desired ratio of residential and non-residential uses is detailed in the specific Mixed Use Area descriptions found on the following pages. Key features of any Mixed Use Area include the following:

- Vertically mixed use buildings and, where feasible, a mix of uses horizontally throughout the entire site.
- Access to mass transit stops with shelters located on the perimeter of the development and, where feasible, internal to the development to serve the area.
- Internal pedestrian amenities and greenways that connect to mass transit stops and connect externally to the Blacksburg Greenway system. Pedestrian features such as a loop trail around the perimeter of the development are strongly encouraged.
- Limited entrances to major arterial roads to help prevent additional traffic congestion.
and to help prevent the appearance of strip commercial shopping centers. On-site vehicular parking should be accommodated without dominating the streetscape or landscape.

e. Site design and site layouts that are coordinated with and complemented by other mixed use developments within the Mixed Use Area and to other properties adjacent to the Mixed Use Area. While mixed-use developments may be designed independently of each other, they must function with surrounding developments.

f. Arrangement and configuration of buildings, building setbacks and streets that create a sense of spatial enclosure or “outdoor rooms” along key portions of street corridors. The result should be an inviting and attractive built environment that encourages and accommodates people living, working, shopping, and visiting these mixed use areas.

g. A mix of uses, residential and non-residential, within each building and within the development is encouraged. Outdoor activities such as patio dining are encouraged to promote commercial and pedestrian vitality. Complementary uses, such as daycare and preschool facilities, are supported within the Mixed Use Areas.

h. Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and the preservation of existing mature trees and the provision of landscaped buffers within each development.

i. Historical and environmentally sensitive sites within a Mixed Use Area that are adequately protected and, where appropriate, incorporated into the site design.

j. Design styles and features that accommodate and prepare for the Town’s changing population, such as aging in place.

The following Mixed Use Area descriptions provide additional guidance regarding the desired mix of uses for each specific area:

**Mixed Use Area A** was removed from the Future Land Use Map Classifications by Resolution 10-B-14 dated October 14, 2014.

**Mixed Use Area B** is located north of Prices Fork Road, between the Route 460 Bypass and University City Boulevard. A mixed balance of commercial and residential development in this area should complement existing commercial development with roads, sidewalks, and greenways connecting to the Town. The close proximity to Virginia Tech should encourage a development designed for the University community, such as graduate student housing and services. Limited access on Prices Fork and additional landscaping to buffer the mixed-used development is recommended.

**Mixed Use Area C** is located along North Main Street between Prices Fork and Patrick Henry Drive. A balance of commercial and residential mixed uses is desired to provide a natural transition from the commercial orientation on North Main Street, Prices Fork and Patrick Henry Drive to the adjacent residential uses. Limited vehicular entrances on these arterial streets and landscaping techniques should be implemented to avoid the impression of a strip commercial shopping center.

**Mixed Use Area D** includes the Old Blacksburg Middle School property located at the 500 Block of South Main Street, extending to include the Old Annie Kay’s property in the 300 Block of South Main Street. In 2011, Montgomery County and the Town of Blacksburg
adopted the Old Blacksburg Middle School Master Plan to guide redevelopment of the site. Redevelopment of remaining property in Mixed Use Area D should have uses that stimulate pedestrian activity on Main Street and have sensitive transitions to established neighborhoods within the Blacksburg Historic District.

**Mixed Use Area E** is located on South Main Street between Country Club Drive and Hubbard Street. A major commercial node for the Town already exists in the area, and any redevelopment should also provide services for all residents and visitors. This mixed use area is predominantly commercially oriented with limited entrances on South Main Street so as not to impede traffic flow on South Main Street nor give the impression of a strip commercial shopping center. Transitional residential uses should be located closer to the existing residential neighborhoods to help protect the integrity of the existing neighborhoods and to provide a buffer between the commercial-oriented uses on South Main Street.

