

4.0 LAND USE



Abstract

Land use decisions are a balancing act: encouraging quality new development while diminishing impacts on existing areas. As Ashland progresses into the future it will be necessary to accommodate new growth and respond to change while maintaining aspects of the Town that are valued by its residents, workers and businesses. Decisions made regarding land use will guide the future organization of transportation and open space systems and work towards ensuring the economic health of the Town.

With the Land Use chapter, the Town endeavors to maintain the Town's character and ensure orderly growth by:

- *Ensuring that growth does not outpace the availability of community facilities and services.*
- *Guiding well-planned, coordinated, and sustainable development. Quality of life is given high priority and outweighs the value of unnecessary growth.*
- *Ensuring that the housing needs of present and future residents of the Town are met through a variety of high-quality housing options that reflect the different ages, family types and income levels of our neighborhoods.*
- *Introducing the Mixed-Use designation within the Downtown to allow for more comprehensive, flexible and creative uses as new development and redevelopment occurs.*

The Land Use chapter must be considered, in combination with Chapter 3, Community Character and Design, as one of the two most important chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. These two chapters provide the framework for the Comprehensive Plan to follow by specifying the basic strategies necessary to preserve Ashland's unique character and ensure the orderly growth of the Town. Decisions made regarding land use will guide the future organization of transportation and open space systems and work towards ensuring the economic health of the Town.

This chapter identifies the policies that guide the distribution, general location, and extent of uses of land for housing, business, industry, open space, and other uses of land within the Town of Ashland. The Land Use chapter also ensures a compatible balance of land uses that will both meet the diverse needs of the community as it grows into the future, and help preserve Ashland's small town qualities. Equally important, the Land Use Chapter provides, along with the Future Land Use Map, the detailed planning tools and policies that will coordinate future development, preservation and revitalization efforts in the Town.

Community sustainability requires well-managed land use planning practices that will ensure close-knit neighborhoods with a sense of community, support continued economic vitality, create and maintain efficient infrastructure, and preserve the Town's natural systems. With this sustainable planning, the Town's projected population and economic growth can be accommodated while protecting and enhancing its beloved character. This comprehensive plan will enable Ashland to preserve its Downtown and neighborhoods while encouraging new development of a similar scale and character.

The Future Land Use Map (Map LU-2) is a graphic representation of the Land Use Chapter. This map is prepared by integrally tying land use designations to the Guiding Principles and policies that carry through the various chapters of the Plan.

The Land Use Plan is intended to set forth policies to be used to guide decision-making by:

- Designating areas of Town to be appropriate for Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Institutional land uses including open space, government and educational uses.
- Encouraging development in patterns that reflect the Guiding Principles, especially the life of Ashland as a genuine small town.
- Designating areas of Town where current policies, such as zoning or subdivision ordinances may hinder reinvestment or diminish character, and suggesting strategies to promote new developments and reinvestments in ways that reflect our values.



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Annexation History

As originally incorporated in 1858, the Town of Ashland consisted of one square mile. The Town has grown, through several annexations, to a size of 7.12 square miles and is one of the larger towns in land area in Virginia. When the Virginia General Assembly adopted the original charter for the Town in 1858, the physical boundaries of the Town were not specifically identified. The charter merely established a village known as Ashland having the powers of an incorporated Town. The Town boundaries were established by the General Assembly in 1893-94. The defined limits, approximately one square mile, were entered into the records of the Circuit Court of Hanover County in May 1932.

Effective January 1, 1977, the boundary of the Town was expanded by 3.02 square miles, to a total of approximately 4.02 square miles, following a Town-initiated annexation filing. This 1977 annexation included a large population increase of approximately 1,848 County residents.

The most recent annexation became effective January 1, 1996, when the Town boundary was expanded by approximately 3.1 square miles to its current area of 7.12 square miles. The 1996 annexation brought several notable changes to the Town. The Town of Ashland and Hanover County entered into a Voluntary Settlement Agreement (VSA). One of the stipulations of the agreement was the transfer of water and sewer services. Therefore, the Town's water and sewer services merged with Hanover County's services and these services are now provided by the County. The ownership and operation of the Town's water treatment plant and distribution system was transferred to Hanover. While there are no known landfills within the Town, prior to the annexation in 1996, several automobile salvage yards existed in Hanover County; these have been grandfathered into the Town of Ashland. Again, prior to the annexation of 1996, about 25 percent of the land in Ashland was designated for industrial purposes. The annexation brought an additional 973 acres of industrial land into the Town and increased the percentage to 35.7 percent. The three annexation boundaries are shown on Map LU-1 (page 4-5).

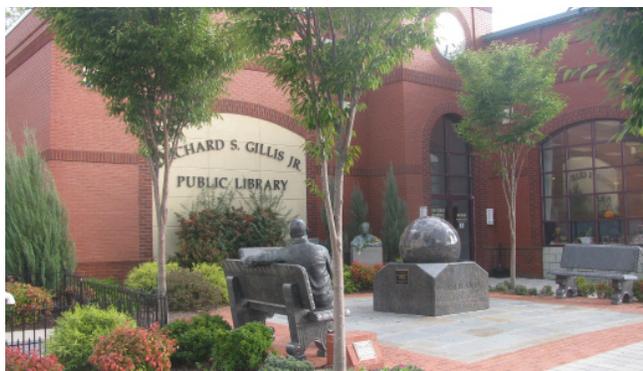


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Ashland's Values: What Makes Ashland *Ashland*

The process of creating this Comprehensive Plan, and this specific Land Use Plan, was focused on eight neighborhood planning areas. This neighborhood focus resulted in a great level of specificity that was based on the residents' and owners' very clear expectations. Furthermore, it was made clear throughout the process that a future Ashland must continue to be like *Ashland*, and that the many details that make our Town great must be noted and described.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This chapter supports the Plan's Guiding Principles as follows:

1. Preserve Ashland's Small Town Character

- Strengthen the walkable core in the Downtown area in close proximity to established residential areas.
- Champion the preservation of historic development patterns and appropriate extension of those patterns in developing areas.

2. Protect Ashland's Unique Features

- Structure the Land Use recommendations to assure that the unique features remain.
- Advocate for appropriate densities and development activities in the historic core area of the Town.

3. Manage and Enhance Our Green Town

- Designate specific open space areas.
- Establish appropriate densities for development that would allow for preservation or enhancement of existing tree cover.

4. Encourage Continued Variety within Ashland

- Endorse the construction of various types of housing in various sizes on a variety of lot sizes side by side within neighborhoods in appropriate quantities.

5. Promote Continued Economic Development

- Provide sufficient land area for a wide range of retail, commercial, office, and industrial uses.
- Bolster development and redevelopment activity in the Downtown area.

6. Provide a High Level of Government Services.

- Secure land use areas for the provision of government activities.
- Ensure orderly development to most efficiently deliver municipal services.

4.1 LAND USE MAP

The Land Use Map, MU-2 (page 4-9) is hereby incorporated to be a part of this chapter.

Interpretation of Land Use Map

The Land Use Plan Map is intended to serve as a generalization of the land uses anticipated in the future. The location and the description of the land uses are not intended to be exact, but a reflection of the predominant location and use intended in the future. The Zoning Code, including the use of form-based zoning in some areas where the character must be clearly identified, will be used to interpret the map. This map is intended to be a general guide to future zoning, and is not intended to exactly designate the location of future zoning boundaries.

Boundaries between Land Uses

Boundaries shown on the Land Use Plan Map are intended to be approximate, especially where they do not follow any boundary feature. Where a boundary feature is followed, such as an existing or proposed roadway, a stream, and in some cases, existing parcel boundaries, the boundary shall be considered less generalized.

4.2 LAND USES DESIGNATIONS

The Land Uses listed here are organized into four groups:

- Residential
- Mixed Use
 - Residential
 - Retail
- Commercial
 - Retail
 - Office
 - Hotel
 - Industrial
- Institutional
 - Government Facilities including schools and public parks

Note that, while these descriptions are about uses only, there is to be a strong and clear relationship between uses and character, as listed in detail in Chapter 3, Community Character and Design. Chapter 3 contains criteria to assist in ensuring high-quality, sustainable developments within the Town. Our aspirations for quality design and construction must be recognized as new development takes place, so that Ashland retains its cherished small-town qualities.

As explained in detail in Chapter 6, Economic Development, Ashland needs to improve the quality of development, both residential and





commercial. Studies, such as the study by Urban Partners completed in August 2008, have shown that the Town has a high number of affordable homes. Therefore, it is the intention of this Comprehensive Plan to create the basis for future developments that will focus on a higher level of quality in the homes, the properties, the landscapes, and in the roadways. Ashland must create a better balance between affordability and higher quality living, for the larger health of the community, and for the consumer markets for our shops and businesses.

Residential Designations

The Town has identified three different residential land use categories: Town Edge, Traditional Neighborhoods, and Mixed Neighborhoods.

