

Somerset Farm



Comprehensive Plan Amendment — *Proposed Growth Area Expansion*

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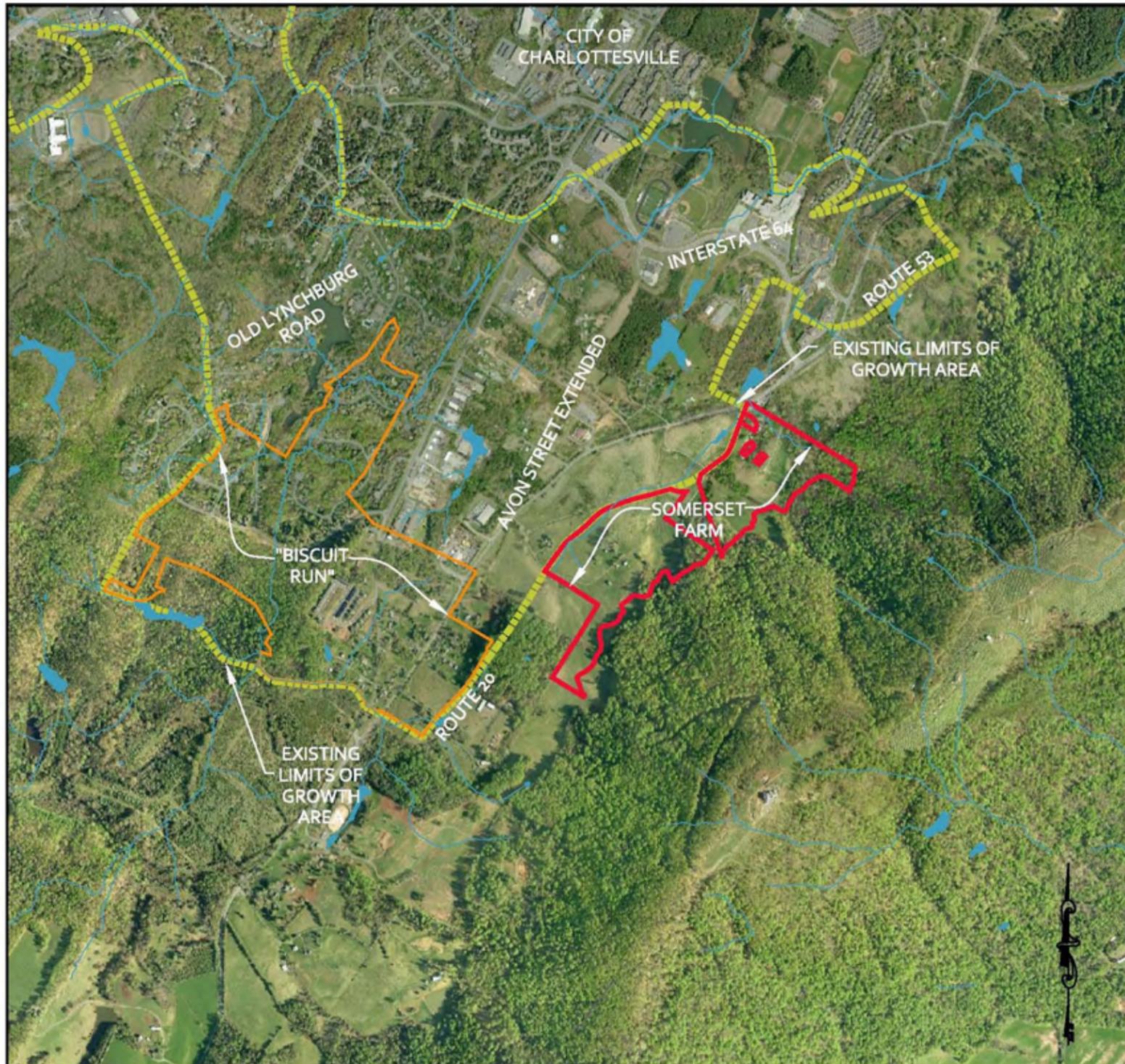
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Introduction



The rich historic heritage and natural beauty of Albemarle County are widely recognized as not only cultural assets but true national treasures. Over the decades, as the population has grown, the leaders of Albemarle County have astutely recognized their role as stewards of this magnificent region and committed themselves to maintaining its notable historic, pastoral character. As mandated by State law, the Comprehensive Plan for Albemarle County lays out the overall vision for future growth and development. Within the Comprehensive Plan, Albemarle County officials have judiciously incorporated boundaries for development that accommodate projected growth and clearly designate the limits of urban development, thereby preserving the treasured rural areas. As a result of this dedicated effort, Albemarle County has averted the tendency toward rambling suburban sprawl that so many similar regions of the country have succumbed to in the last century, and served as a model for prudent growth management.

The Comprehensive Plan divides the areas designated for growth and development into 7 Neighborhoods. Neighborhood 4, located south of Charlottesville generally between Route 20 and Old Lynchburg Road includes significant tracts of vacant, undeveloped land which has been planned to accommodate much of the County's projected future growth. In 2007, the 848 acre Biscuit Run Neighborhood Model District was approved within Neighborhoods 4 and 5. Biscuit Run included the potential for over 3000 housing units of variable types, as well as commercial centers to provide retail and office space. As the economy struggled in the following years, Biscuit Run was ultimately acquired by the State of Virginia as a permanent state park.

A stone's throw from Biscuit Run, Somerset farm is located on the east side of Route 20, just outside the designated growth area of Neighborhood 4. Sixteen contiguous parcels make up approximately 620 acres. This application for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposes to expand the growth area within Neighborhood 4 to include Somerset Farm, with a designation of "Neighborhood Density." Though expansion of the growth areas is typically considered undesirable, this proposed growth area expansion is a unique opportunity for the County to effectively transfer the planned development area from the Biscuit Run tract to a nearby location, so that anticipated future growth can be accommodated responsibly.

Existing Conditions

Bordered to the west by Route 20, Somerset Farm is conveniently located just minutes from the City of Charlottesville, the University of Virginia and Interstate 64. The western portion of the site along Route 20 is currently occupied by rolling pastures and open farmland. The eastern portion of the property includes steep slopes at the base of Carter Mountain, which are wooded. Parcels with frontage along Route 20 are located within the Entrance Corridor Overlay District.

Mountainous terrain that comprises the eastern slopes of the site is located within the Mountain Overlay District, which is approximately all land above 700' topographic contour. This designation restricts development within those parcels so that they remain undisturbed. Approximately 317 acres exists at Somerset Farm outside the Mountain Overlay District.