**Mixed Use Areas F & G**
While adjacent to each other, topography prevents easy interaction between Mixed Use Areas F & G. Care with the design and development of both areas should be taken so there are complementary land uses, pedestrian access, and, where possible, vehicular connections between the two areas. Attention to aesthetic and architectural details in these mixed use areas is required since both areas are visible from the Route 460 Bypass and are part of the southern gateway entrance to Blacksburg.

**Mixed Use Area F** is located on South Main Street at the major south entrance gateway to Blacksburg. This mixed use area is predominantly an office and commercial campus with limited entrances on South Main Street with landscaping that does not give an impression of a strip commercial shopping center. Retail and residential uses are secondary in nature and support the Blacksburg Industrial Park and existing office parks.

**Mixed Use Area G** is located on Research Center Drive, a predominantly medium and high density residential oriented mixed-use development. Neighborhood commercial and office uses could support local residents and employees at the adjacent Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, including the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM).

**Mixed Use Area H** is located around the North Main Street, Patrick Henry Drive and Giles Road block. A major commercial node for the northern area of Town already exists in the area, and any redevelopment should continue to provide services for residents and visitors. Properties fronting on North Main Street within this mixed use area should be commercially oriented with the highest intensity of uses. Redevelopment of these properties should include limited or shared driveway access so as not to impede traffic flow on North Main Street, nor give the impression of strip commercial shopping centers. Any uses located on Patrick Henry Drive and Giles Road should be of a lower intensity to help provide a transitional buffer between the existing residential neighborhoods on Giles Road and the commercially oriented uses on North Main Street. High Density Residential uses should be carefully designed, constructed, and managed to provide parking, sidewalks and trails as well as provide amenities for residents and minimized impacts on adjacent neighborhoods. Blacksburg Transit services and sidewalks should be incorporated with any redevelopment in the area.
MAP B: URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS (UDA)
Local governments subject to the UDA State legislation, originally adopted in 2007, must show that through new development or redevelopment, there is sufficient acreage to accommodate projected residential and non-residential growth for the next 10 to 20 year period. The State legislation indicates that UDA will be appropriate for higher density development due to proximity to transportation facilities and the availability of a public or community water and sewer system. To the extent feasible, UDA are to be used for redevelopment or infill development. The UDA State legislation also requires the boundaries and size of each Urban Development Area to be reexamined and, if necessary, revised every five years in conjunction with the review of this Comprehensive Plan and in accordance with the most recent available population growth estimates and projections.

In 2010, State legislation was amended to include density standards and design criteria for UDA and to improve the coordination between transportation and land use. To the extent possible, federal, state and local transportation, housing, water and sewer facilities, economic development, and other public infrastructure funding for new and expanded facilities shall be directed to the urban development areas. The Town met the State requirement by adopting UDA in August 2011. In 2012, the State legislation was again amended to make the adoption of UDA optional. The planning principles set forth in the 2007 and 2010 Urban Development Area legislation are similar to many principles that already existed in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. Regarding the 2012 legislative change, the State has not advised localities as to the impact of removing UDA already adopted. The Town may be in a better position for State funding opportunities by retaining UDA. Thus, the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update maintains the UDA as adopted in 2011.

UDA are intended to serve as a focal point for growth over the next 10 to 20 years. Development within the UDA should be compact, using Traditional Neighborhood Design principles, or part of a mixed use development designed to accommodate pedestrian and vehicular traffic with a full complement of services and amenities. Development in a UDA should also provide for transit facilities or stops. Designated UDA are intended to be developed at urban densities and intensities and may include single-family residences at four dwellings per developable acre, townhouses at six dwellings per developable acre, or multifamily units at 12 units per developable acre or higher—or a combination of these unit types—or commercial development at a floor area ratio of 0.4 per acre or higher. Individual parcels or groups of parcels within a UDA may be either higher or lower than the general density/intensity standards, as long as these general density/intensity standards are available in some combinations in the UDA when taken as a whole. Compact, mixed uses are appropriate in UDA and development in these areas should be guided in part by the mixed use area guidelines discussed later in this chapter.

