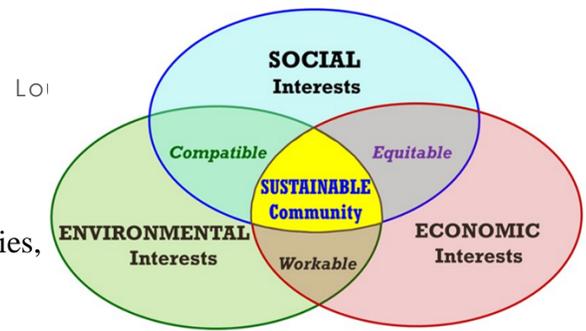


RURAL POLICY AREA



Policies, Strategies, and Actions

Unless otherwise specified, the following Policies, Strategies, RPA.

Land Use & Development

RPA Policy 1: Foster land use and development patterns that incorporate natural, cultural, heritage, and agricultural resources to preserve character-defining features of the rural landscape while providing opportunities for rural living and businesses.

Strategy

- 1.1. Support uses that protect, preserve, and enhance natural areas and open space, retain farmland and the vitality of the rural economy, and foster a high quality of rural life for residents.

Actions

- A. Provide incentives for the consolidation of underutilized or undeveloped small lots into larger parcels for agricultural and rural economy uses.
- 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.

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.
- B. Encourage the provision of publicly accessible and connected open space.
- C. Educate property owners about alternatives to residential subdivision by providing information on conservation easements, the Land Use Assessment Program, and other land conservation programs to keep rural properties intact and productive.

Rural Economy

RPA Policy 3: Agricultural and rural business uses that are compatible with the predominant land use pattern will be developed in a manner that is consistent with the County's growth management, economic, and environmental goals.

Strategy

- 3.1. Ensure compatibility of rural economy uses through the evaluation of the scale, use, intensity, and design (site and building) of development proposals in comparison with the dominant rural character and adjacent uses.

Actions

- A. Evaluate and revise zoning regulations and development standards for rural economy uses. Such regulations and standards will address traffic capacity, safe and adequate road access, number of employees, site design standards (e.g., land disturbance, buffering, use intensity, siting, and architectural features), and public health, safety, and welfare.
- B. Consider the establishment and/or expansion of existing commercial, industrial, and institutional uses by Special Exception if the use and/or expansion: 1) is compatible in scale, use, and intensity with the surrounding rural environment, 2) uses building forms, massing, and architectural styles that reflect the surrounding rural character 3) preserves ridgetops, natural resources, farmland, and open space, and 4) meets applicable zoning regulations and development standards.
- C. Non-agriculturally related commercial uses may be permitted by Special Exception if the use is compatible in scale and intensity with the agricultural and rural character of the area; poses no threat to public health, safety, and welfare; and helps to preserve farmland, open space, and/or continued agricultural operations.

Strategy

- 3.2. Promote the retention and development of rural business uses that sustain the rural economy and support the County's agricultural, equine, and tourism industries.

Actions

- A. Adopt zoning regulations and design standards that include new types of rural business and agricultural uses, permit flexibility for the sale of farm products, and promote rural tourism, hospitality uses, and similar kinds of rural business uses that are compatible with the character of the RPA.
- B. Evaluate and revise zoning regulations and design standards to permit a variety of accessory residential unit types, such as accessory apartments for seasonal farm laborers and year-round tenant housing, that support the rural economy.
- C. Create zoning regulations and design standards for existing and new types of rural recreational uses to evaluate their appropriateness and ensure their compatibility with the character of the RPA.
- D. Develop County parks with trail networks, cross-country courses, and equestrian riding rings or other equestrian-related features.

- E. Develop a publicly accessible multi-use trail network (i.e., pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian) to link private and public lands in the RPA in partnership with nonprofit entities, landowners, and developers of rural properties.
- F. Develop a strategy to facilitate the development of high-speed wired and wireless telecommunication networks, including broadband technology, to support rural businesses and residents in the RPA.

Strategy

- 3.3. Promote and expand agricultural enterprises and the rural economy, and attract rural entrepreneurs to locate in Loudoun.