The parcels are located within the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District, as designated on the National Register of Historic Places.

Existing services and infrastructure are readily available to serve future development at Somerset Farm. Open space amenities and transportation routes surround the site with excellent accessibility and recreational opportunities. The parcels within the proposed growth area expansion are all currently zoned R-1.



The following parcels comprise the proposed development area expansion:

<u>TMP</u>	<u>AREA PROPOSED FOR GROWTH AREA</u>
09100-00-00-00700	136.9 AC.
09100-00-00-00600	1.8 AC.
09100-00-00-00400	4.0 AC.
09100-00-00-00500	1.0 AC.
09100-00-00-03500	0.7 AC.
09100-00-00-03400	0.9 AC.
09100-00-00-01800	145.1 AC.
09100-00-00-019A0	26.9 AC.
Total Area:	317.3 AC.

As a further measure to buffer the proposed development area from Rural Area to the east, the applicant has identified over 300 acres adjacent to the proposed Growth Area boundary which would be placed in a conservation easement, to ensure it would forever remain undisturbed by development. The owner would place a public access easement over this area so that the open space opportunities would be available to all residents and visitors of Albemarle County. The following table summarizes the parcels contained within the future preservation easement:

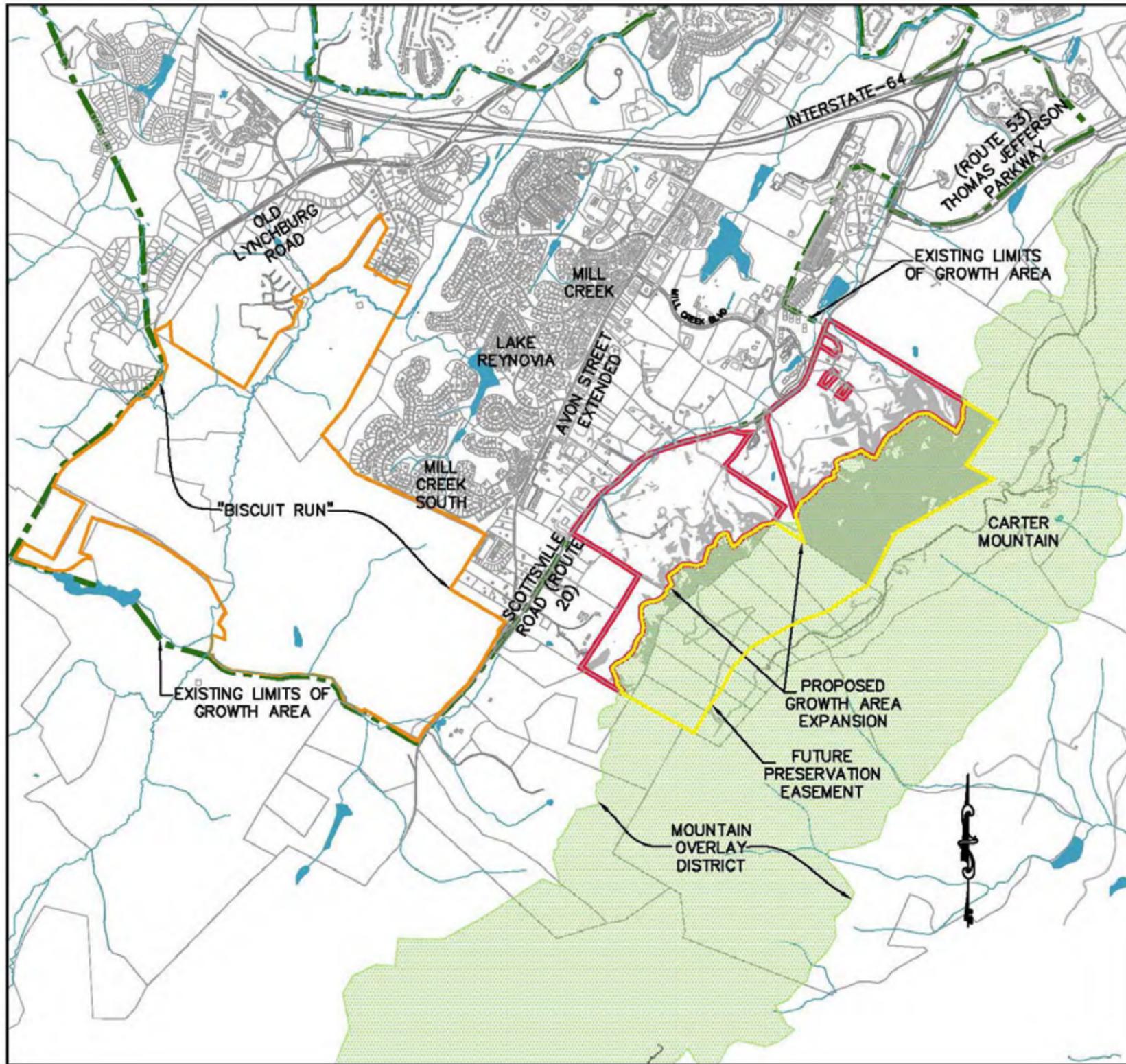
<u>TMP</u>	<u>AREA PROPOSED FOR PRESERVATION EASEMENT</u>
09100-00-00-00700	120.1 AC.
09100-00-00-01800	8.14 AC.
09100-00-00-019A0	16.24 AC.
09100-00-00-018A0	29.67 AC.
09100-00-00-018B0	23.13 AC.
09100-00-00-018C0	19.68 AC.
09100-00-00-018D0	17.80 AC.
09100-00-00-019A1	19.09 AC.
09100-00-00-019A2	16.24 AC.
09100-00-00-019A3	18.14 AC.
09100-00-00-019A4	14.46 AC.
Total Area:	302.69 AC.

Note that some of the areas listed above are portions of their respective parcels, as depicted on the following exhibit.