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

Within the Town, there are eight geographic areas designated as UDA. The UDA are shown on Map B of the Town’s Land Use Map Series. While the UDA generally correspond with areas
designated as mixed use on the Future Land Use Map, Map A of the Town’s Land Use Map Series, the boundaries are not synonymous. (Also refer to Blacksburg Administrative Manual)

Note: In 2012, the Long Range Planning Committee and Planning Commission recommended review of Map C in 2014 with the annual amendments. However staff recommends further reviews in 2015 of Map C once there are more public hearing cases to reflect benefits/challenges of using Map C in the Land Use Analysis.

**Map C: NEIGHBORHOOD, EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICE AREAS**

The Town of Blacksburg’s Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map Series, Map C: Neighborhood, Employment and Services Areas Map, illustrates different types of areas that can be found throughout the Town of Blacksburg. Map C replaces the Planning Sectors found in previous adopted versions of Blacksburg 2046. The eight Planning Sectors were geographically designated areas of the Town, describing the planning issues found within each, often with great duplication. The Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas reorganize the Planning Sectors by type, bringing areas throughout the Town that have similar lifestyles and issues together to improve the overall effectiveness of planning for each area.

All neighborhoods and areas in Blacksburg are classified into different styles based on a number of key characteristics. This classification is not based on geography, but on commonalities and factors including historical patterns of development, transportation network, and neighborhood identity, density and type of development, and potential development opportunities. The boundaries reflect the predominant land use form within each area. There may be isolated instances or enclaves of a land use form that do not conform with the designation of the area. For example, there may be a single family home located beside a multi-unit residential apartment building; however, the boundaries of the areas were determined based on the predominant land use form and the common issues identified with that area. The result is that areas of the Town that share similar characteristics and face similar challenges were classified together into the following categories:

- A 1. Commercial and Employment Areas
- A 2. Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods
- A 3. Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods
- A 4. Suburban Residential Neighborhoods
- A 5. Rural/Undeveloped Areas

Additional information about each area style is detailed on the following pages, including a general description of the areas, how the areas developed, and strategies for the future. Applicable Community Character Principles are referenced to provide context for how that particular neighborhood style relates to the Town as a whole.

Both private proposals and Town projects will be reviewed against the neighborhood, employment and service areas to evaluate if the proposed development or capital improvements will benefit the neighborhood, employment or service area, or exacerbate neighborhood problems identified in this chapter. If the proposed land use is different from the adopted Neighborhood, Employment and Service Area, the Area more closely matching the proposed
land use may also be considered during the review process to better evaluate the proposed land use request.

A 1. Commercial and Employment Areas
There are five core commercial and employment areas in Town where needs of employees, customers and suppliers converge. These areas in the Town contain the majority of the jobs in Blacksburg but do not incorporate home-based businesses, which have minimal land use impacts. These areas include all but one of the Town’s gateway entrances (the other primary gateway, North Main Street, is discussed under A 4. Suburban Residential Neighborhood Areas later in this chapter). The five core commercial and employment areas are listed below and then individually discussed in greater detail:

- University
- Retail (Downtown, South Main Street, University City Boulevard)
- Corporate Research Center
- Blacksburg Industrial Park
- Hospital/460 Business

University
Virginia Tech is the largest employer in Blacksburg, with 6,500 employees in 2011. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Virginia Tech) was established in 1872 and contains historic structures on-campus, including Smithfield Plantation and Solitude. Adjacent to the Downtown, Virginia Tech’s presence has promoted the growth of a retail employment center in the Downtown to serve the needs of students, faculty and staff. Some Downtown properties adjacent to campus have been converted to university-related uses as Virginia Tech has expanded. As Virginia Tech continues to grow, it will be important for the Town to work closely with the University to balance the economic value from these entities’ developments in order to maintain the integrity of commercial and residential areas in Town. To this end, it will also be important to effectively coordinate the Town’s Comprehensive Plan with Virginia Tech’s Master Plan, most notably to create a seamless transition between the campus and the Downtown with a free flow of bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular traffic between the two areas. The development along College Avenue in coordination with the University can serve as a model for this collaboration, and the best practices from that project can be applied to other coordinated developments. The construction of the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech that is adjacent to the Downtown will benefit from this successful coordination, as the addition of this important cultural amenity will attract residents and visitors to the Downtown.