Town Edge

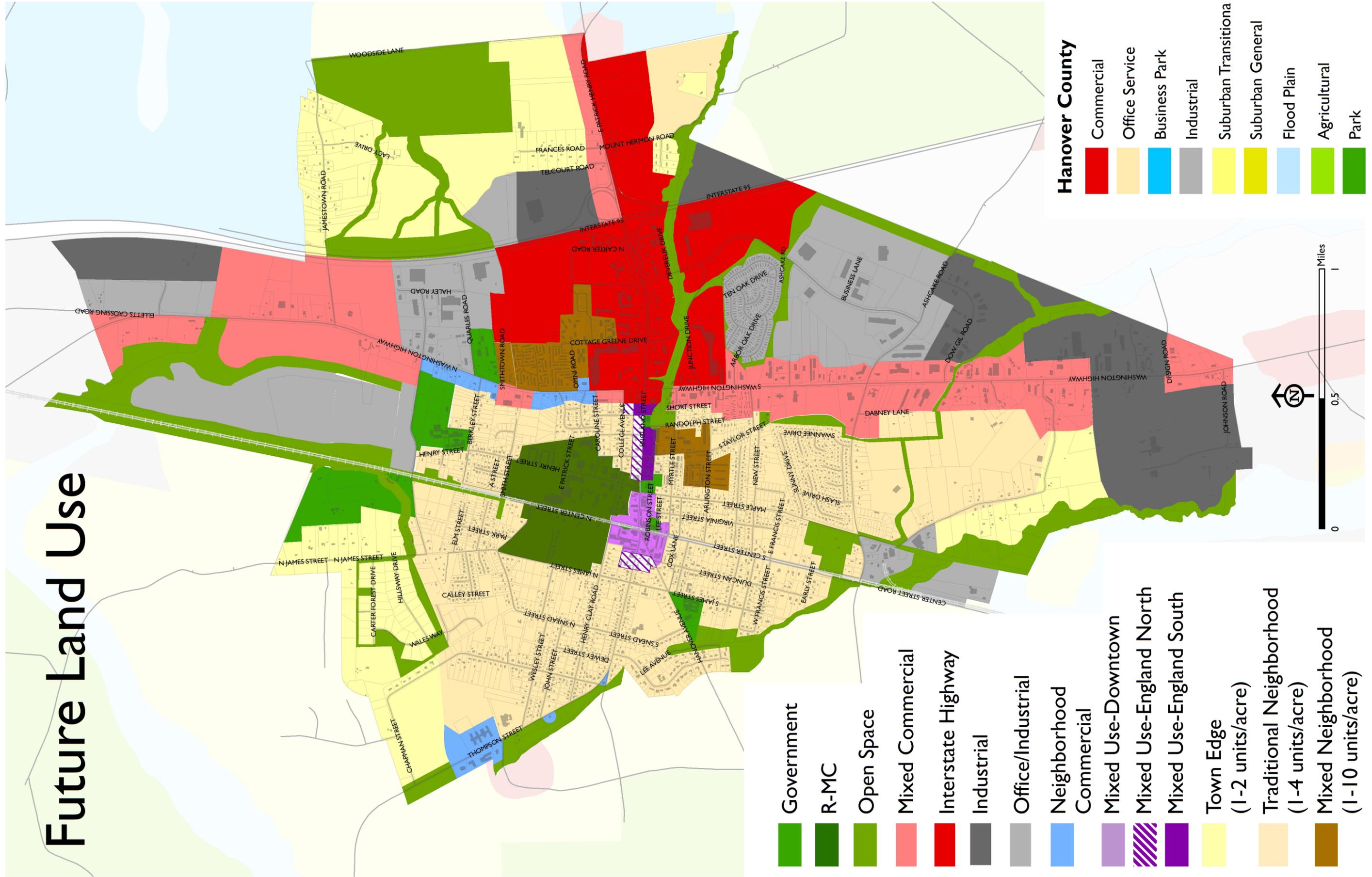
Town Edge is defined by 1 to 2 dwelling units per acre. By right development will allow 1 house per acre. In order to develop smaller lot sizes, up to the maximum of 2 units per acre, a developer would need to take advantage of density bonuses that meet the Town's requests for variety of house and lot sizes with a higher quality of construction and other ideals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines Handbook.

Traditional Neighborhoods

Traditional Neighborhoods are defined by 1 to 4 dwelling units per acre. By right development will allow 1 house per acre. In order to develop smaller lot sizes, up to the maximum of 4 units per acre, a developer would need to take advantage of density bonuses that meet the Town's requests for variety of house and lot sizes with a higher quality of construction and other ideals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines Handbook. This category encompasses the basic neighborhood districts, which cover most of the residential areas of Town. The criteria for development in these districts reflect, specifically, the expectations of Principles 1 through 4, regarding the small town character, the unique features of Ashland, the landscape and tree shaded streets, and the variety of homes and lots that exist here.

The basic intention is to promote and preserve the character of a grid of streets that are tree-shaded, where houses are close enough to each other and to the street to create a real sense of neighborhood, but are far enough apart to maintain the open, green quality that is valued by the community. The streets are to be quiet and safe, enabling people of all ages to walk along and on them. And, there is to be a variety of house and lot types possible, so that young and old, and single people and families can live in the same neighborhoods and on the same streets.

Future Land Use



An important aspect of our neighborhood standards are the more specific design guidelines, such as building and roofing materials, windows, porches, etcetera. These items are identified in Chapter 3, Community Character & Design, and should be addressed in detail in the updating of the 2004 Design Guidelines Handbook. The Town encourages projects that include green building techniques in compliance with the U.S. Green Building Council LEED rating system, EarthCraft House Virginia or similar certification standards. The Town will work with Hanover County Building Department to continue to update the building code to include recommendations, where permitted, of these standards.

In order to create the shade and enclosure that is typical of Ashland's streets, street trees should be placed in the right location depending on the presence of sidewalks and overhead wires. The street trees planted within the public right-of-way should be chosen from the Town's approved tree list. This list is not based on personal aesthetics, but the work of a trained arborist, working specifically with the Town. These trees were chosen because they do well in Ashland's climate and because the wrong tree can cause damage to public property such as sidewalks and streets. It is intended that large, spreading, deciduous trees such as a London Planetree, Zelkova, or Red Maple be used in appropriate locations to create the desired tree canopy along Ashland's streets. More information on street trees is provided in Chapter 3, Community Character and Design, Chapter 8, Environment and within the updated design guidelines document as part of the recommended tree list.

Variety

Ashland enjoys the virtues of having a variety of home types to permit people of different ages, family types and incomes to live side-by-side. The word variety, as used in this plan, refers to variations in lot sizes, lot widths, house sizes, house design and house cost, but not in construction quality. It is the intention of this plan that all new homes, regardless of size, be built with the same consideration for quality design and high quality construction.

Policy LU.1 Variety in Home & Lot Size

The Town desires a variety of house and lot sizes within blocks and neighborhoods. In order to maintain the desired variety in the neighborhoods, a maximum density is given with the expectation that larger lots will be intermixed with smaller lots. To promote sustainable development, higher density allocations will be allowed provided the developer meets the ideals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan that will be specifically defined in the zoning code. Density bonuses would be offered in return for the developer providing features, design elements or amenities desired by the Town including but not limited to, site design





incorporating principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development, environmentally sustainable and energy efficient building design, and historical preservation, as part of the development. Recommended design elements are included in the updated design guidelines document. The density bonuses will act as an incentive allowing developers to react to the changing market. As a guide, maximum lot coverage for single family homes should not exceed 30 percent of the area of the lot. Density credits will also be offered to encourage more sustainable building and lot design and discourage the use of traditional BMPs. Suggestions for more attractive BMPs are given in Chapter 8, Policy E.16. These recommendations and incentives are intended to encourage the desired variety in house and lot sizes to be intermixed within blocks and neighborhoods. The similarity in our homes should come from the level of quality with which they are designed and constructed.

