

Cluster Development and Prime Farmland Appendix

1. Comprehensive Plan References

Rural Residential RPA Policy 2: Limit residential development to protect the land resource for agricultural operations, rural economy uses, and open space uses; minimize traffic impacts; and reduce the demand for additional public facilities and services.

Strategy 2.1. Where residential development does occur in the RPA, it should be designed to preserve the rural character, work with the land form to preserve and protect natural features, and conserve land for agriculture, equine uses, rural economy uses, passive recreation, and open space.

Actions A. Evaluate and revise zoning regulations and design standards to improve the design of subdivisions and clustered residential development by incorporating natural features and buffering from roadways and scenic byways.

Chapter 2-98 The General Plan carries forward the growth management approach for the RPA established in the RGP, which seeks to limit residential growth, retain farmland, and sustain the rural economy. This approach has contributed to the County's economic success through attracting businesses, residents, and visitors while maintaining the character of the RPA.

Prime Agricultural Soils Strategy 3.2. Preserve and protect prime farmland and agricultural soils, recognizing their importance to the overall economic health of the rural economy.

2. Prime Farmland Soils – Definition

"Prime farmland is defined as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses. It has the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops in an economic manner if it is treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods". (NRCS, n.d.)" Source: VA DCR, Division Natural Heritage, Natural Heritage Technical Report

USDA Definition-

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/pr/soils/?cid=nrcs141p2_037285

3. Cluster Development example (Case Study attached)

The cluster development option allows a hypothetical 40 acre lot that might otherwise yield two parcels, instead be split into eight, a 400% increase in density. The tradeoff for the developers seeking this option was that 70% of the gross acreage of the original parcel had to be set aside for Open Space and Rural Economy Lots.

4. **Based on AR-1 Prime soils are Class 5 soils per the Virginia Conservation Vision 2015 report:**

This chart shows in AR-1 the high AG(prime soils) in acres. An assumption can be made that parcel sizes under 20 acres have already been subdivided and may not offer sufficient parcel size for economic viable farming operations.

Reader should focus on 40+ parcel size. Most of prime soils are located on already subdivided lots of under 20 acres.

Distribution of prime soils by parcel size in AR-1

Parcel Size	Parcels	Acres	High Ag Value Acres
< 3 acres	5,595	5,894	3,857
3-5	4,184	14,929	5,283
5-10	2,372	16,940	6,295
10-20	2,453	31,172	11,705
20-40	918	25,085	8,538
40+	621	64,769	21,804
Total	16,143	158,789	57,482

36% of all acres in AR1 are prime soils.

38% are on parcels of more than 40 acres,

27% are on parcels 10 acres or less.