Retail
In addition to the Historic Downtown retail employment and commercial area that developed largely as a result of the presence of Virginia Tech, two other retail employment and commercial areas have developed along primary transportation routes through the Town on South Main Street and University City Boulevard. Businesses located in these areas serve the day-to-day needs of residents, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, or gas stations, as well as businesses meeting more quality of life needs, including restaurants, clothing stores, specialty shops, coffee shops, bakeries, and bicycle shops. Businesses located in the Historic Downtown area tend to be locally owned, while most national chains are located in the other employment and commercial areas. Town Council is considering a live/work overlay district in the
Downtown to add to the variety of arts and tourism-related employment and commercial offerings in this area.

Commercial and employment areas contain a variety of building styles, age and quality. New development in these areas should be designed to fit the character of the area in which they are located; designs should create a community gathering place as well as a commercial center, and should provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access. Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet the demand for limited availability of commercial land in these areas and to allow for the preservation of historic landmarks and properties in the Downtown. As established commercial areas redevelop over time, a re-orientation to a pedestrian focus is a primary design goal to help create more cohesive neighborhoods. In both new construction and in the refurbishment of older structures, quality building materials should be used and maintained to ensure economic viability over time.

Offices are part of the desired mix of uses in the Downtown and can contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of Downtown throughout the day and night. Office uses complement retail, restaurant and other commercial uses in the Downtown, and employees of those businesses become patrons of other Downtown businesses. The development of properties, such as the Old Blacksburg Middle School (OBMS) site in accordance with the OBMS Master Plan, provides an opportunity to create office, commercial, and residential uses in a mixed-use development that is street-oriented, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, has easy access to public transportation and is an asset to the vibrant Downtown area.

Both the South Main and University City Boulevard employment and commercial centers can also benefit from greater access to pedestrian and bicycle routes, as well as public transportation that can better connect them to the other commercial and employment centers in the Town as well as to residential neighborhoods.

**Corporate Research Center**

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC) is a research park containing over 140 high-technology companies that currently employ over 2,200 people. In partnership with Virginia Tech as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Foundation, the CRC houses companies that provide educational opportunities and research-related jobs for University students, faculty, graduates, staff, and spouses, all of whom may also be residents of the Town. With Phase I complete and Phase II under construction, maintaining easy access to the area creates a critical need for traffic management in addition to making available alternative forms of transportation such as adequate access to mass transit and bicycle friendly routes. A proposed interchange on US 460 at Southgate Drive will create a direct connection from that highway to campus and the CRC. While alleviating some of the traffic concerns, it will be important to foster a sense of community between the CRC and other areas of the Town. This can be achieved by encouraging community involvement through programming at the CRC, in addition to assuring adequate access to pedestrian, bicycle and mass transit alternatives that encourage employees to live locally and patronize local businesses.

**Blacksburg Industrial Park**

The Blacksburg Industrial Park is home to several large corporations, small high-tech firms, and Virginia Tech research institutes. Phase V of the Industrial Park was completed in 2011. A
recent extension of Commerce Street in 2012, as well as the subdivision of four parcels slated for development, speaks to the economic health of this employment area. Similar to the CRC, appropriately managing traffic flow in this area and providing alternative transportation, such as adequate access to mass transit and bicycle friendly routes, will be important in the development and future expansion of the Industrial Park. In encouraging pedestrian networks and trail connections through this area, it will be important to be sensitive to the unique vehicular traffic patterns of an industrial park. Large trucks and other equipment may not be compatible with more traditional pedestrian networks such as sidewalks, but pedestrian access for employees might still be possible through less invasive walkways or trails through this area.