Policy LU.2 Accessory Structures

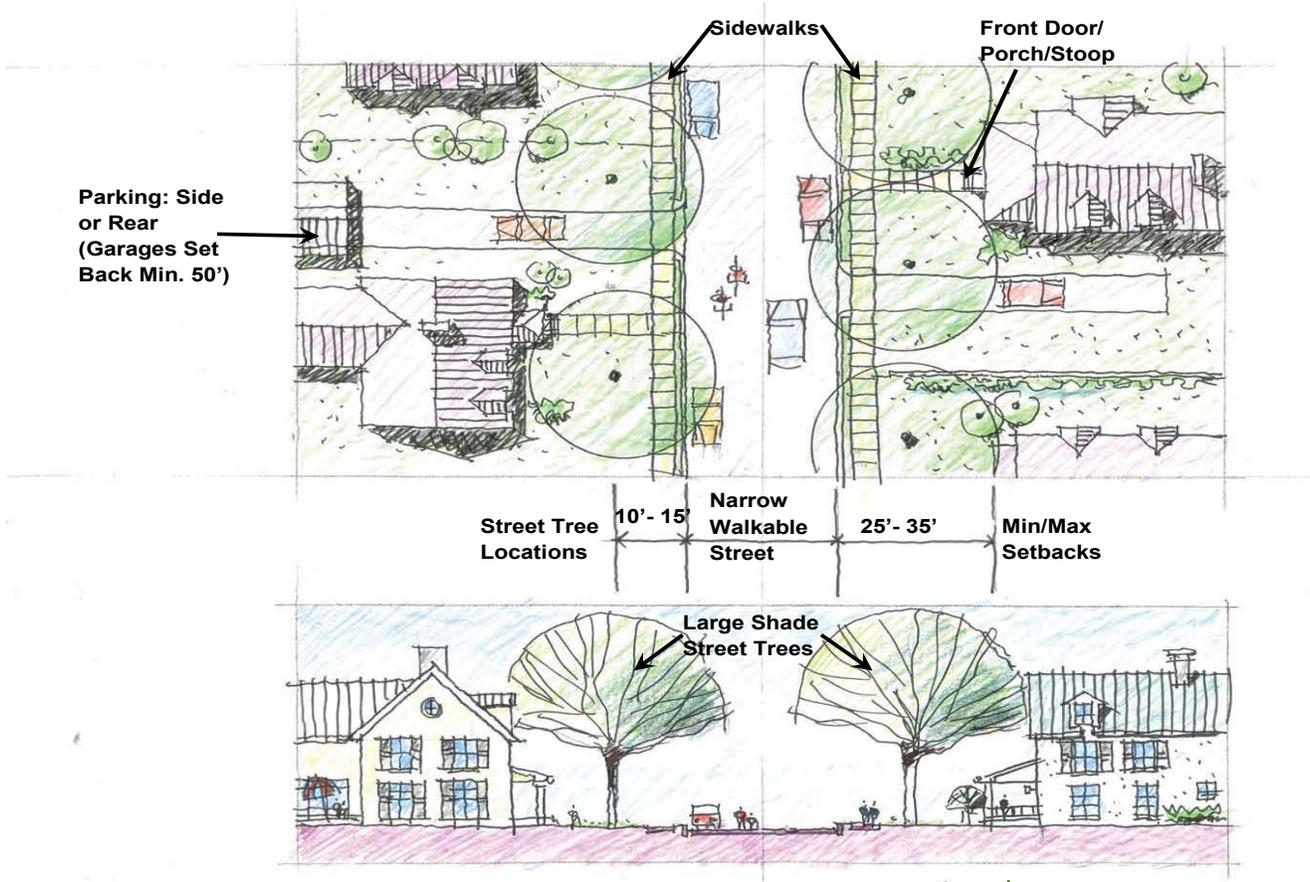
Small accessory structures used as garages, tool sheds, and accessory apartments are part of the fabric of our small town. These small structures must be set to the rear of the main structure and designed and constructed with the same care as the main structure.

Policy LU.3 Parking/Garages

In Ashland neighborhoods, the car does not dominate. They are small scale, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. To keep this aspect of our small town, the parking of cars and other vehicles, such as boats on trailers, should not be the dominant design feature in front of homes. On-site parking should be provided on the side or to the rear of the main structure accessed by a narrow driveway. Garage doors should not dominate the front façade. The preferred garage location is detached and located to the rear of the home.

Policy LU.4 Street Design

It is important to remember that Ashland is a walkable community. The dimensions of the streets and sidewalks should be such that pedestrians are safe and comfortable. Streets should be wide enough to provide on-street parking on both sides, plus two moving lanes, but not so wide as to encourage fast driving speeds. The streets should be designed to encourage slow driving speeds and permit on-street walking and cycling. A typical street width that accomplishes this in Ashland is a width of 31 feet from curb to curb; examples include Henry Clay Road, Howard Street and College Avenue. Sidewalks should be at least five feet wide; wide enough for two people to walk side by side.



Residential Street Sketch.

This sketch shows the desired street design through the suggested location of street trees, the recommended house setback and the desired setback for a garage.



Mixed Neighborhoods

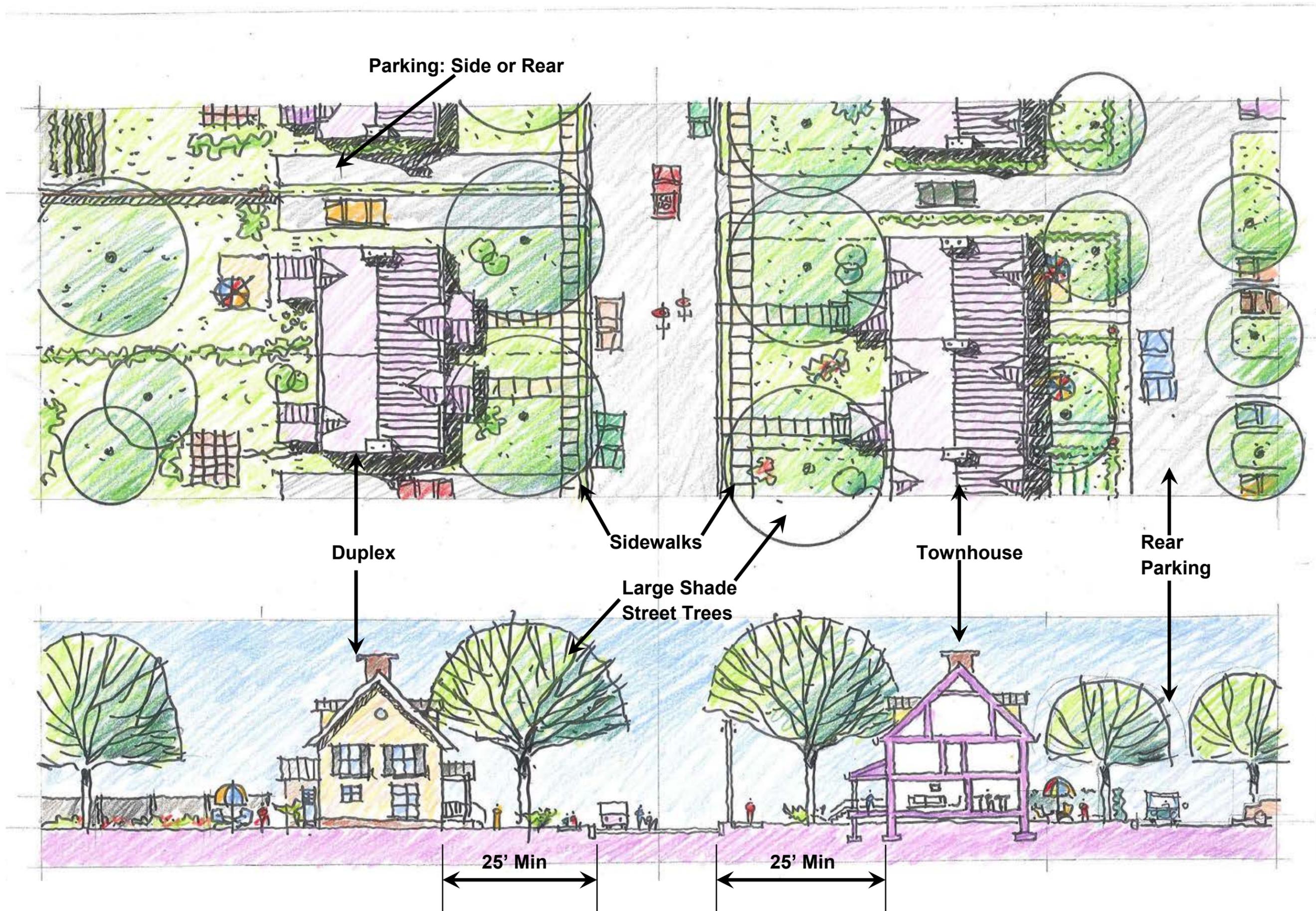
Mixed Residential is defined by 1 to 10 dwelling units per acre. By right development will allow 1 house per acre. In order to develop smaller lot sizes, up to the maximum of 10 units per acre, a developer would need to take advantage of density bonuses that meet the Town's requests for variety of house and lot sizes with a higher quality of construction and other ideals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines Handbook. The goal of this classification is to create communities that include a diversity of housing types (single-family, townhome, apartment) with a range of incomes (mid-upper income, workforce, affordable, etc.). In the area south of England Street, it is recommended that the precedent set by the townhouses on Myrtle Street and the houses in Arlington Square be extended to create a higher density residential neighborhood that is walkable from the shops on England Street and on Railroad Avenue. With this pattern of development, another opportunity for residential variety and support for future (and current) shopping is created. In order to accomplish this, the plan and design conditions as stated in this Plan and in the updated design guidelines document should be met.