Actions

- A. Promote rural business sectors and community events to support rural tourism, showcase the rural economy, and strengthen the economic vitality of rural businesses, villages, and towns.
- B. Develop a coordinated service approach to assist rural landowners in the review and development of proposals to maintain agricultural operations, preserve the agricultural potential of farmland, institute farm and rural business plans, and assist in filing applications, which support agriculture, agricultural activities, and the rural economy.
- C. Develop additional incentives to retain and encourage agricultural enterprises and support land preservation.
- D. Retain the Rural Economic Development Council (REDC) as an advocacy and advisory committee on initiatives, programs, and policies that affect the economic growth and development of rural Loudoun County.
- E. Support public education and job training in agriculture-based careers to ensure a stable agricultural work force and promote the region’s agricultural and tourist based economy.
- F. Facilitate the provision of appropriate on-site housing options for farm interns and apprentices in support of agricultural workforce development.
- G. Develop an update process to ensure the Loudoun County Economic Business Development Strategy is updated on a regular basis.

Strategy

- 3.4. Maintain the Land Use Assessment Program to provide property tax relief to retain and support agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and open space as critical components of the RPA.

Actions

- 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.

Strategy

- 3.5. Promote and encourage the preservation, rehabilitation, and repurposing of farm buildings and structures to maintain infrastructure for future agricultural enterprises and rural economy uses. Where possible, rural business uses should locate in existing agricultural and historic structures.

Action

- A. Adopt zoning regulations and design standards that facilitate the use of existing agricultural and historic structures.

Strategy

- 3.6. Support and increase farming activities and maintain a resilient food network for local consumption.

Actions

- A. Promote community supported agriculture (CSA); the direct sale of farm products between farmers and local consumers including farmers markets, restaurants and retailers; and the establishment of a permanent year-round indoor farmers market in the eastern portion of the County.
- B. Facilitate effective processing, distribution, and marketing of locally grown products.
- C. Promote best practices in farming, including adapting to new crops, livestock, and technology, to address market demands and diversify agricultural production.

Strategy

- 3.7. Protect farming and farmers from nuisance complaints in accordance with the provisions of the Right to Farm Act, Code of Virginia §3.2-301.

Actions

- A. Maintain zoning regulations and design standards that protect the right to farm.
- B. Support and provide educational programs about farming practices and activities to reduce potential conflicts associated with the proximity of agriculture to nonagricultural uses.

Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines are to build upon our current development patterns in a manner that allows innovative design and new responses to the market. The Design Guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive and are not intended to be treated as a checklist, but are instead meant to provide a framework for how the desired character of the RPA can be achieved, with the acknowledgement that other methods could achieve the intended results. The Design Guidelines do not supersede or otherwise limit the application of adopted zoning regulations, ordinances, building codes, or any other design standards or regulations administered by Loudoun County.

When using the guidelines make sure to analyze the impact a potential development may have on the landscape, considering not only appearance, but practical considerations such as proximity to roads, utilities, and community amenities to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and limit travel distances. Development should contribute to creating unique places within the Rural Policy

Area by working with existing topography and site features, responding to the local context, preserving farmland and reinforcing the landscape's character, rather than simply attempting to place suburban design onto the rural landscape. Sustainability requires maximum consideration for using the landscape for benefits such as solar heat gain or shelter from wind when siting buildings. It is imperative that buildings and structures are treated as objects in the rural landscape and given due attention to their location and form to ensure they blend with the topography, protect viewsheds, and contribute to the traditional pattern of development in the RPA. The County encourages the use of a design process when planning development in the RPA that conserves natural, environmental, and heritage resources and incorporates any such features into the site design (See Appendix A for Design Guidelines for RPA).

Place Types

As described in the beginning of this chapter, the following Place Types have been designated for specific locations as displayed on the accompanying map. The Place Types will work in concert with the Design Guidelines and Policies, Strategies, and Actions of the RPA and Rural Historic Villages to fulfill the land use patterns and community characteristics intended for the area.

Rural Historic Villages

Vision

Rural Historic Villages continue to be vibrant communities that reflect historic settlement patterns that preserve and enhance Loudoun’s social and cultural heritage while contributing to the overall character of the Rural Policy Area.

