

## **Land conservation policies excerpted from the *Loudoun County 2019 General Plan***

Chapter 2, TPA Strategy 2.1 Provide a network of protected open space that maintains natural, environmental, and heritage resources and reinforces the TPA's unique character.

Chapter 2, TPA Action 2.1.D: Establish programs and regulatory mechanisms to increase publicly accessible open space, consistent with County facilities plans, through easements, land dedications, and purchase.

Chapter 2, RPA Farmland Preservation and Protection, text: To support the rural economy and ensure that agriculture continues as a long-term use in the RPA, the County will continue to develop and support voluntary participation in programs that provide assistance and reduced tax burdens to landowners. Such programs and measures as the Land Use Assessment Program, the Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) program, and public/private conservation easements will be used to encourage landowners to use their land to expand the rural economy, rather than convert it to residential use. These programs also assist in the protection of the RPA's unique manmade and natural environment, which directly benefit the rural economy.

Chapter 2, RPA, Farmland Preservation and Protection, text: The County should commit to supporting efforts to increase the total acreage of land held in conservation easements as part of an overall land use strategy to further reduce density in the RPA, and ensure that farmland and open space are available in perpetuity for future generations. The County may consider cost-share initiatives to assist in establishing conservation easements and/or public/private partnerships with existing land trusts to leverage efforts and funding to support the recordation of additional conservation easements.

Chapter 2, RPA Action 1.1.B: Consider cost-share initiatives to assist in establishing conservation easements, in order to reduce the land that is available for residential development and to provide landowners with financial options to support working farms, rural economy uses, and/or stewardship of the land.

Chapter 2, RPA Action 3.3.C: Develop additional incentives to retain and encourage agricultural enterprises and support land preservation.

Chapter 2, RPA, Action 3.4.A: Regularly review, update, and enhance the Land Use Assessment Program and other voluntary agricultural programs, such as the Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) program, to strengthen the rural economy, preserve rural character, and maintain the viability of farming.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Action 1.1.G: Work with the Towns, interested groups and nonprofit foundations to identify open-space and agricultural-preservation strategies such as: donation of conservation easements, fee-simple purchase, clustering, and the possible creation of a conservation service district.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Leesburg Action 1.4.E: Preserve the rural character of the viewsheds along Route 15 as it approaches the Town of Leesburg from the north and south by encouraging additional conservation easements and instituting design guidelines.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Hillsboro Action 1.6.A: Encourage the establishment of a greenbelt around the Town using conservation easements, development design techniques and other means to help maintain the distinct edge and rural community identity of the Town of Hillsboro.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Middleburg, text: (Page 2-126) To preserve the character of the Town and the rural area that surrounds it, Middleburg promotes a defining edge between in-town development and open and agricultural lands outside of town. The defining edge will be established by the uses and development pattern of the Rural South Place Type and by identifying the lands adjacent to the Town as priority open space areas for conservation easements.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Middleburg Action 1.8.B: (Chapter 2-126) Be an active partner with the Middleburg community and interested preservation groups to identify open-space and agricultural preservation approaches such as conservation easements, land acquisition, and development standards to promote and implement open-space preservation around the Town of Middleburg that helps establish a greenbelt and protect the rural appearance of roadways leading into the Town.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Purcellville, text: (Page 2-128) The Town supports a greenbelt extending to incorporate properties that fall within approximately one-quarter mile of the Town limits, with a defining edge” within the RPA. The Town supports preservation and protection programs within these areas.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Purcellville Action 1.9.A: (Page 1-128) Establish a “defining edge” by implementing the uses and development pattern of the Rural North Place Type and by identifying the lands adjacent to the Town of Purcellville as priority open space areas for conservation easements.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Purcellville Action 1.9.F: (Page 2-130) Avoid high density development between the current boundaries of Purcellville and Round Hill and expand open space around Franklin Park to help maintain a greenbelt between communities.

Chapter 2, Towns and JLMAs, Purcellville Action 1.9.G: (Page 2-130) Enhance the gateways to the Town of Round Hill by developing features or retaining a clear distinction between the surrounding rural area and the edge of the town. Techniques may include measures to protect existing trees, hedgerows, viewsheds, and vistas; design guidelines for lot configuration to retain the rural lot pattern; new landscaping and entrance features and other techniques.

Chapter 3, Historic and Archaeological Resources, text: (Page 3-8) The cultural heritage of the County is reflected in its remaining rural landscapes, scenic road networks, historic structures, and archaeological sites. Identification, preservation, conservation, and sensitive reuse of these resources is critical for the retention of the County’s distinctive character. Where these resources have not yet been identified or studied, public and private resource surveys are increasingly

important to inventorying and preserving them. Most of these elements will remain in private ownership and can be preserved through private stewardship, protective buffers, donation of open space easements, County historic district zoning standards, and context-sensitive site design. A number of incentive-based programs can also be used, including state and federal tax credit programs.

Chapter 3, NEHR Action 1.1.B: Identify those properties that are not conducive to development due to sensitive environmental, cultural, and historical characteristics, and promote their preservation through various public and private programs (such as the Open Space Preservation Program, conservation easements, etc.).