**Hospital/460 Business**

LewisGale Hospital (formerly Montgomery Regional Hospital) has been the leading healthcare provider in the New River Valley since opening in 1971. The hospital has been expanding its services to meet growing healthcare needs and was the 6th top employer in Blacksburg in 2011. The hospital is located just off 460 Business on the South end of Blacksburg, so any development in this area is part of a gateway to Blacksburg, and should reflect the care and quality of the Town. In addition to its own employees, the presence of the hospital fosters the growth of a cluster of related employment centers surrounding it such as medical offices, elderly living facilities, and other service providers. By working with developers on projects in this area, there is an opportunity to capitalize on open space requirements that meet another need of the residents in the area for parks and recreational facilities. With Warm Hearth, a comprehensive retirement community, located in both the County and the Town, as well as other facilities in Town addressing the needs of the aging population, transportation in this area should be focused on providing easy and accessible public transportation and pedestrian networks for those residents to the healthcare services this area provides. By focusing on improvements to transportation, there is also an opportunity to allow for additional development farther away from this area as the aging population grows and demand for additional elder care facilities and services increases.

**Commercial and Employment Area Issues for the Future**

- The activity in these areas generates traffic and congestion. Mass transit, alternative transportation and other creative options, such as staggered working hours and telecommuting, can mitigate some of these negative impacts.

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

- There is an opportunity to upgrade technology infrastructure in these areas so they can become more economically competitive.

- Unique utility demands of new Research and Development, Light Industrial or Manufacturing businesses in these areas will need to be accommodated and incorporated into the Town’s infrastructure.
With a variety of commercial and employment areas throughout the Town, strengthening and expanding that economic vitality while adding to a high quality of life for residents is a primary focus.

Creating a master plan for site redevelopment in these areas helps to assure that appropriate site design is achieved and fosters successful collaboration.

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

Implement the pending 2012 Economic Development Strategies once adopted (Refer to the Jobs & Housing Chapter).

There are a number of aging commercial properties in these areas. Stimulating redevelopment or the refurbishing of existing buildings in accordance with the various Commercial Infill Design principles discussed earlier in this chapter will help make these properties contribute more, both to the Town’s economic tax base and the Community Character Principles of Blacksburg.

A 2. Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods

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

The urban/walkable neighborhoods in Blacksburg are centered around Downtown and the original “Sixteen Squares.” Residential neighborhoods developed over time beginning at Main Street and the Sixteen Squares and eventually moved outward. These are some of the oldest neighborhoods in the Town, and they contain a number of historic homes. There is a strong community sentiment for preserving these structures, and the Blacksburg Historic Overlay District attempts to do this. In addition, two of the neighborhoods in this area, McBryde Village and Miller-Southside, have developed their own neighborhood master plans. The majority of these neighborhoods have a high percentage of rental properties when compared to owner-occupied homes.

The urban/walkable neighborhoods contain open space and greenway connections to better connect them to Downtown. These areas also provide visual and physical resting points, enhance the aesthetic experience, and make the area more desirable in general. Pedestrian trails, such as the Huckleberry Trail, play a significant role in the aesthetic charm and pedestrian orientation of these areas.

Places of worship and neighborhood schools are an important anchor to these areas. They function as gathering places and are recreational and cultural centers for their neighborhoods, providing definition and identity.
Urban/Walkable Neighborhood Issues for the Future

- Single-family residential character and neighborhood identity should be preserved in these areas.

- Through education of residents, owners and property managers, as well as the Town’s zoning enforcement property maintenance programs, seek to minimize lifestyle conflicts that may occur in these neighborhoods, especially with undergraduate students renting property in these areas.

- As the fraternity and sorority uses cease in these areas, the non-conforming structures can be converted back to single-family residential uses or other alternative compatible uses such as art studios, bed and breakfasts, or other creative small-scale commercial uses.

- More connections in sidewalks and trails benefit children and adults who wish to travel to nearby schools and work from their home without relying on a car or bus. To remedy deficiencies, improve connectivity and ensure property maintenance, utilize programs such as the Safe Routes to School along with other grants or Town funding.