The wooded slopes within the Mountain Overlay District provide a scenic backdrop to the lowland areas of Somerset Farm



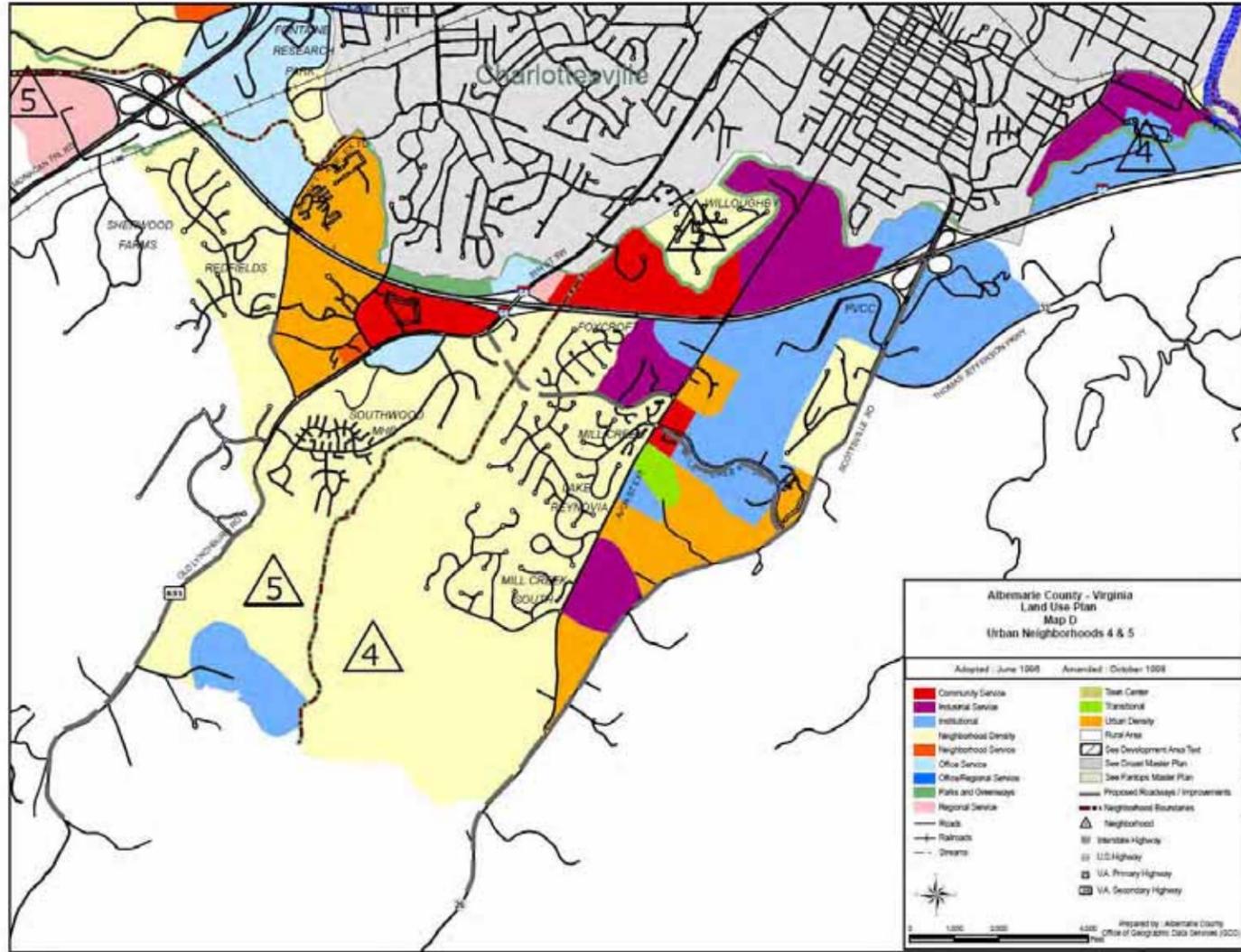


Existing views of the site from Route 20

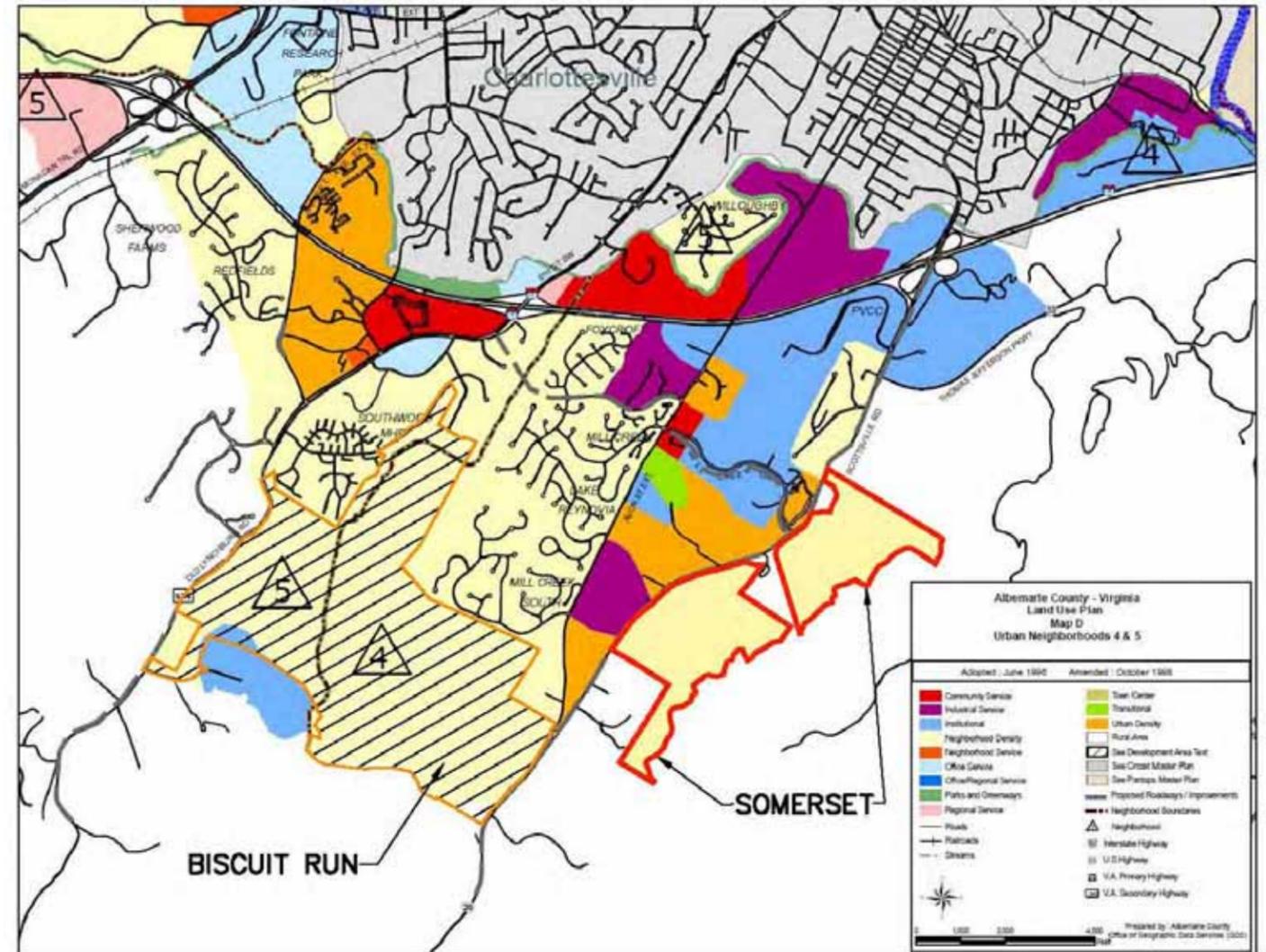


Proposed Land Use Plan

The proposed Somerset development area, located on the east side of Route 20 in Neighborhood 4 is a logical replacement of the development area that was planned within Biscuit Run. The area is proposed to be designated as Neighborhood Density, allowing a density of up to 6 dwelling units per acre, and commercial services to support the Neighborhood Development.

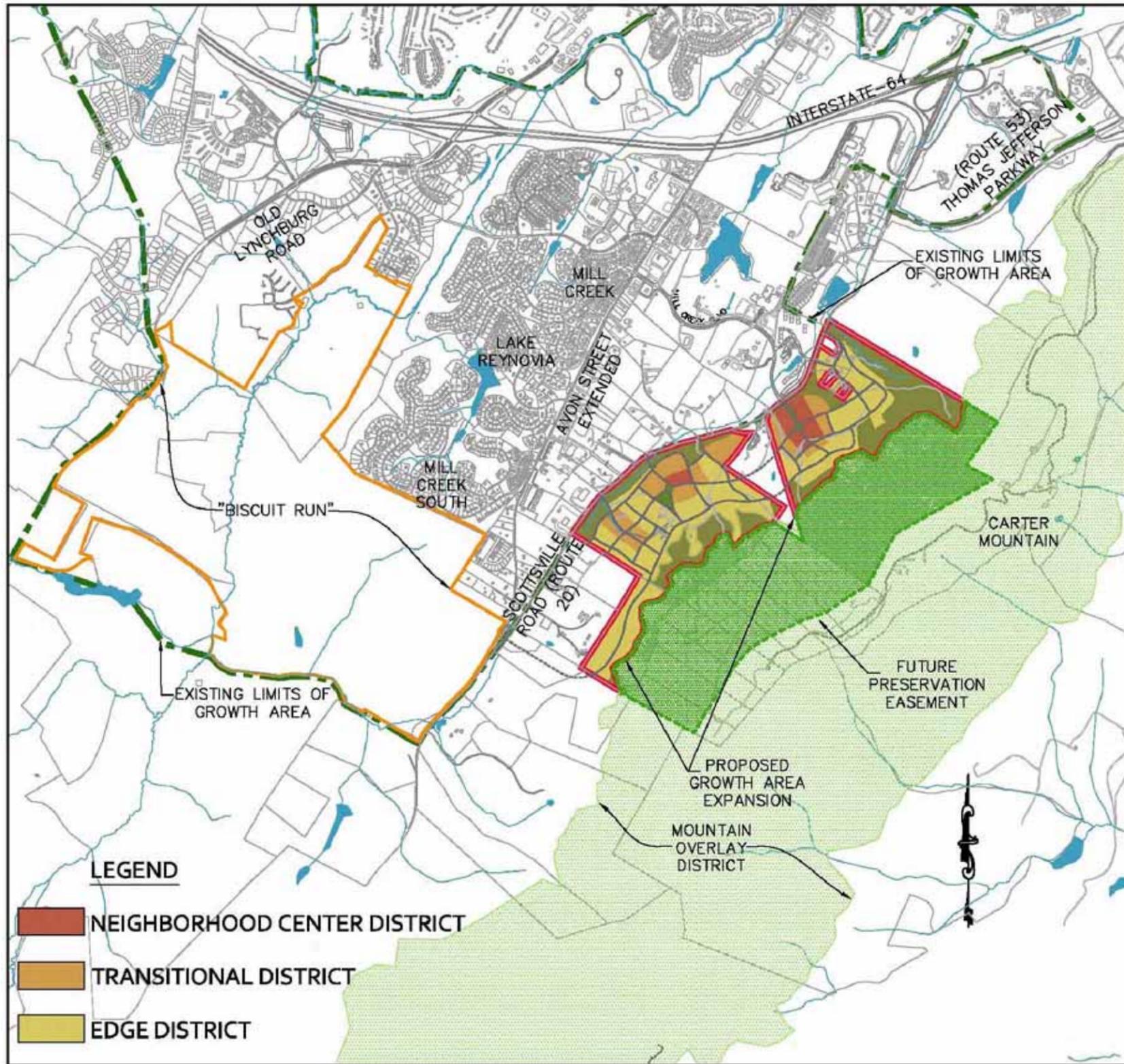


Existing Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan for Neighborhood 4



Proposed Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan

Concept Plan



A Conceptual Block Plan is included in this proposal to illustrate the contemplated development scenario which embodies the principles of the Neighborhood Model. Two neighborhood centers are envisioned where retail and office space would provide up to 350,000 sq. ft. of non-residential commercial uses. A variety of neighborhood commercial uses and regional services would be permitted, with allowances for a destination retail use up to 120,000 sq. ft. in size.

Varying densities are incorporated into the plan to provide a healthy mix of housing types. In the Conceptual Block plan provided on this page, colors of blocks correlate to relative levels of density. The Neighborhood Center District would consist of the densest areas of development, gradually transitioning to lower density in the transitional district and the lowest densities in the edge district. The proposed Neighborhood Service Land Use designation permits up to 6 dwelling units per acre, which would allow up to 1902 overall dwelling units within the 317 acres proposed for Growth Area expansion.

Interconnected streets would link the surrounding blocks of varying housing types to these neighborhood centers. Street designs would prioritize pedestrian mobility, providing ample sidewalks, framed by street trees and a built environment of comfortable human scale. Steep slopes on the eastern portion of the site would be designated as passive open space.



Dedication of these slopes to public open space use would provide multiple benefits: the preservation of forested slopes would serve as a buffer to protect the Rural Areas; the great amount of mountainous open space would provide recreational opportunities along pedestrian trails; and preserving this land would safeguard the site's beautiful wooded backdrop.

Located within the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District, as designated by the National Register of Historic Places, future development of Somerset will be carefully planned to respectfully complement its historic significance. Architectural standards would be created specifying massing and design requirements to ensure that aesthetic standards are met.