Chapter 3, NEHR Action 1.1.F: Use a design process that conserves natural, environmental, and heritage resources and incorporates any such features into the site design; Use Value Assessment Program; AFDs; public-private partnerships; and other regulatory and incentive-based efforts (e.g., a potential TDR program) for the preservation, conservation, restoration, and management of the County's natural, environmental, and heritage resources. Explore and implement additional incentive-based approaches.

Chapter 3, NEHR Call-out box, age 3-15: Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Conservation Easements are tools available to the County and public and private entities to protect and preserve open space, farms, and natural, environmental, and heritage resources in perpetuity, allowing landowners to retain ownership of their property, while maximizing the economic value of the land.

Chapter 3, NEHR Strategy 1.2: Promote private, state, and federal conservation programs and their allocated resources to advance conservation programs within the County through public and private means such as grants, voluntary easements, and dedications.

Chapter 3, NEHR Action 1.2.A: Study and, if feasible, aid in the establishment of a public-private conservation partnership to facilitate communication, grants, easements, education, and partnership opportunities to conserve and protect natural, environmental, and heritage resources.

Chapter 3, NEHR Action 1.4.A: Prioritize protection of the following priority open space areas through conservation easements acquired by the County or others, participation in the Open Space Preservation Program, development design, and other means:

- i. Key natural, environmental, and heritage resource features not already protected from development by conservation easements or regulation,
- ii. Rural areas immediately adjacent to the Towns, JLMAs, and Rural Historic Villages that help form greenbelts and gateway buffers,
- iii. Areas adjacent to the Potomac, Catoctin, Bull Run, Goose Creek, and Broad Run floodplains to protect water quality,
- iv. Properties on the State or National Registers of Historic Places and within local historic districts,
- v. Corridors and sites that the County has identified for trails and parks and additions to existing parks provided they permit the construction of such facilities, and

- vi. Other areas of local natural, historic, or cultural significance including designated scenic rivers and roads.

Chapter 3, Surface Water Resources Action 2.5.B: Protect lands that are critical to the quality of key water supplies through easement, fee simple acquisition, regulatory measures, or other sufficient measures. Restore filtration and erosion control functions through the re-naturalization and native revegetation of these areas.

Chapter 3, Prime Agricultural Soils Action 3.2.B: Encourage the retention and conservation of prime agricultural soils within open space areas.

Chapter 3, HASR Strategy 5.1: Preserve cultural and scenic character through conservation and preservation of designated heritage areas, battlefields, cemeteries, scenic corridors, Scenic Rivers, the Potomac River, significant geological features, archaeological sites, historic structures and their settings. Convey the benefit of these resources to the public through public education in collaboration with private landowners and preservation organizations.

Chapter 3, HASR Action 5.1.K: Preserve and protect significant cultural and scenic resources from development impacts by promoting private or public acquisition and/or conservation easements.

Chapter 3, NHR Action 6.1.A: Use open space requirements, passive recreation, nature preserves, incentives, and regulations to protect areas of natural biodiversity and rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species, and plant communities in keeping with the federal Endangered Species Act and to foster the implementation of the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan.

Chapter 3, NHR Action 6.2.B: Identify essential wildlife corridors and encourage protection of these areas through conservation easements acquired by the County or others, participation in the Open Space Preservation Program, development design, and other means.

Chapter 6, Introduction, text: Loudoun County maintains a strong commitment to preserving open space and agricultural land and protecting natural, environmental, and heritage resources. Conservation easements in 2018 protect over 72,000 acres of land throughout the County. The County holds over 26,000 acres of these easements. Over the years, County policies have emphasized preserving open space in its natural setting, undisturbed, to protect the environmental value of the space. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the community desire and economic value to expanding public access to and enjoyment of open space through trails and recreational uses. A key objective is to create a connected network of parks, trails, and natural areas, which can offer expanded environmental, design, and recreational benefits.

Chapter 6, Fiscal Action 1.4.C (Page 6-16) Work with the United States Department of the Interior, the Virginia Tech Conservation Management Institute, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, NOVA Parks, and other local, regional, and state organizations and the incorporated Towns to define and recommend areas for open space preservation and development of a trail network that links the County's natural, historic, and recreational resources.

Chapter 6, Open Space Action 3.1.H: (Page 6-18) Seek through public purchase, proffer, donation, or third-party easement, the preservation of natural areas and the development of linear parks, recreation space, and trails.

Chapter 6, Open Space Action 3.1.K: (Page 6-19) Encourage protection of the following priority open space areas through conservation easements acquired by the County or others, participation in the Open Space Preservation Program, development design, and other means:

- i. Key natural, environmental, and heritage resource features not already protected from development by conservation easements or regulation;
- ii. Rural areas immediately adjacent to the Towns, JLMAs, and Rural Villages that help form greenbelts and gateway buffers;
- iii. Areas adjacent to the Potomac River, Catoctin Creek, Bull Run, Goose Creek, and Broad Run floodplains, to protect water quality;
- iv. Properties on or eligible to be listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places and within local historic districts;
- v. Corridors and sites identified for trails and parks and additions to existing parks; and
- vi. Other areas of local natural, historic, or cultural significance including but not limited to designated scenic rivers and roads, ridgelines, and battlefields.
- vii. Amend the zoning ordinance and development regulations as needed to permit a percentage of the open space required on an individual site to be met through off-site permanent open space that creates a more usable, desirable, or environmentally significant open space (see 3.1.J, above) located in the same planning subarea identified in the latest Capital Needs Assessment.