- There is a limited inventory of homes within walking distance of the University and Downtown. In addition, these homes are often beyond the financial reach of many young families, young professionals, or employees of the University or Downtown businesses who would like to live in this area. Creative strategies are needed to encourage more home ownership in these neighborhoods (Refer to Jobs & Housing Chapter).

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

- The speed and inattention of drivers using some of these neighborhood streets can be a safety issue. Education and other strategies are needed to combat this ongoing issue (Refer to Transportation Chapter).

- Construction of new homes and the redevelopment and refurbishing of the existing housing stock in this area should be done utilizing the Residential Infill Guidelines and, where applicable, the Blacksburg Historic Overlay guidelines.

- The housing stock in these areas is aging and lack of property maintenance is a critical issue for neighborhood identity and character in the future.

- Limited parking is an issue in these neighborhoods. Any opportunities to reduce the number of vehicles being parked in this area should be explored and encouraged.

- Development in this area should be sensitive to balancing the minimization of light pollution with the need for sufficient lighting to create safe pedestrian and vehicular experiences at night.
• Where there are undeveloped tracts of land that are on ridgelines or that contain significant wooded areas, such as the area between Clay Street and Roanoke Street near the eastern continental divide, thoughtful care should be given to design in order to retain natural areas and features as part of the new development. Creative design can be used to balance residential infill with protection of important natural systems and viewsheds. The Town’s Residential Infill Development Guidelines provide examples and directions on how to design infill development in the Clay and Roanoke Street area, or any other area that can accommodate density but is also sensitive to the surrounding residential context.

A 3. Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods
These neighborhoods are primarily apartment developments rented to students due to the proximity of the Virginia Tech campus. In these dense urban areas with a high concentration of students, there are fewer lifestyle conflicts than in other residential areas because the properties are larger rental developments where residents have a shared set of lifestyle expectations. The compact forms of development in these areas allow residents to rely less on automobiles as they have access to public transit, on- and off-road trail systems, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. With the exception of the Hethwood and Foxridge neighborhoods, these areas are located just beyond the urban/walkable neighborhoods, and all are located near the Town’s major employment and commercial areas. These neighborhoods also have easy access to the US 460 Bypass, the main transportation route to I-81 and surrounding localities.

While Hethwood has easy access to US 460 Bypass, the bypass separates Hethwood from the University and Downtown. Hethwood has a comprehensive trail system that connects to the campus bikeway system of Virginia Tech, providing convenient bicycle and pedestrian access to campus via an extension of the Huckleberry Trail. This landscaped, multi-use trail can also serve as a natural buffer between existing and future development in the area. The route system also connects residences to recreation facilities within the neighborhood. Recreational amenities include a pond, playing fields, tennis and basketball courts, two pools, and tot lots.

Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhood Issues for the Future
• Transit service in these areas should continue to meet residents’ needs.
• Enhancing sidewalk, trail and bicycle opportunities that link these areas of high concentrations of people with Downtown and the University core campus will be beneficial.
• New developments and redevelopments should:
  o Consider providing open areas and recreational opportunities within their developments.
  o Provide landscaped multi-use trail systems for commuting opportunities to the Commercial and Employment areas while providing landscape buffers.
  o Provide strong property management and maintenance.
• Through education of residents, owners and property managers, as well as the Town’s zoning enforcement property maintenance programs, seek to minimize lifestyle conflicts
that may occur at the interface of these higher density developments with adjacent residential neighbors.

- Coordination with Virginia Tech on the development of property located east of the US 460 Bypass between Prices Fork Road and Glade Road will affect these areas. Specifically, the area adjacent to University Mall is suitable for high-density, multi-family housing.

- There is an opportunity to encourage planned residential development, with limited neighborhood commercial areas, on the properties to the north and south of the existing Hethwood neighborhood, with accommodations for appropriate collector/access roads and alternative transportation routes.