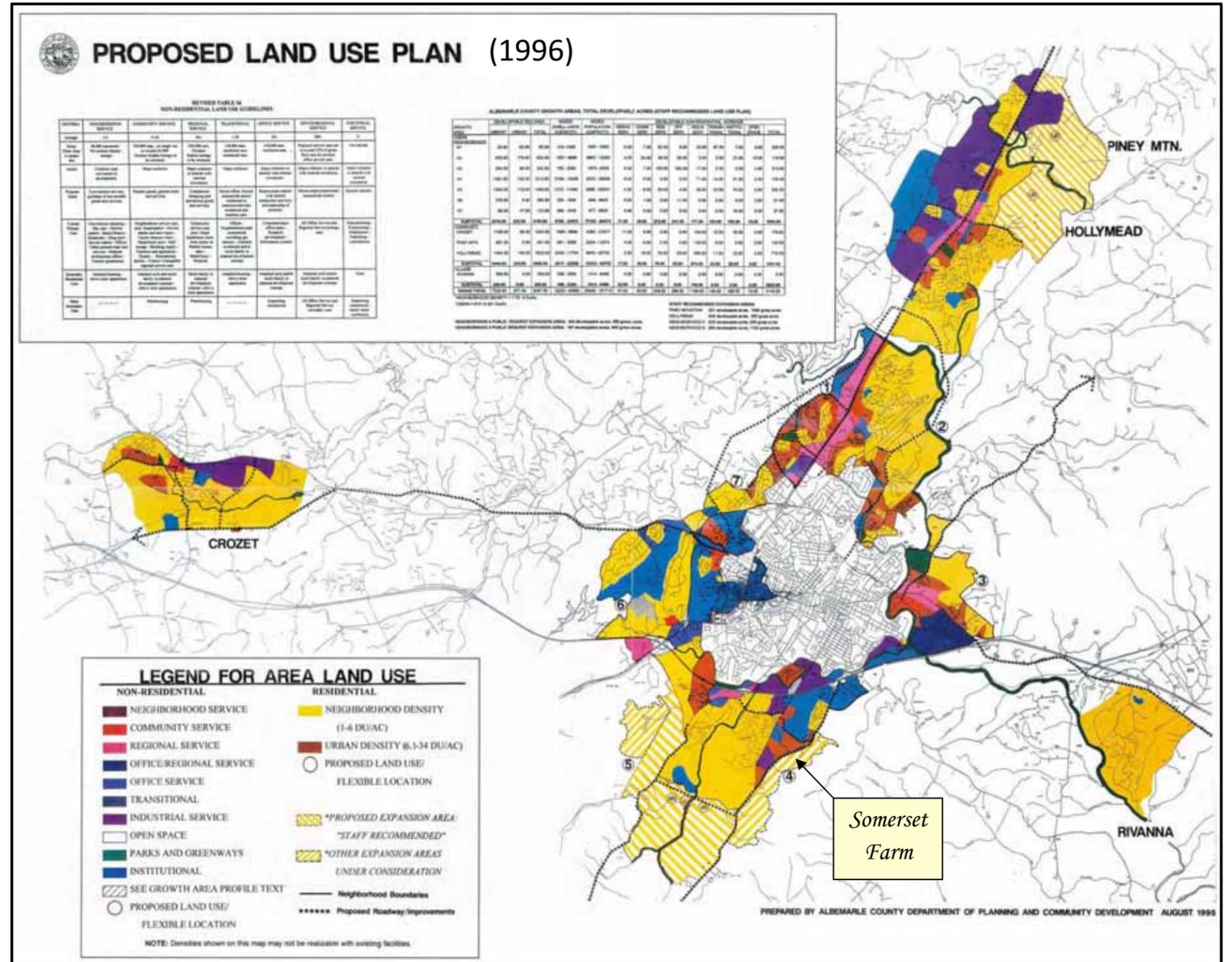
History

The Comprehensive is a living document, reviewed by County staff in detail regularly and updated to meet changing needs and conditions. The first Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1971 included 20 designated Development Areas. At that time, the parcels which now comprise Somerset Farm were designated as Development Area.

In 1977, the County undertook an update to the Comprehensive Plan. Among their areas of focus, County officials had identified the need to thwart the disturbing trend of increasing erosion associated with development that had resulted in rapid siltation of the South Fork Rivanna River Reservoir. The boundaries of the Development Areas were reduced to minimize land disturbance and disrupt this detrimental phenomenon. Land on the east side of Route 20 in the vicinity of Somerset Farm was removed from the Development Area at that time.

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan occurred in 1982 and 1989. During each update, County officials continued to seek to curtail development in the Rural Areas, while promoting better models of development.