Introduction

The County recognizes the Rural Historic Villages as important features of the RPA that possess scenic and historic resources, act as gathering places for citizens, provide services to the surrounding community, and support rural tourism. The existing Rural Historic Villages were established during the 18th and 19th centuries, in areas located around historic mills, railroad depots, or major crossroads that later developed as commercial and mercantile business centers that served the surrounding farming communities.

The Rural Historic Villages have gradually developed over a number of years and feature a variety of building setbacks, types, and styles as well as streetscapes that reflect the historic growth and character of the individual villages. The Rural Historic Villages are dominated by residential dwellings with some commercial structures that have upper floor apartments and offices. Small scale, non-residential uses, such as country stores, restaurants, antique shops, and other retail establishments that meet local needs and support tourism, are located within some of the Rural Historic Villages. In addition, numerous civic uses, such as churches, post offices, community centers, fire and rescue stations, and schools, are also located within the Rural Historic Villages.

Rural Historic Villages
Aldie
Bluemont
Bowmantown
Lincoln
Loudoun Heights
Lucketts
Neersville
Paeonian Springs
Philomont
St. Louis
Taylorstown
Waterford

The County’s land development approach for the Rural Historic Villages is to limit residential, business, and commercial activities to uses that are compatible with the historic development patterns, community character, and visual identity of the individual villages. The *Loudoun County 2019 Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) strives to maintain the traditional development pattern and distinguishing features of the individual villages while accommodating opportunities for compact, small-scale growth where appropriate in a manner that enhances existing residential and commercial areas. By encouraging limited compact, residential and non-residential development within the Villages, these policies complement the County’s efforts to preserve open space and maintain the character of the rural area. Although limited development is anticipated in the Villages, that development should not adversely affect the quality of life of residents nor pose a threat to public health or safety. Only three of the existing Rural Historic Villages – Aldie, St.

Louis and Waterford – are currently served by public community wastewater systems. Aldie is the only village that is served by a private water company. The remainder of the properties located within the Rural Historic Villages are currently served by individual water wells, and septic sewage systems (i.e., conventional drainfields, alternative systems, etc.), which limit the potential scale and intensity of development. Additionally, a number of the Rural Historic Villages are bisected by major roadways that experience high volumes of commuter traffic and impact the quality of life of residents. With careful planning and growth management, the Rural Historic Villages will maintain their scenic and historic character.

Policies, Strategies, and Actions

Unless otherwise specified, the following Policies, Strategies, and Actions apply only within the Rural Historic Villages.

RHV Policy I: Development and uses in Rural Historic Villages must be compatible with the historic development pattern, community character, visual identity, intensity, and scale of the individual villages.

Strategy

- 1.1. Encourage the retention and development of a variety of compatible residential, commercial, and community uses that enhance the attractiveness and vitality of the Rural Historic Villages.

Actions

- A. Develop criteria to evaluate existing Rural Historic Villages and other historic crossroads communities, such as Airmont, Bloomfield, Howardsville, Morrisonville, Unison, and Willisville, to determine if their current designation is warranted, define and/or redefine community boundaries as necessary, and amend the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance as appropriate.
- B. Work with Rural Historic Villages to develop community plans that will support their community goals and address issues related to land use and zoning; economic development; natural, environmental, and historic resources; community facilities and services; water and wastewater; and transportation to maintain the character of the villages.
- C. Review and revise zoning regulations, design standards, and guidelines to achieve compatible building and street design to ensure that quality development occurs within the Rural Historic Villages.
- D. Coordinate with Rural Historic Village communities to determine appropriate methods to differentiate entrances into the villages from surrounding areas, including through street design, landscaping, and building placement.
- E. Incorporate traffic calming measures that are compatible with the village character where appropriate to reduce vehicle speeds and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment.

- F. Evaluate and revise existing Rural Commercial (RC) zoning district regulations to implement Plan policies and design standards for development in the Rural Historic Villages that ensure compatibility with the settlement patterns and neighborhood scale.