Policy LU.5 Mixed Neighborhood Projects

The residential composition of this land use designation is encouraged to include a range of all housing types. Any multi-family project should be intended for owner occupancy. Patio homes, townhouse-style units, side-by-side duplexes, or cottage neighborhoods should be encouraged as an alternative to traditional apartment complexes. Front doors should face a public street to engage the neighborhood. As in the other residential districts, the maximum building height is three stories or 35 feet.

The aspiration for quality design, quality materials and quality construction applies equally to the residential structures within the Mixed Neighborhoods designation. The quality and detail of all dwellings constructed and the included common areas should be given high priority throughout the design and development process.

Note that this District, and these criteria, also apply to the few residential areas east of Route 1, as indicated in the Future Land Use Map.



Parking: Side or Rear

Duplex

Sidewalks

Large Shade Street Trees

Townhouse

Rear Parking

25' Min

25' Min

This sketch shows the desired placement street trees, duplexes, townhouse and the parking for each.

Mixed-Use Designations (Walkable Retail): Our Downtowns

Three Mixed-Use land use designations have been identified on the Future Land Use Map. These consist of a combination of retail and residential development.

The goal of this new land use designation is to allow a more comprehensive, flexible and creative use of the Historic Downtown and the adjoining England and Thompson Streets. This compact development is intended to reduce the public investment in infrastructure, enable creative site design and preserve open space areas that provide benefit to the community as a whole. Mixed-use developments combined with pedestrian friendly streets tend to reduce the number of trips as well as the number of miles driven and ideally encourage less dependency on the automobile. A pedestrian-oriented environment promotes safety in commercial areas through an around-the-clock presence of people. The use of proper design standards in conjunction with mixed-use zoning can create an environment complimentary to the existing neighborhoods in the Town.

The three areas designated for Mixed Use are:

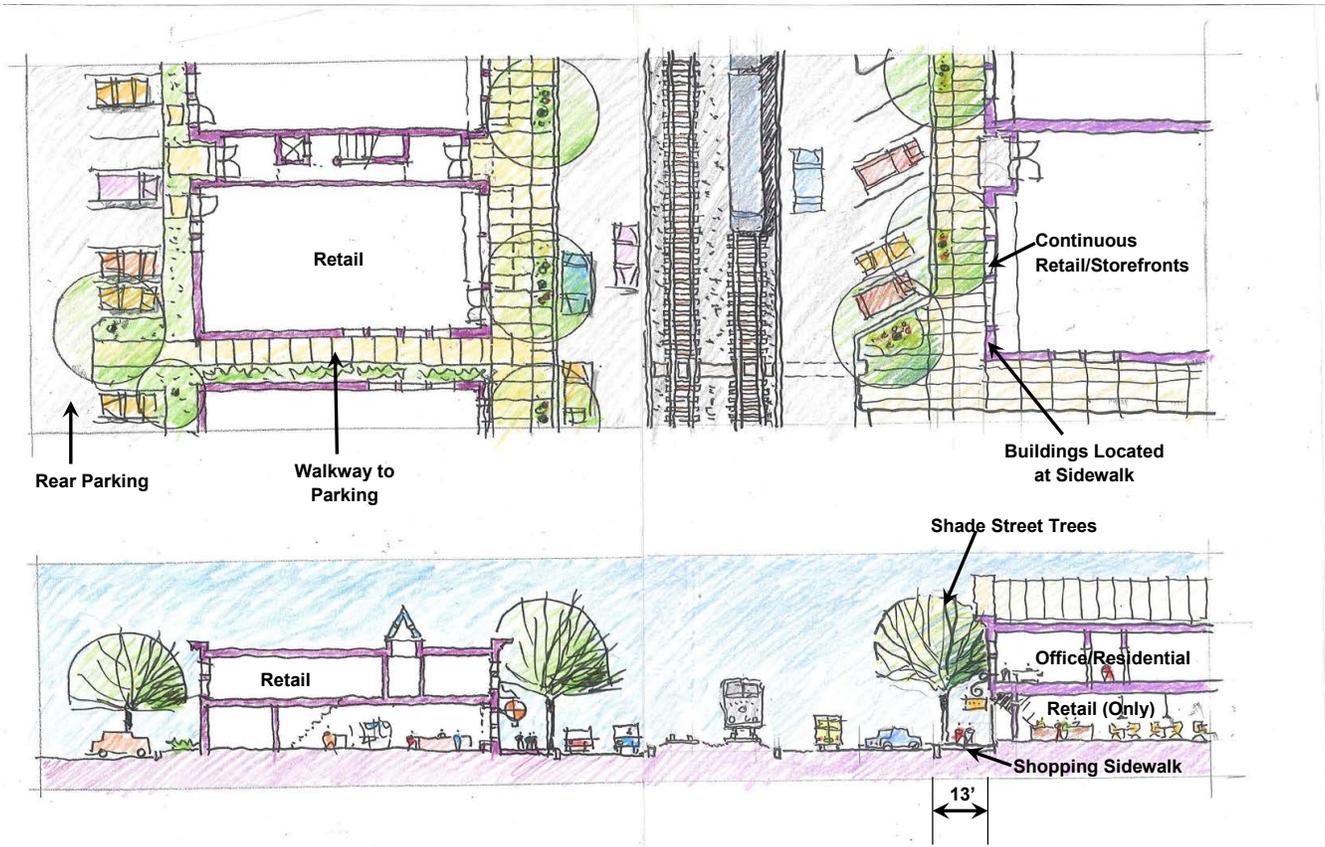
- Historic Downtown
- England Street North
- England Street South

MU-Historic Downtown

This category is intended for conservation of the existing building stock that is characteristic of the iconic image of Historic Downtown Ashland, as well as redevelopment and infill throughout the area that will contribute to the historic image, and contribute to the perception of Historic Downtown as an area of high pedestrian activity. Land uses on parcels near the edge of Downtown shall be designed to provide appropriate transition to adjacent residential areas. Blocks should consist of a mixture of retail and restaurant uses on street level to encourage a high level of pedestrian activity, with the upper levels accommodating both residential and office uses. As mentioned in the Community Character and Design and Economy chapters, another appropriate use for the street level locations are arts related businesses. Building heights should be two or three stories.

Building footprints should occupy as much of the lot area as possible, except for the need to provide parking (at the rear of the building). The expectation is that the retail storefronts are continuous along the sidewalks. A floor area ratio of 1.0 or greater should be attempted. Floor area ratio is the floor area of a building or buildings on a lot divided by the lot area.





Mixed Use-Historic Downtown Sketch.

This sketch shows the desired placement for infill development in the historic Downtown district. New buildings should be constructed adjacent to the sidewalk with parking to the rear and along the street.

In order to maintain the pedestrian orientation, buildings should be constructed directly adjacent to the sidewalk. As noted in the 2004 Development Guidelines Handbook, construction of new buildings at the zero foot setback (from the sidewalk) line is encouraged, but special consideration must be taken when adjacent to a building of historic significance. The following sketch shows the ideal placement for new construction within the historic downtown.

This sketch of the Downtown area shows the intended overall form of the Mixed-Use Downtown and the appropriate locations for parking. Parking should be provided in convenient centralized areas; both on-site and in municipal lots. It should be located to the rear and sides of buildings, instead of between the building and street. On-street parking should continue to be utilized. Parking requirements should be amended to a maximum allowable requirement to reflect the walkable quality of Downtown, and its convenience to adjacent neighborhoods. As part of the overall provision of parking, an effective, clear set of directional signs should be utilized to easily lead visitors directly to the available parking spaces.

An alternative parking solution for mixed use areas is that of shared parking. This involves multiple users of a single lot. Examples of shared parking include the joint use by adjacent shops and restaurants or by an office building during the weekdays and a movie theater and restaurants