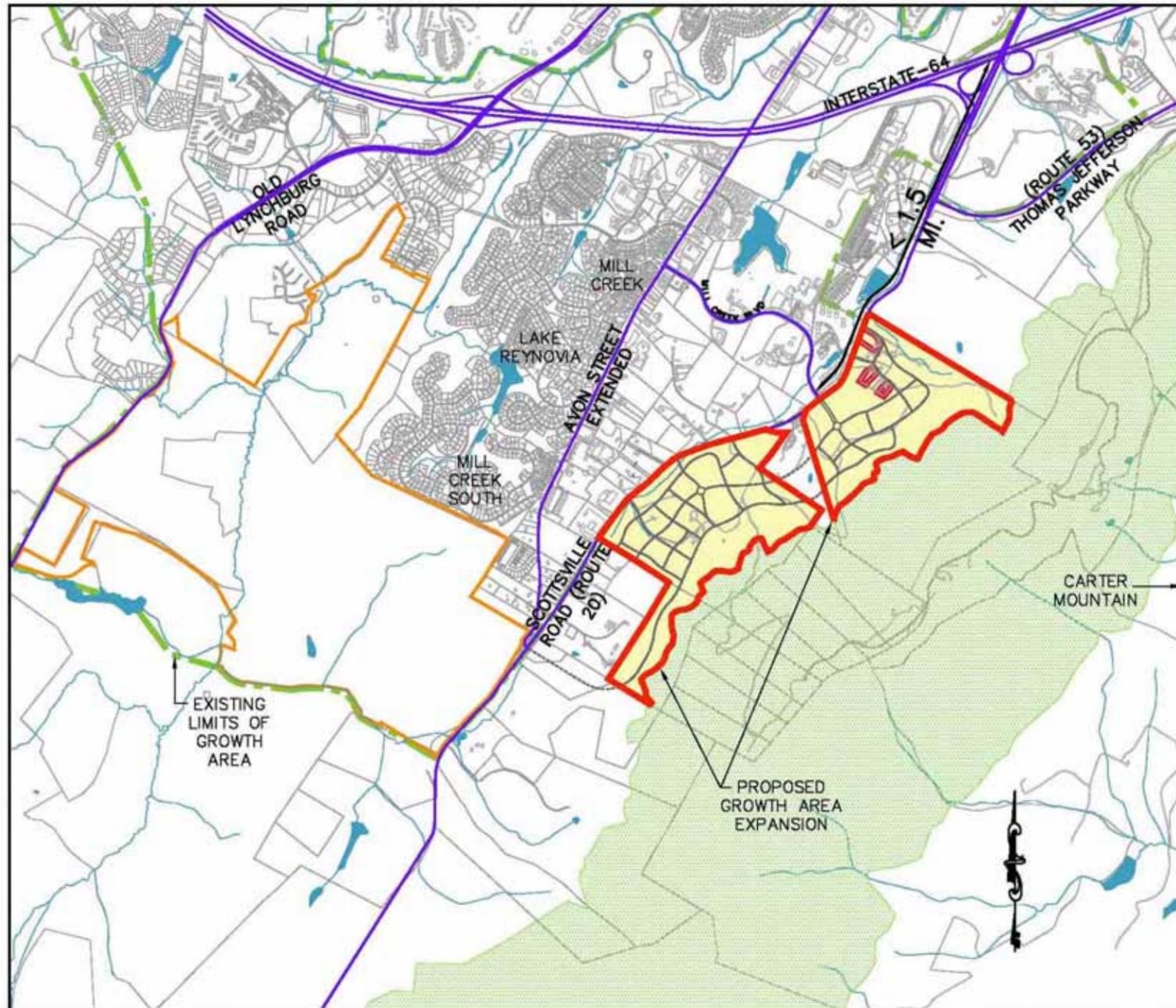
The Comprehensive Plan was again updated in 1996. Based on the increasing trend of low density residential development, the County identified the need for additional land to accommodate projected growth. Several areas were suggested by County staff as appropriate areas to expand the Growth Area. Directly adjacent to existing Development Areas, where infrastructure and services were immediately available, these were the most logical areas to incorporate into the existing Growth Areas. Somerset Farm was within one of these areas suggested as appropriate for future growth. Ultimately the Board of Supervisors did not endorse expansion of the Development Areas, but directed staff to explore other means of accommodating growth.



Transportation Networks

With over a mile of frontage along Route 20, Somerset Farm has convenient access to numerous existing transportation routes. Though directly adjacent to the site, Route 20 is a 2-lane road, it is a 4-lane divided roadway less than a mile to the north. The existing Interstate 64 interchange is located just over a mile north of the site on Route 20. Mill Creek Boulevard links Route 20 to Avon Street Extended, which is a direct route to downtown Charlottesville.

If developed, Somerset Farm would be subject to a traffic study, analyzing existing and projected transportation demands in the vicinity. Because a solid transportation framework exists in the vicinity of the site, specific transportation improvements could be made to create a robust network of interconnected routes to the north, south and west.



Pedestrian mobility would be a top priority at Somerset Farm. Trails already exist throughout Biscuit Run state park and the vicinity of Carter Mountain, which are frequented by hikers, horseback riders and mountain bicyclists. The development of Somerset Farm would include an abundance of trails that would link these two important trail networks. Bike lanes would be constructed along Route 20 and throughout Somerset Farm that would connect County trails and bike paths to Biscuit Run Park, in addition to offering an alternative mode of transportation to commuters. Upgraded sections of Route 20 would become more urban in design, incorporating bike lanes, planting strips and sidewalks.

Somerset Farm could be readily served by public transit. A potential bus route along Route 20 and Avon Street Extended could be a valuable service to residents in this neighborhood and the nearby businesses and schools.