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

- If additional student housing is not provided on-campus, the University should consider providing additional student residences only on property that is currently designated on the Future Land Use map for this high density residential use.

A 4. Suburban Residential Neighborhoods

Suburban residential neighborhoods are commonly made up of detached single-family homes on quarter acre or larger sized lots. Homes are typically owner-occupied and known for their good exterior maintenance and appearance. They are on tree-lined streets with houses nestled under a full and mature tree canopy. Homes are often rented to families who complement the already existing family-oriented neighborhood. Many of these neighborhoods are located near parks and recreational amenities. The low density neighborhoods are located on the edges of town, and many abut agricultural and open land. There is no transit service to single-family neighborhoods in these areas. These areas do not contain some of the urban/walkable amenities such as sidewalks and streetlights on all streets. The neighborhood street grid is not as well connected as older neighborhoods closer to Downtown. While commuting by biking and walking is possible, residents in these neighborhoods predominantly use their personal automobile to get to places.

Suburban neighborhoods are primarily located at the edges of town, where urban development transitions to rural areas. The North Main Street gateway entrance to Blacksburg is in this area. These neighborhoods developed as demand increased for individuals and families looking for less urban lifestyles and more land while remaining close to employment and commercial areas.
Suburban Residential Neighborhood Issues for the Future

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

- Neighborhoods in these areas should increase connectivity to other neighborhoods, Town parks and other recreational facilities.

- Other means of transportation should be supported in these predominantly vehicular-oriented traffic neighborhoods.
  - Construct new sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and off-road trails where appropriate.
  - Provide creative transit options.

- The Town has classified streets as arterial and collector roads to carry support traffic with local traffic connecting to local streets. Planned road connections and improvements will complete the Town’s interconnected grid system to efficiently move traffic. Any road improvements should honor the Town’s arterial and collector road system while reflecting the character of the surrounding area.

- While cul-de-sacs are typical suburban development features, they are not always desired in Blacksburg. New developments should connect to the existing street system and existing neighborhoods where possible and as allowed by topography. This should include the provision of stub-outs as part of the development review process.

- Additional small-scale commercial services will be needed in some of these areas as residential communities grow. These uses will be considered in large planned residential developments and should be pedestrian-oriented and should not generate additional traffic from outside the area.
A 5. Rural/Undeveloped Areas

These areas contribute to the rural feel of Town and create a natural boundary between the more urbanized areas of Town and the rural county. The feeling of openness and picturesque views of open fields and surrounding mountains contribute to the overall quality of life in the Town. Most of this area abuts the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest. The Town’s Gateway Park provides a greenway connection from the Town to the National Forest where recreational opportunities include hiking, biking, horseback riding, camping, fishing, and picnicking. The pattern of future development in this area is critical to the preservation of open space, protection of water resources and agricultural land uses within the Town. Due to the low density and rural character of these areas, alternative transportation is not available to residents.

Rural/Undeveloped Area Issues for the Future

- As demand for residential areas in Town increases, this area will face increasing development pressures.
  - Cluster housing development can be a concern to some residents due to the “urban” character of the developed land. However, this type of development can be a mechanism to address these development pressures while preserving large tracts of open space in perpetuity.

- Through the adoption of Urban Development Areas, the Town has identified areas for future residential and commercial growth. It will be important to balance potential development with the needs of the residents in this area.

- Public wastewater systems are not extended into this area by current policy, as the readily-available service supports and promotes a level of growth not desired for this area. The existing road network and road connectivity is limited, as expected in rural/undeveloped areas. Planned future roadways and connections, as identified on the Land Use Map series and further detailed in the Transportation Chapter, may impact the character of this area.

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

- Alternative transportation options, such as transit, may be limited in this area, but there may be non-traditional transit options or ridesharing options to reduce vehicular travel.

- Recreational amenities in these areas are typically larger open space, such as Heritage Park. These areas need to be protected and connected to other recreational and residential areas through the off-road trail system.