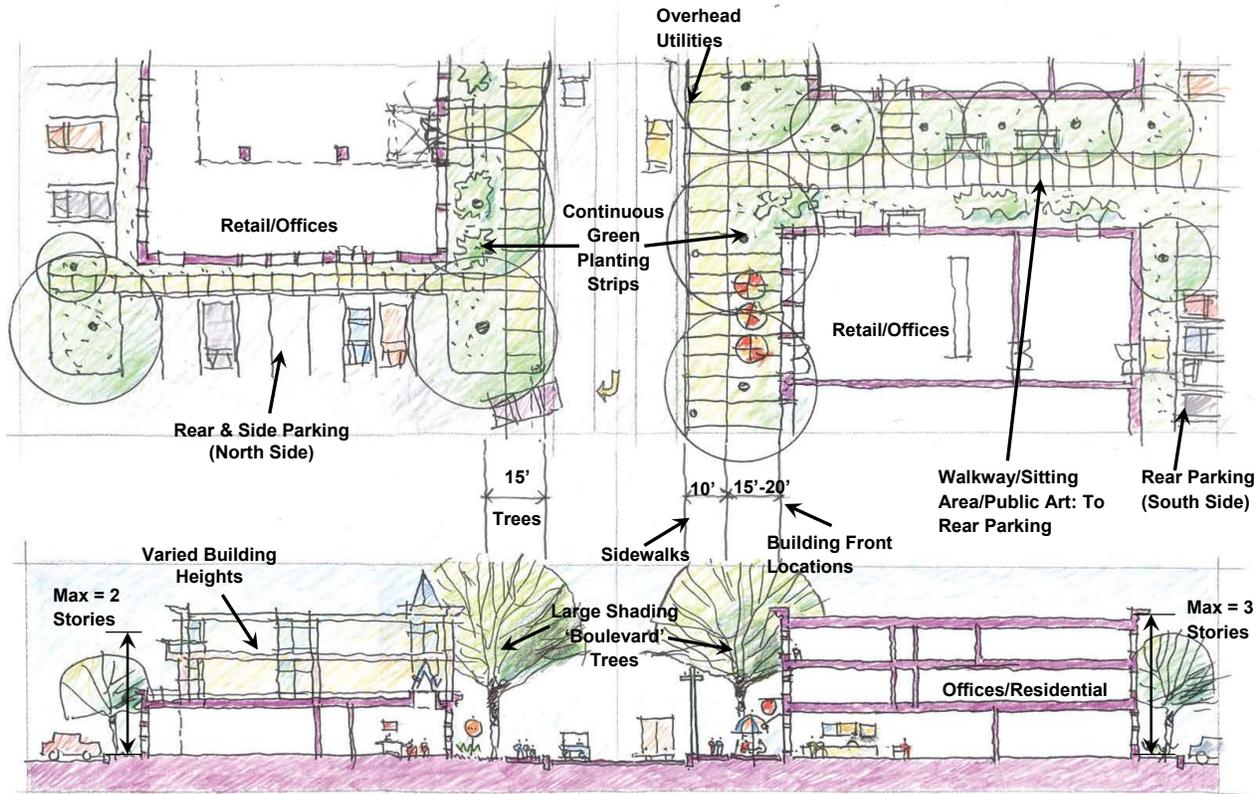
in the evening and on weekends. Efficient sharing of spaces can allow parking requirements to be reduced significantly. In a mixed use district, shared parking can actually encourage vibrant street activity simply by having pedestrians walk between destinations.

Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation Study, November 2008

In 2008, the Town of Ashland was included in an Amtrak Station Area Planning and Land Use Analysis completed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. This project was conducted to assist with the redevelopment planning of station areas along Amtrak routes within Virginia and focused on the use of transit oriented development (TOD).

In 2007, approximately 12,000 riders boarded or disembarked from the train at the station in Ashland. With increased rail service along the major metropolitan corridors in Virginia, Downtown Ashland would be a convenient and desirable place for both businesses and families to locate. This type of land use would reinforce Ashland as a center of employment. The station area is a logical location for nodes of increased residential and economic activity. As stated in the DRPT study, "These recommendations are formed by, and seek to build on, Ashland's unique character and small-town intimacy, as well as its rich variety of architectural styles and periods. Overall goals include enabling more people to live downtown, increasing the amount of retail space downtown and fully integrating the Randolph-Macon College campus with the town." The new development is intended to fit in with the historic Downtown character on existing vacant lots, through coordination with Randolph-Macon College and through redevelopment of and around existing buildings. Planning for this type of development will support continued rail service and other forms of public transportation. Future transit oriented development will take considerable planning by the Town, some of which is included in this Plan and includes items such as:

- a significant investment in local and regional transit that supports and complements the rail service;
- zoning changes allowing for and encouraging mixed use development within the Downtown areas;
- an increase in allowable building heights within the Downtown areas;
- a reduction in parking requirements to allow for shared use of parking;
- the creation of a build-to line in the zoning ordinance to require a consistent relationship between the buildings and the street.



Mixed Use-England Street Sketch.

This sketch shows the desired placement buildings for new construction and redevelopment projects and the placement of parking and street trees.

MU –England Street North and England Street South

The current uses on this part of England Street and the established residential areas nearby make England Street an appropriate location for the land use designation of Mixed Use. The addition of residential on England Street with the current mix of retail, restaurant, service, and office will better unify the historic downtown with England Street. The addition of arts related businesses at the street level will help to create the lively business district the Town desires. Two separate land use categories were created to differentiate between the lot depths from the north side to the south side of England Street. These are Mixed Use England Street North and Mixed Use England Street South. The Mixed Use England Street North designation will also be utilized along most of the first two blocks of Thompson Street. Appropriate transition from commercial activity along England Street to the residential areas on the north and south should be provided. While the automobile should be accommodated, the uses in this district should be oriented to the pedestrian.

No matter the specific uses that are ultimately developed here, this street should become, in its appearance, a tree-lined entrance to the center of Ashland; it could be considered a boulevard in the future. Therefore, there are very specific designations for the landscape along England Street listed below, and shown on the illustration above.

As development and redevelopment takes place along this corridor, the differences in the sizes of the north and south blocks must be considered. On the north side, the depth of the lots, between England Street and the alley serving College Avenue is about 200 feet. In contrast, the southern lots are approximately 300 feet deep. Therefore, it is assumed that a slightly higher density of development can take place on the southern lots allowing more parking and taller buildings than on the northern lots. As a result, three story buildings may be appropriate on the south, and two stories should be the limit on the north both designed so as not to interfere with the adjacent residential character. This is especially true when adjacent to College Avenue. In contrast, a higher density residential district is recommended to the south of England Street, where development can be effectively coordinated with the patterns of size and design of any adjacent mixed use buildings here. Blocks on either side of the street shall consist of a mixture of retail, office, and services on street level, with a mix of office and residential uses on upper floors.

The previous sketch indicates the recommended locations and heights of buildings, the widths of the sidewalks, and the nature of the boulevard style landscapes including street trees and small green parks. Note that the buildings are to be set back about 20 to 25 feet from the curb, no matter where the actual property line is located. This will permit the addition of sidewalks at least ten feet wide; wide enough for pedestrians to move comfortably. This recommended setback dimension will also accommodate the inclusion of a 10 foot wide green edge along the street. This green edge provides the space for large shade trees and added green space along the length of the street. The increased setback allows for the opportunity for small plaza areas to accommodate uses such as outdoor dining.

On the south side of the street, the setback, sidewalk and green edge dimensions will permit the planting of trees without the need to remove the overhead wires. This criterion follows the guidelines as suggested by the Municipal Tree Restoration Program mentioned in Chapter 8. (Note that the removal of these wires has been considered in the past, but the cost has always proven to be prohibitive.)

Building footprints should occupy a minimum of 25 percent of lot area, and floor area ratios should be at least 0.6. Floor area ratio is the floor area of a building or buildings on a lot divided by the lot area.

These numbers are intended to be consistent with the idea of a walkable boulevard and yet be small enough in scale and spacious enough to be compatible with the idea of small town Ashland.

Parking should be provided on-site, but at a reduced ratio than is required in more suburban areas of Town. On the south side of England Street, parking can and should be accommodated only to the rear of buildings. On the smaller north side, some parking may be located on the sides of buildings. If parking is located on the side, a continuous green hedge row should separate the parking lot from the sidewalk. On both sides of the street, walkways that lead from the sidewalk and building fronts to the rear parking should be designed as small, shaded, green sitting parks. Exceptions may be granted for corner lots to allow parking on the side of a building along secondary streets. Buildings should always front on the principal road, England Street.

Also, as mentioned in the MU-Historic Downtown section, shared parking should be considered which can reduce the amount of parking needed, reduce the coverage of our precious land by asphalt, and yet be fully functional for the mix of uses here.

Thompson Street

A portion of Thompson Street falls within the MU-England Street North land use designation. The characteristics of Thompson Street, on both sides from Duncan Street to the western edge of the commercial district, are the same as the north side of England Street; both of these areas are about 200 feet in depth and have residential neighborhoods behind them. Therefore the design details on Thompson Street are the same as those for England Street North: sidewalks approximately 10 feet wide, a green planting strip for shade trees approximately 10 feet wide, and a building setback of approximately 20 feet. In addition, lining this small portion of Thompson Street with shade trees will extend the boulevard quality of England Street and yet be seen as a link to the historic bungalow neighborhood at the immediate west. Again, parking will be in the rear or on the side, and small green landscaped walkways should lead from the sidewalks to the parking areas.

Redesign of England Street

As established in § 15.2-2306 of the State code, a historic overlay district may be established on significant routes of tourist access to the Town or to designated historic districts. England Street falls into this category. An overlay district does not alter the underlying zoning regulations but provides additional requirements for the design and form of new and/or expanded buildings. This overlay district would provide an authority to the Town in affecting visual character of England Street in terms of architectural design and design of the surrounding streetscape allowing greater detail than conventional zoning.



Policy LU.7 England Street Design Overlay District

In order to fulfill the vision of England Street as the red carpet to the historic Downtown, a design overlay district should be created for England and Thompson Streets from South James to Route 1. The guidance provided by the overlay district will ensure optimal results for new development and redevelopment along this gateway corridor.