View of Somerset Farm looking southbound from Route 20

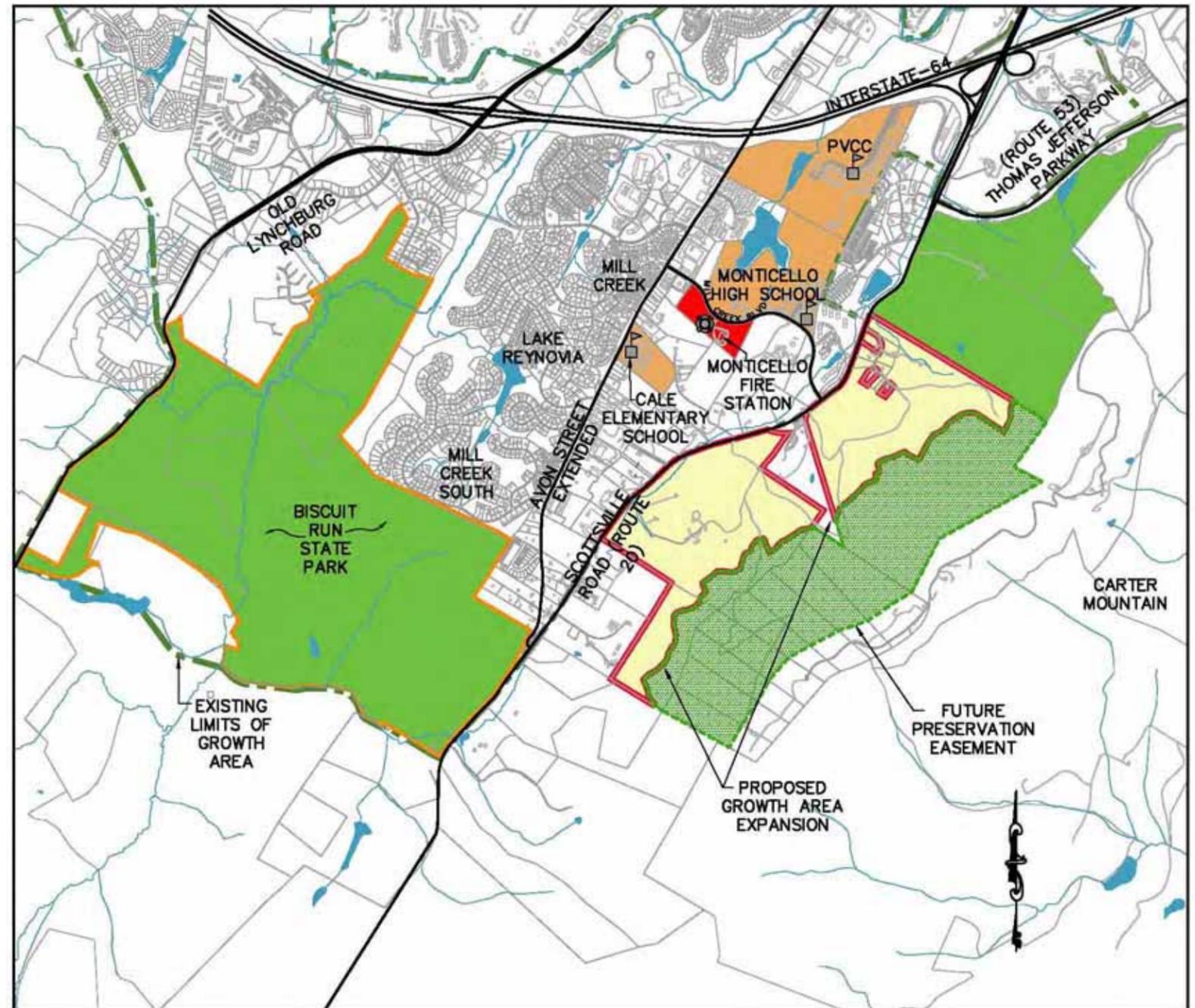
Services and Amenities

Somerset Farm is surrounded by services and amenities within close proximity, readily available to meet the needs of future development in this area.

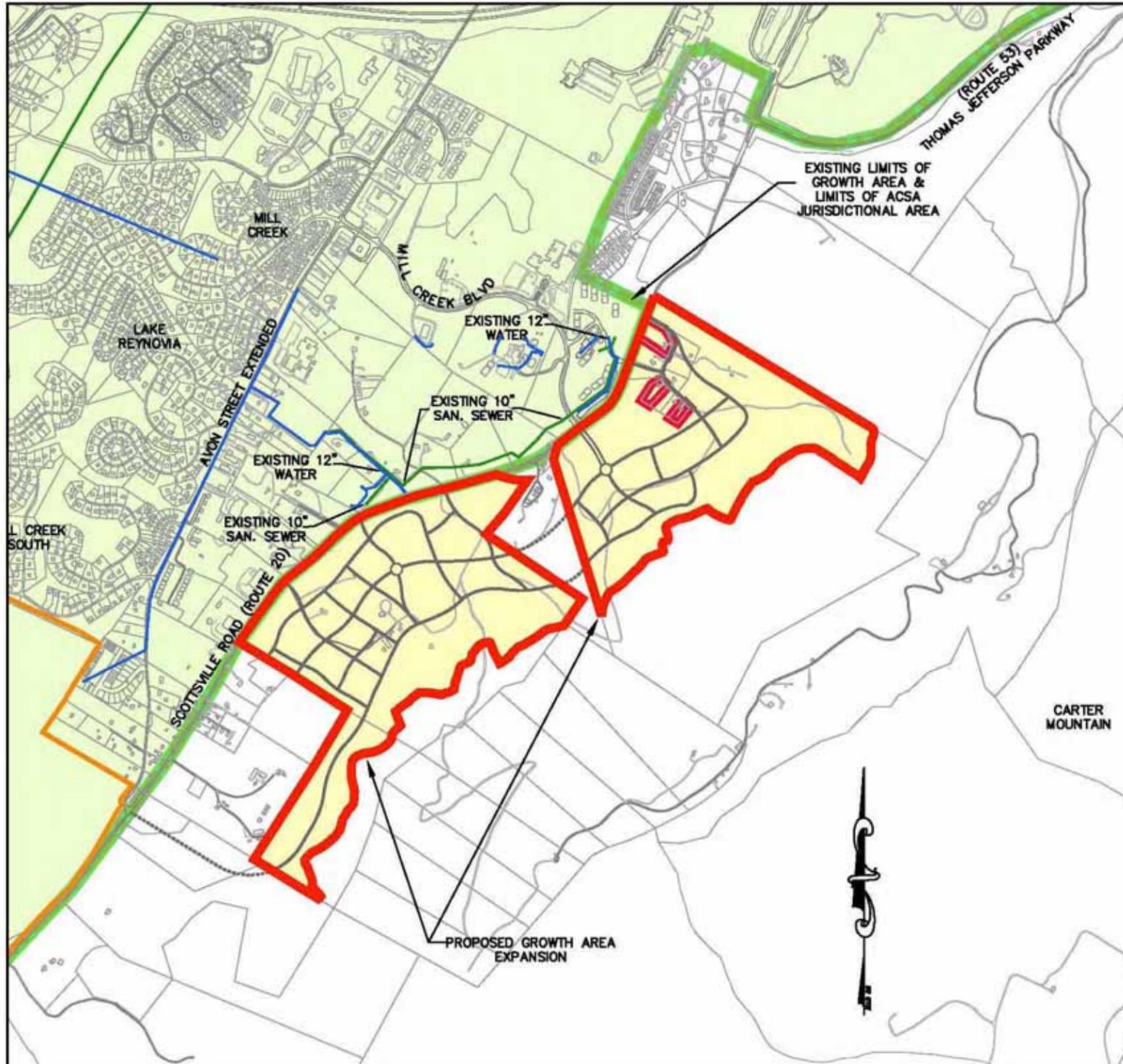
Several schools and public services are located less than a mile from Somerset Farm. Piedmont Virginia Community College is located just to the north, on the west side of Route 20. Monticello High School and Monticello Fire & Rescue Station are located just to the west, along Mill Creek Boulevard. Cale Elementary School is located along Avon Street Extended. Several private schools and churches are also located within the vicinity.

Somerset Farm is surrounded by superlative parks. Kemper Park, located immediately to the northeast, encompasses 89 acres of land along Thomas Jefferson Parkway and offers bountiful opportunities for hiking, jogging and picnicking. The Saunders-Monticello Trail, a popular trail among outdoor enthusiasts of all ages, begins at the western end of Thomas Jefferson Parkway and terminates at Monticello, the historic home of Thomas Jefferson. Secluded Farm, a 100-acre property located just south of Kemper Park, offers miles of additional trails. Biscuit Run, the newly acquired state park, consists of over 800 acres of open space. Trails throughout Biscuit Run are enjoyed by hikers, joggers, bikers and horseback riders.

The expansion of the growth area to encompass Somerset Farm would include specific goals and guidelines for pedestrian facilities which would provide a valuable link between the two important tracts of open space of Kemper Park to the east, and Biscuit Run to the west.