- Scenic views of the mountainside and the rolling, open terrain of this rural area are a desired view by Blacksburg residents and visitors alike and provide an attractive entrance to the community.
  - This rural viewshed should be protected if there is development.
Both public and private efforts to preserve agricultural and open lands through land trusts, open space easements, purchase of development rights, and fee simple acquisition is strongly encouraged in this area.

- A larger portion of the rural undeveloped property west of the US 460 Bypass adjacent to the University is currently owned by the Virginia Tech Foundation. The Town should coordinate with the University and the Foundation on the future use of this parcel, recognizing the Town’s Future Land Use Classifications of this property and the fact that it may not remain a rural/undeveloped area.

MAP D: PATHS TO THE FUTURE
Map D: Paths to the Future Map illustrates transportation and connectivity in the Town of Blacksburg. The map shows trails and connectivity elements that contribute to the Town’s sustainability goals and quality of life, including the feel of a walkable and bikeable community. The Town is committed to providing residents with a unified pedestrian route network that includes off-road and on-road trails, supplemented with bikeways and sidewalks.

The Paths to the Future Map depicts the link between transportation and land use. Land use decisions impact transportation networks, and, at the same time, transportation systems can influence nearby land use patterns. It is very important that these elements are coordinated to create an environment where people have a variety of options to access the goods, services and amenities they need. Connectivity that allows for many types of transportation within the Town is an important element of Blacksburg’s character.

This map is used during the development review process to ensure this character is maintained through compatibility with new development. More information about this map can be found in the Transportation Chapter.
LAND USE
OBJECTIVES & POLICIES
LU.1. Clearly articulate and communicate the Town’s Future Land Use goals, development standards and requirements to the development community and the general public.

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

LU.3. Review the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance, as well as other parts of the Town Code, to determine if these regulations adequately implement the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.


LU.5. Continue amendments to update the Town’s Zoning Ordinance based on Town Council priorities. Determine the Zoning Ordinance amendments necessary to:

- Implement the Residential Infill Design Guidelines
- Create a Commercial Infill Guideline manual
- Re-evaluate the implementing districts for the Mixed Use areas
- Facilitate aging in place and other uses needed for an aging population

LU.6. Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses. Utilize strategies such as landscaping or other buffering techniques along with modification of site design to minimize impacts and facilitate compatibility.

LU.7. Encourage developers to work with surrounding property owners and tenants to resolve community concerns prior to formalizing development plans.

LU.8. Continue the policy not to extend Town water and sewer to areas unless within Town boundaries and subject to the Town’s Land Use regulations.

LU.9. Work with Virginia Tech on the implementation of the Virginia Tech Campus Master Plan, specifically with the timing and impact of proposed improvements.

LU.10. Create a corridor planning initiative for key roadway corridors to address redevelopment opportunities, streetscaping and gateway entrances.

LU.11. Encourage residential infill in the Downtown area. Support the addition of a mix of uses and services that will attract and support a Downtown residential population.

LU.12. Develop and implement a comprehensive long-term parking strategy and education plan to reduce parking needs Townwide and address continued parking issues in residential areas.

LU.13. Continue Town support of child care and adult day care services for all residents.
LU.14. As the Town focuses on attracting high-tech industry, IT infrastructure should also be considered on each development project along with more traditional public utilities.

LU.15. Use cluster development as a means to enhance the natural environment and for the preservation of open space.

LU.16. Through the Land Use review and decision-making process, encourage grouping open spaces together and creating interconnectivity in sensitive areas such as ridgelines, steep slopes, wetlands, and flood-prone areas.

LU.17. Reduce the development of ridgelines and preserve open space.

LU.18. Protect the integrity and quality of forested areas as buffers, wildlife habitats, and pollutant removal systems. Ensure the retention of existing high quality trees and woodlands and the planting of new trees during land development.

LU.19. Regulate the amount of noise and/or light produced by land uses to minimize impacts on nearby properties.

LU.20. Protect the integrity and quality of water resources in the Town.