The Future of the Downtowns

The best way for Downtown Ashland to reach its full potential is to have a clear and effective plan of development. A downtown plan will set the stage for catalytic new development, while focusing on preserving existing historic resources and neighborhood character and enhancing existing open spaces. The main goal of a downtown plan is to spur new residential development and residential conversion of existing buildings and thereby foster a more lively retail, dining and entertainment district. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings and infill development leverages existing infrastructure making the Town more sustainable as it continues to develop.

Policy LU.8 Downtown Plan

The Town should work to obtain funding for a Downtown Plan that addresses details such as suggested public improvements, a parking plan, future building locations, guidelines for building design, and other suggestions for the Downtown.

Commercial Designations

Five commercial land use categories have been identified. These designations are:

- Mixed Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Interstate Commercial
- Office/Industrial
- Industrial

Mixed Commercial

The Mixed Commercial Land Use category is the predominant use along Route 1 and is also located to the east of Interstate 95. This is a land use category that contains a mix of office and commercial uses, which complement each other and by design coexist. Office workers can eat and shop in the retail and restaurants, hotels can serve the offices, and so on. Regarding future development located on Route 1, see the section below concerning the creation of a design overlay district.





Corporate, Class A office space as defined in Chapter 3, Community Character and Design, is appropriate in this land use category. This land use should employ a large number of people, and be highly visible. Buildings should employ quality architecture and sit on highly landscaped campuses. It may be appropriate to exceed the three-story standard used elsewhere throughout Town. Where this land use occurs on the east side of Interstate 95, due to the greater visibility of this site from the I-95 corridor, it is our intent to maximize the use of land for economic development activities.

Also appropriate within this land use designation is a mix of retail, restaurants and hotels. These can be located in separate buildings or mixed in to single buildings. These uses should be designed at a density that is appropriate for a pedestrian scale, while still being easily accessible to the automobile.

Retail developments that encourage interconnectivity and pedestrian activity should be encouraged. The construction of new conventional strip shopping centers should be discouraged in Mixed Commercial.

Neighborhood Commercial

The Neighborhood Commercial category is located on the map along Route 1 between Archie Cannon Drive and Caroline Street and on Thompson Street north of Wesley Street. This land use is a limited business or professional office activity meant to provide services to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. These businesses are meant to be small in scale. Development should be buffered to protect nearby residential development and should serve as a graceful transition use between more intense commercial land uses and residential uses. Acceptable uses will have a limited impact on adjacent residential areas especially in terms of lighting, signage, traffic, noise, and hours of operation. Building heights for new construction should not exceed two-stories, should be complementary to the residential character, and appropriately buffered from adjacent residential uses. Parking areas should be discouraged adjacent to right-of-ways. Most appropriate placement of the parking lot would be to the rear or side of the building.

Interstate Commercial

This category appears on the map on Route 54 between Route 1 and Interstate 95. Interstate Commercial is similar to Mixed Commercial in that it accommodates a mix of higher-end hotel, restaurant, retail, and general commercial serving both the residents of Ashland and interstate travelers. This land use should serve and employ a large number of people, and be highly visible.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, Economy, there are underutilized parcels along the Route 54 corridor between Interstate 95 and Route 1. These sites are a prime location for mixed-use commercial development with higher-quality retail, hotel, and office components. By redeveloping at a higher floor area ratio, this would equate to a higher value for the land and the improvement resulting in a higher total property tax and increased revenue for the Town.

Buildings in this category should have high quality architecture and may exceed the three-story standard used elsewhere in Town, as the intent is to maximize the use of land along the interstate for economic development activities. Parking along right-of-ways and between buildings should be minimized. As mentioned in Policy CD.40, as one of the gateways to Ashland, the Town shall continue to maintain and enhance the landscaping along this corridor.

As mentioned in Mixed Commercial, future development should encourage interconnectivity between uses and pedestrian activity should be encouraged. The construction of new conventional strip shopping centers should be discouraged in Interstate Commercial.

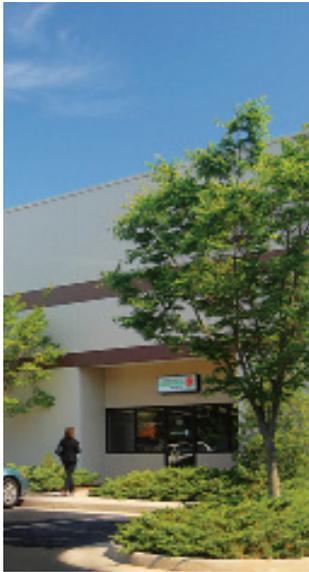
Office/Industrial

A mixture of professional offices, research facilities, light manufacturing, and warehouses are appropriate in this land use designation. These facilities should be fully enclosed, with no outside activities, and should be highly attractive from the public right-of-way. Building heights of one to two stories would be appropriate.

Industrial

Industrial uses including manufacturing, truck terminals, warehousing and processing of raw materials are appropriate in this area. These uses should be designed to ensure compatibility with less intense uses. Outside storage may be appropriate, provided that it is fully screened from adjacent properties by architecturally compatible walls or evergreen screening. If it is necessary to conduct significant portions of these operations outside, then the uses should be located and designed to minimize noise, dust, or other environmental impacts on existing and anticipated areas of development.



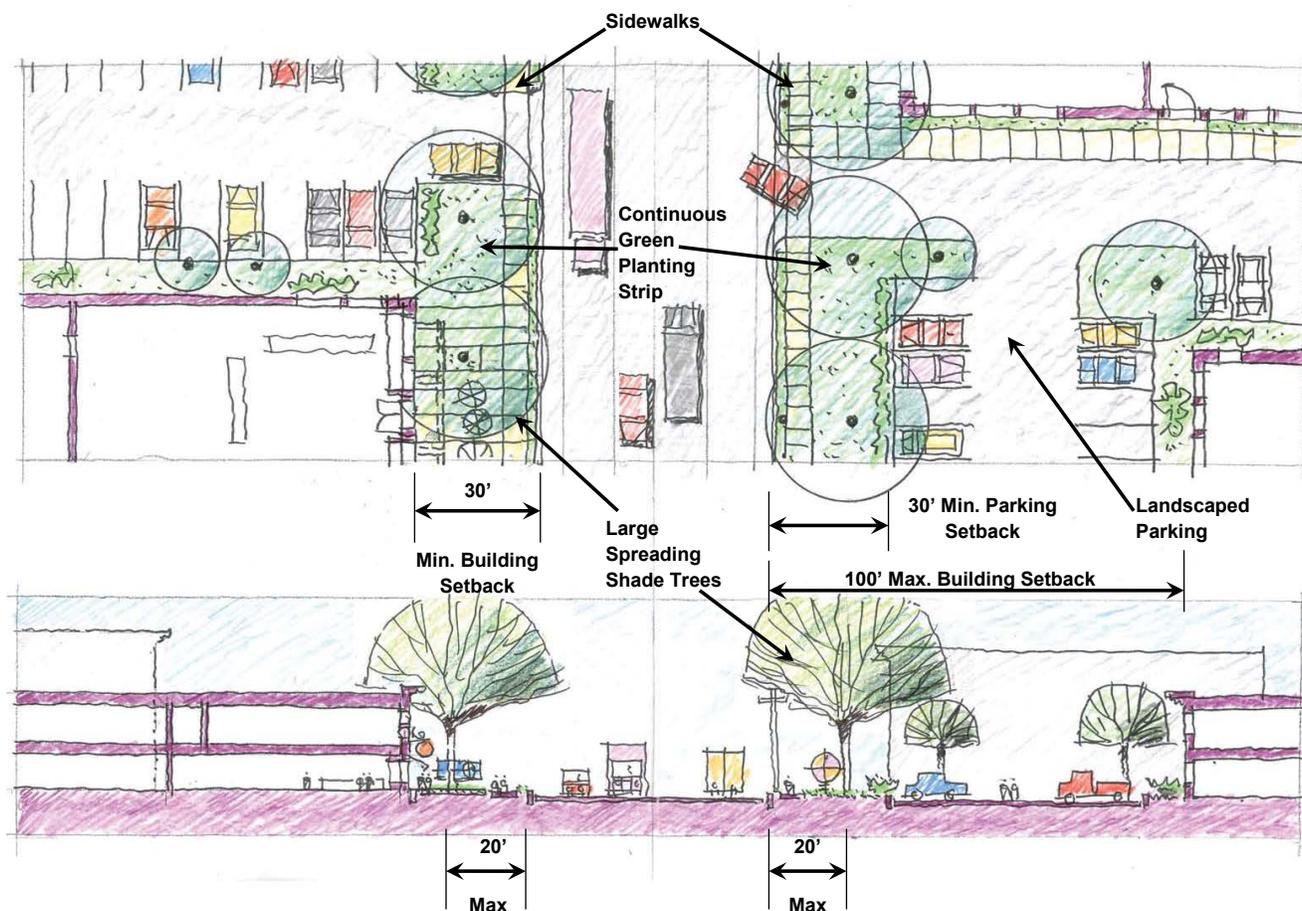


Technology Zone Overlay District

In July of 2010, the Town Council adopted an ordinance designating three corridors in Town as a Technology Zone. Tech zones are designed to attract, accommodate and accelerate new-economy technology businesses. This zone is specifically designed to facilitate business investment, increase quality jobs and employment opportunities, increase public revenue, and keep Ashland competitive in attracting new industry. The three corridors are Route 1 South, Hill Carter Parkway and Dow Gill Road. These corridors are located in Mixed Commercial, Office/Industrial and Industrial land use designations on the Future Land Use map. Additional information regarding the Technology Zones including a map can be found in Chapter 6, Economy.