Utility Infrastructure



The Albemarle County Service Authority's jurisdictional area follows the County's Growth Area limits, therefore a decision to expand the Growth Area would also expand the jurisdictional area for utility infrastructure. Even though Somerset Farm is technically located outside the jurisdictional area, water and sewer facilities are located immediately across the street, on the west side of Route 20, serving those properties within the jurisdictional area. Future developers of Somerset Farm would be responsible for extending these utilities to serve the development.



Future Development

If embraced within the Development Area, Somerset Farm would be subject to future rezoning – foreseeably to Neighborhood Model District. The Concept Plan illustrates a potential development scenario consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use designation of Neighborhood Service and the principles of the Neighborhood Model.

The 317 acres where development could occur would be divided into distinct phases to ensure that land disturbance occurs in manageable increments. Stabilization of earlier phases would be required before later phases would be allowed to commence. Specific phasing boundaries and schedule would be determined at the time of rezoning and site plan design. Build-out of Somerset Farm would be expected to occur over 20 years.

Pedestrian access is a top priority for the Growth Area. Somerset Farm would fulfill this vision by providing sidewalks along every street and trails connecting green spaces and parks throughout. Emphasis would be placed on ensuring streetscapes are comfortable and inviting for pedestrians. Streets would be designed to accommodate modes of public transportation by maximizing through routes and minimizing dead end streets. The design of sidewalks and streets would accommodate the needs of both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Travelways for both pedestrians and vehicles at Somerset Farm would evoke a sense of community. Narrow streets, which meet VDOT standards, would encourage lower vehicle speeds and contribute to the sense of enclosure in the public space. Street trees would further enhance the aesthetic quality of travelways and foster a sense of community. Pedestrian sidewalks and trails would be linked throughout the development area, connecting to sidewalks and trails on adjacent parcels. The safe, attractive network of pedestrian facilities would result in an attractive, walkable community where pedestrians are prioritized and protected.

The Concept Plan lays out a conceptual road network that would create walkable blocks defined by a network of interconnected streets. Streets would be designed to provide interconnectivity with existing and anticipated future roads.

In addition to the open spaces to be preserved within the Mountain Overlay District, a development plan for Somerset Farm would incorporate pocket parks and trails, as consistent with the open space vision of the Neighborhood Model.

Neighborhood centers would be developed as focal points for congregating. These central districts could include commercial or civic spaces that provide services, employment opportunities and gathering places for residents, reminiscent of European and pre-suburban American villages.

The form of development at Somerset Farm would be designed to human scale. Right of way, building setbacks and building heights would be specified that provide an appropriate sense of spatial enclosure, framing the public space to create an inviting ambiance and comfortable pedestrian environment.

Parking would be designed at Somerset to meet the parking demands generated by users, but thoughtfully placed to minimize the view of unsightly parking lots. Blocks designs would include alleys and parking lots that are relegated behind building facades and landscaping.

The Concept Plan includes varying levels of densities, in relation to the Neighborhood Centers. Blocks of higher density would likely consist of apartments, condominiums and townhouses. Mixed use buildings may be implemented where parking could be shared and residents live above restaurants and retail uses. Districts of lower density would like be comprised of single family detached housing. Somerset Farm would encourage a variety of housing types, and commit to meeting the 15% affordability guideline.

Somerset Farm contains a considerable amount of sloping terrain located within the Mountain Overlay District. These untouched wooded slopes of the mountainside would frame the development below and provide vast recreational opportunities to residents of Albemarle County. In the other low-lying portions of the site, development would follow the existing terrain to the greatest extent possible.

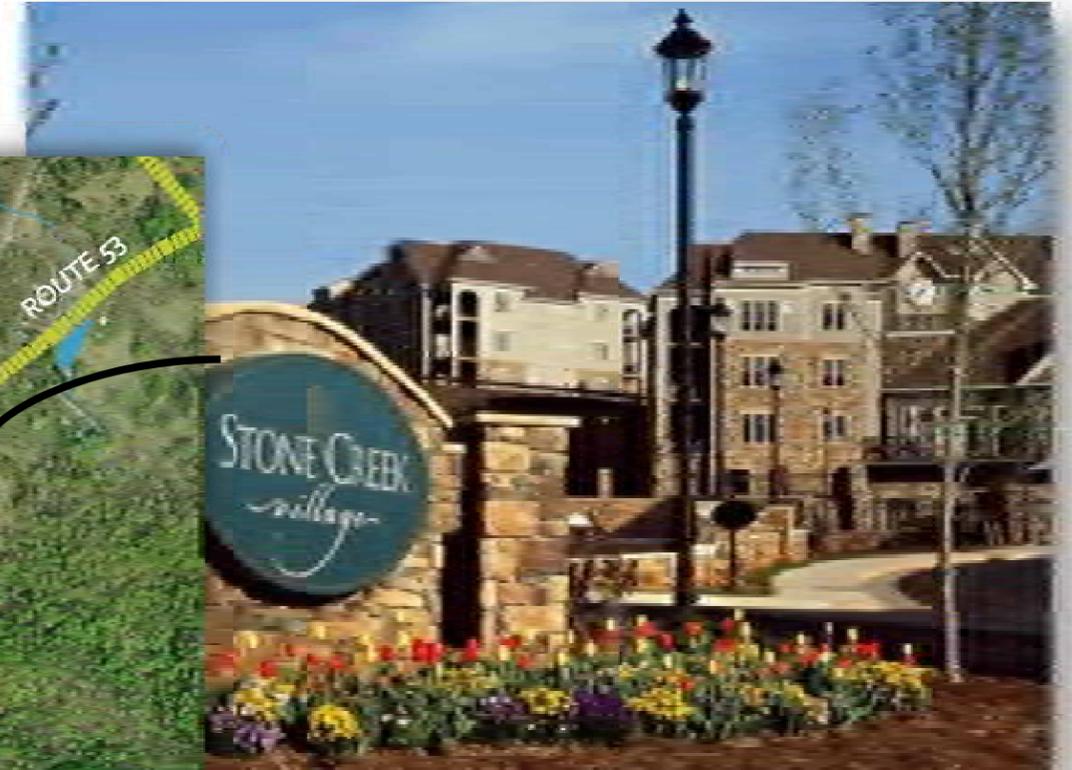
Clearly defining the limits of the Development Areas is an important step in adequately preserving the Rural Areas. The extensive open space along the eastern mountainous portion of Somerset Farm would provide a distinct barrier between the Development and Rural Areas.

Surrounding Uses

The Roof Center



Stone Creek Village Apartments



Parham Construction



Kappa Sigma