Strategy

- 1.2. Preserve the character of the villages and their historic structures and sites through the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

Actions

- A. Promote and support building maintenance and improvements to preserve the existing building stock and the character of the villages.
- B. Evaluate the establishment of additional County Historic Districts in the Rural Historic Villages.

Strategy

- 1.3. Limited increases in residential densities within the Rural Historic Villages may be considered through legislative approval processes when the design of the project reinforces the character, development pattern, and identity of the village. Conventional, suburban forms of development are not appropriate in or contiguous to Rural Historic Villages.

Action

- A. Adopt zoning regulations and design standards to encourage housing on smaller lots, allow accessory apartments attached to single-family residential units, and allow residential units above commercial/retail uses within the Rural Historic Villages to provide housing options.

Strategy

- 1.4. Business and commercial uses in the Rural Historic Villages should be 1) small scale, 2) compatible with existing development patterns, 3) generate limited vehicular traffic, and 4) meet local community needs or support rural tourism.

Action

- A. Adopt zoning regulations, design standards and performance criteria that are specific to the types of small-scale, community-related commercial uses that the County encourages within the Rural Historic Villages.

Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines are to build upon our current high quality development in a manner that allows innovative design and new responses to the market. The Design Guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive and are not intended to be treated as a checklist, but are instead meant to provide a framework for how the desired character of the Rural Historic Villages can be achieved, with the acknowledgement that other methods could achieve the intended results. The Design Guidelines do not supersede or otherwise limit the application of adopted zoning regulations, ordinances, building codes, or any other design standards or regulations administered by Loudoun County.

When using the guidelines make sure to analyze the impact potential development may have on the Rural Village and surrounding landscape, considering not only appearance, but practical considerations such as road and street access, siting of buildings and parking, safe and adequate water and wastewater, community amenities, jobs, and housing to assess compatibility. Development should contribute to the character of the Rural Historic Villages to integrate and blend with existing development patterns and building styles.

Many properties within the Rural Historic Villages of Aldie, Bluemont, Lincoln, Taylorstown and Waterford are located within County Historic and Cultural Conservation Districts which are zoning overlays that regulate the appearance of properties through architectural design guidelines. Any alterations, additions, demolition or relocation of an existing structure, or any new construction within the conservation districts requires approval from the County's Historic District Review Committee. The goal of the architectural review processes is to ensure the historic, architectural, and landscape characteristics that are unique to the villages are protected, preserved, and enhanced for future generations. While the remainder of the Rural Historic Villages do not have historic district zoning overlays, the County's policies also support compatible development and the retention of the unique character of the individual villages. Public water and wastewater facilities are encouraged to provide services to the villages (See Appendix A for Design Guidelines for Rural Historic Villages).

CHAPTER 3 -- 2019 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HERITAGE RESOURCES¹

- NEHR² Action 1.1.C: “Adopt zoning regulations and development standards that implement a process identifying natural, environmental, and heritage resources worthy of preservation and developing around those resources as part of all land development.”
- NEHR Action 1.1.I: “Require development proposals that impact one or more natural, environmental, and heritage resources to offset impacts by enhancing and/or recapturing natural, environmental, and heritage resources elsewhere onsite.”
- NEHR Action 1.1.J: “Require development proposals to create links to adjacent natural, environmental, and heritage resources to create an integrated network and prevent habitat fragmentation.”
- RSCR³ Action 2.1.A: “Amend zoning regulations and development standards, including but not limited to the Floodplain Overlay District (FOD) and Scenic Creek Valley Buffer sections, to address the objectives of the RSCR policies.”
- RSCR Action 2.1.B: “Develop and implement a watershed management plan for each watershed, establishing development guidelines and performance standards to protect water quality.”
- RSCR Action 2.1.C: “Establish appropriate regulations for Catoctin Mountain, Short Hill Mountain, and the Blue Ridge Mountains to limit diversions of water from the Catoctin and Goose Creek headwaters and prevent stream pollution.”
- RSCR Action 2.1.E: “Work with the incorporated towns, Loudoun Water, and other organizations and agencies to establish overall water quality goals and specific standards for individual streams and river and stream corridors, consistent with County RSCR objectives and policies.”
- RSCR Action 2.2.A: “Amend zoning regulations and development standards to establish a minimum 100-foot stream buffer to protect rivers and streams when floodplains and adjacent steep slopes do not extend beyond either bank by 100 feet.”
- RSCR Action 2.2.B: “Amend zoning regulations and development standards to establish a 50-foot management buffer as part of the RSCR surrounding floodplains and adjacent steep slopes.”