Route 1 Design Overlay District

As noted above concerning mixed commercial use and as mentioned in Chapter 3, Community Character and Design, Policy CD.23, creation of a design overlay district for the Route 1 corridor will provide guidelines and standards for public and private development projects in commercially zoned areas along the Route 1. The intent of the Design Overlay District is to provide guidance and direction in the creation of a parkway-like quality and to raise the quality of design and business within this corridor. This overlay district will address the design of new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing buildings and storefronts in order to improve the appearance, enhance the identity, and promote the pedestrian environment of the Route 1 corridor. All projects within the boundaries of the Route 1 Design Overlay District should comply with the design guidelines and development standards as established in creation of the design overlay district. These guidelines and standards are intended to provide architectural guidance and create a unified character for the Route 1 corridor. Specific incentives should be considered to encourage existing businesses to participate in the redevelopment effort. The resulting improvements to the corridor are intended to attract new businesses and customers, and provide for the comfort, convenience, and safety of workers, residents, shoppers and visitors. New development and revitalization projects along the Route 1 corridor should follow the form and character of a parkway once the overlay district is created. The intended result of the parkway is shown in the following sketch.



Future Route 1 Sketch.

Policy LU.9 Key Intersection Overlay District

Because corner lots have road frontage on two sides of the property, the developable area is reduced by the buffer that must be maintained along the two road frontages. This required buffer may act as a hindrance to development and redevelopment. An overlay district should be created to provide flexibility to the developer/property owner to encourage redevelopment at specific key intersections. Design waivers may be given to allow for variations in the site plan. Key intersections along Route 1 are Archie Cannon Drive, England Street/Route 54, Ashcake Road, and Maple Street (extended). Along Route 54, the key intersections are Hill Carter Parkway and Mount Hermon/Frances Road.

Institutional Uses

Three Institutional land use designations have been identified on the Future Land Use Plan Map. This designation consists of:

- Open Space
- Government
- Randolph-Macon College

This sketch shows the desired look of Route 1 in the future indicating the placement of buildings, parking, sidewalks and street trees.



Open Space

Open space areas are intended to be reserved for a variety of uses, such as formal recreation parks, passive parks, and greenways. Chapter 9, Parks and Recreation discusses policies related to the completion of the open space framework of the Town. The goal of designating land areas as Open Space is to preserve wetlands and green infrastructure within the Town. Information regarding wetlands and green infrastructure is provided in Chapter 8, Environment.

Policy LU.10 Open Space

Linear open space areas as shown on the Future Land Use map are intended for maintenance by the Town, as part of a Town-wide greenway system. Construction of these amenities shall be provided by private development where practicable. On parcels that are not intended for development, the Town may need to proactively acquire and develop portions of the greenway system.



Government

These areas are intended for uses incidental with the provision of federal, state, and municipal services. Government uses include uses such as public schools, the library, the post office, Town Hall, and the police station. Most of the land area designated as this land use type is already occupied by government facilities. Expansion of these facilities in their existing locations is appropriate.

This statement is not intended to imply that government services should not occur in other land use areas, however the type of land use category where these services are provided should be appropriate for the type of service delivered. For example, administrative offices would be appropriate where office uses are suggested, or additional land for the Town Shop would be appropriate where industrial uses are suggested.

Policy LU.11 Schools

The Town will encourage any new schools that are proposed by the County to serve the Ashland population to be built within the Town limits. Property near Gandy Elementary would be an appropriate location for new construction, if the time comes that the existing structures become unusable as schools.



Randolph-Macon College

Randolph-Macon College adopts its own Master Plan for campus development. In conjunction with this plan, the Town adopts the College's Master Plan. The most recent Randolph-Macon College Master Plan was adopted in 2009 by the College's Board of Trustees.

The main focus of the College's Master Plan is to create a more pedestrian-friendly and inwardly focused campus. The R-MC Plan suggests fostering connections with the Town of Ashland, reducing on-street parking, increasing while consolidating surface parking within the campus boundaries, and enhancing student safety while crossing Town thoroughfares. Also recommended is increasing the tree canopy according to the Town's 2004 Development Guidelines Handbook and developing a sign package in conjunction with the Town specifically for the Higher Education Zone.

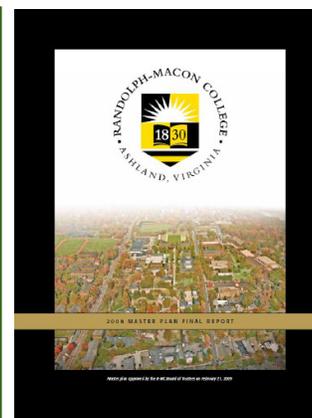
It is recommended that as development of R-MC continues west of the railroad tracks, that the current footprint be maintained with no further expansion. Attention should be given to land use decisions in this area for potential impacts to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Ashland Overlay District

The Ashland Overlay District was created by Hanover County as a result of the 1996 annexation agreement between the Town and County and is included in the Hanover County Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027. This district is an overlay zoning district established to provide additional controls for commercial and industrial development. It is intended to encourage compatible development in areas of the County that are adjacent to the Town. Under the terms of the 1996 Voluntary Settlement Agreement, amendments to the Ashland Overlay District require the approval of both the Town and Hanover County. This is an opportunity for joint planning between the Town and County.

Policy LU.12 Cooperative Planning with Hanover County

The Town should coordinate with the County in the development of additional code language that would govern residential development, as well as commercial and industrial development, surrounding Ashland. Issues that should be addressed include: lot width and size, street grid and capacity, subdivision interconnectivity, subdivision access requirements.



4.3 PHASING OF DEVELOPMENT

The Development Patterns Map, Map LU-3, is hereby incorporated to be a part of this chapter. The map is intended to be a generalized depiction of current development patterns, similar to the generality implied with the Land Use Plan Map policies.

When referring to development patterns within this chapter, the chapter is meant to be interpreted as all-encompassing regarding the general character of development in an area, with respect to setback, building height, building spacing, lot widths and building character.

Policy LU.13 Established Areas

Established Areas are characterized by an existing, established, built-out pattern of development. Development activity in these areas should keep and reinforce these patterns.

Policy LU.14 Redeveloping Areas

Redeveloping areas are already developed, but lack a cohesive or sustainable pattern, or contain areas of conflicting land uses, or are no longer reasonably representing a highest and best use of the land.

Redevelopment in these areas should benefit from development policies geared to encourage appropriate re-use of the property.

In certain instances, especially in high-profile areas, it may be appropriate for the Town to assist with the initiation of redevelopment of certain properties.

Policy LU.15 Infill Areas

Infill areas are vacant tracts that are nearly surrounded by existing development.