¹ Compiled by Save Rural Loudoun

² Natural, Environmental and Heritage Resources.

³ River and Stream Corridor Resources

- RSCR Action 2.3.A “Develop appropriate standards and regulations to protect natural streams from the harmful effects of increased stormwater volume, velocity, and pollutant loads resulting from development.”
- RSCR Action 2.5.A “Protect public water supply reservoirs, Scenic Rivers, the Potomac River, and the Bull Run by establishing a 300-foot no-build buffer or the other elements of the RSCR buffer, whichever is greater.”
- RSCR Action 2.5.C “Develop and implement a watershed overlay district for all public water supply reservoir watersheds, establishing more stringent development guidelines and performance standards to protect water quality.”
- RSCR Action 2.6.D “Limit the installation of additional wells and limit the number of additional households and irrigation systems that are dependent on wells through water conservation efforts and through the use of communal and/or central water systems where feasible and as approved by Loudoun Water.”
- RSCR Action 2.6.G “Develop standards for uses that consume and/or require the usage of large quantities of water in those areas that could affect neighboring wells and aquifers.”
- SGR⁴ 3.1.B “Limit density and intensity of development within areas underlain by limestone, especially on sites proximate to karst features.”
- SGR 3.1.C “Require communal water and wastewater systems built to Loudoun Water standards for new development in areas underlain by limestone.”
- SGR 3.1.E “Identify pollution sources and establish appropriate standards for reducing pollution in areas underlain by limestone.”
- SGR 3.2.B “Encourage the retention and conservation of prime agricultural soils within open space areas.”
- SGR 3.3.A “Manage and regulate development in mountainside areas using performance standards and regulations to minimize negative environmental impacts; minimize land disturbance; protect the ridgelines; maintain woodlands, plant, and wildlife habitats; and preserve other natural features.”
- SGR 3.3.B “Prohibit land disturbance on naturally occurring very steep slopes (greater than 25 percent grade and/or soil slope class of E), with limited exceptions such as access easements to existing lots where no other access is possible.”

⁴ Soils and Geologic Resources

- SGR 3.3.C “Apply performance standards to protect moderately steep slopes (15 to 25 percent grade and or soil slope class of D) to include BMPs and locational clearances for clearing and grading.”
- SGR 3.3.E “Protect ridgelines through updates to the Mountainside Development Overlay District, the development of a Ridgeline Protection Overlay District, and the prioritization of protecting such areas through open space easement acquisition.”
- SGR 3.3.F “Require special exception approval for the subdivision of properties into three or more lots in Sensitive and Highly Sensitive Mountainside Areas.”
- SGR 3.3.H “Review and amend zoning regulations and development standards to ensure consistency with the mountainside area policies.”
- SGR 3.3.I “Establish performance standards for unavoidable development on questionable soils as defined by the International Building Code.”
- FTV⁵ 4.1.C “Require the removal of invasive plant species during the development process.”
- HASR⁶ 5.1.C “Require an archaeological and historic resources survey for all development applications.”
- HASR 5.1.N “Amend zoning regulations and development standards to ensure the viability of adaptive reuse, particularly in the County’s villages where the ability to reuse historic structures is vital to the historic character and vitality of these communities.”
- NHR⁷ 6.1A “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 ...”
- NHR 6.1B “Require development applications to identify Loudoun County’s natural heritage Resources.”
- NHR 6.2.A “Require development proposals to create links to adjacent open space and natural resources to help prevent habitat fragmentation and foster biodiversity.”
- CE⁸ 7.3.A “Update lighting standards to achieve the following: ...”

⁵ Forests, Trees, and Vegetation

⁶ Historic, Archeologic, and Scenic Resources

⁷ Natural Heritage Resources

⁸ Complementary Elements