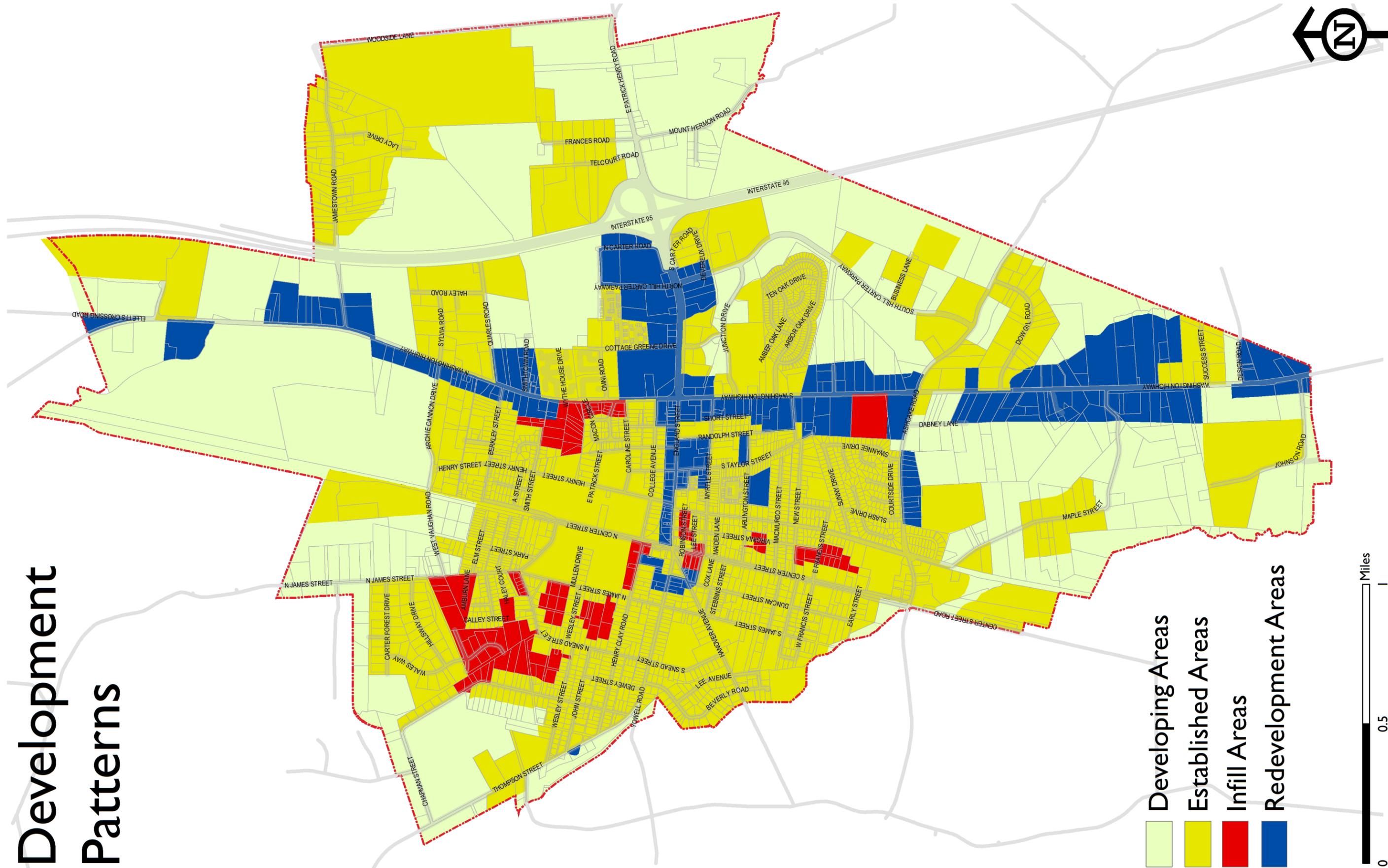
Development in these areas should benefit from development policies geared to encourage appropriate infill development that takes advantage of the existing infrastructure and proximity to built-up areas. These policies should attempt to make infill areas similar in character to surrounding development, as well as ease some of the regulation that may have prevented prior development on the tract.

Policy LU.16 Developing Areas

Developing areas generally lack an established pattern of development.

Development in these areas should create new, sustainable development patterns that attempt to incorporate the existing and future street grid network.

Development Patterns

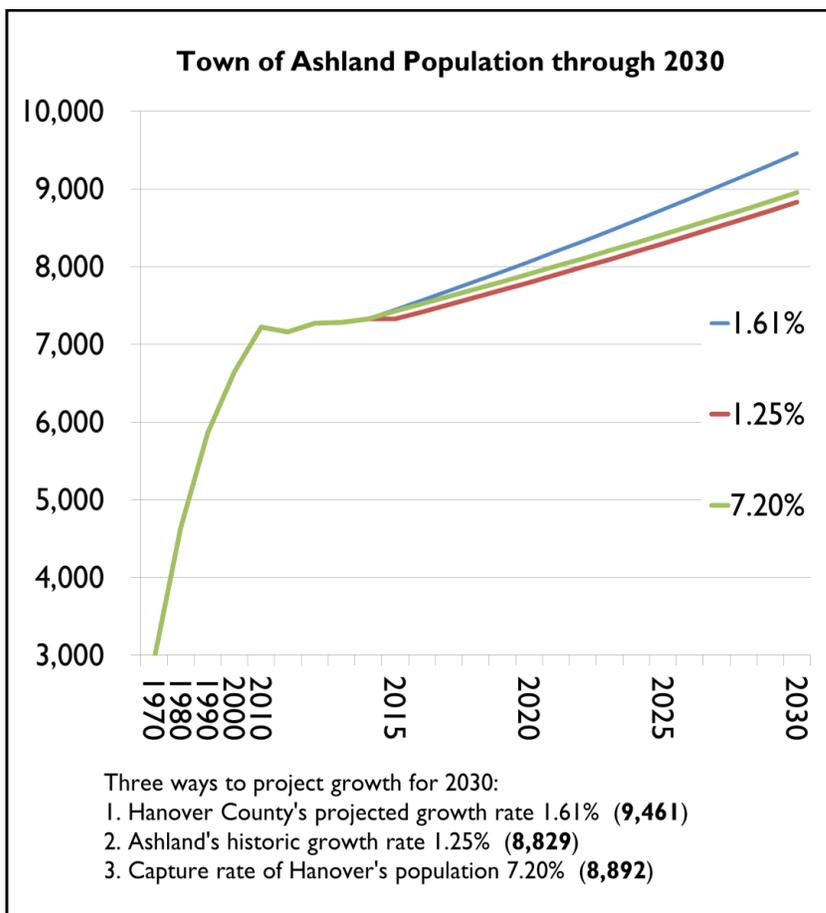


4.4 GROWTH RATES

Rationale for a Target Growth Rate

The Town of Ashland recognizes the need to manage a reasonable growth rate for the following reasons:

- Fair and efficient allocation of community resources that could be harmed by a high growth rate.
- Too much growth too quickly can result in a large amount of similar housing saturating the market, which can cause long range problems as the housing ages and becomes less desirable.
- Preservation of community character and diversity. Ashland grew organically beginning in the 1850s. What has resulted is a mix of housing types, even next door to one another. There are examples within the Town where large developments have been constructed within a short period of time and therefore little variety exists, and the character is not reflective of the rest of the Town.
- In order to balance the desire to maintain a small-town character, yet remain a significant force in Hanover County and the Greater Richmond area.
- A natural human desire for gradual change.



**Table LU-1:
Town Population through 2030**

Policy LU.17 Desired Rate of Growth

The Town should grow at a rate of 1.25 to 2 percent annually. This rate is justified as Hanover County has set its target growth rate at 2 percent. The Town must grow at a similar pace in order to remain a center of activity and new investment as surrounding areas develop. Further, it will be important that the Town absorb some of the area's growth to ensure that the Town maintains an active position in County politics, and is an attractive location for County facilities.

The intended growth rate should not be considered on an annual basis, as economic cycles fluctuate from year to year. A five year trend in building permits should be analyzed to see if the Town is in fact meeting the target 1.25 to 2 percent growth rate. Projects should be reviewed individually based on the merit of this Comprehensive Plan. The growth rate can be exceeded by addressing the specific impacts to the Town and County including transportation, schools, emergency services, parks and recreation and other capital needs.

Policy LU.18 How to Apply the Intended Growth Rate Over Time

As of 2009, approximately 38 to 65 units should be constructed annually to maintain the growth rate. This number will, of course increase over time as the base population increases. According to 2016 data, this range is still consistent with the Town plans for growth. The growth and capture rates in Policy LU.17 would equate to the following annual new home construction rates: 56 (1.61% growth), 42 (1.25% growth), and 42 (7.2% capture rate). Detailed charts are provided in the Appendix.

Policy LU.19 How to Apply the Intended Growth Rate to Individual Zoning Requests

Through the rezoning and conditional use permit process, phasing shall be implemented through the use of proffered conditions (or imposed conditions in the event of a conditional use permit) to ensure that the Town's intended annual growth rate is not exceeded. Phasing shall apply for projects larger than 10 units.

Historically, about 10 to 20 percent of new units constructed have been located on existing individual lots, therefore the rezoning and conditional use permit processes should not authorize more than 80 to 90 percent of the maximum 2 percent growth rate.

As of 2009, no more than 52 to 58 units would be appropriate on an annual basis within an aggregate of all approved and unbuilt rezonings. Exceptions to this projection may be considered due to the fact that past development in Ashland has not met projected growth rates. From 2000 to 2014, the annual average of new housing units per population growth was 13 compared to the projected 35 to 65 units detailed in Policy LU.18.

The Planning Commission and Town Council shall consider the potential for future rezoning requests when applying the growth rate, and therefore should be cautious not to approve the entire 80 to 90 percent to a single development, unless impacts are adequately addressed or as an incentive to provide higher quality design components.

Policy LU.20 Application of the Intended Growth Rate in Established, Redevelopment, Infill Areas

The Planning Commission and Town Council recognize that application of the phasing suggested by Policy LU.19 may be detrimental to Established, Redevelopment and Infill Areas, and may exercise discretion in allowing a greater number of units annually than suggested. This discretion is intended to encourage development within built-up areas, as well as decrease the length of time that a proposed development may inconvenience existing neighbors while it is being constructed.

Table LU-2: Annual Average Growth Rate of the Town

	Average Annual Growth Rate	Growth principally attributed to:
1940s	4.3%	Scattered infill development
1950s	0.6%	Scattered infill development
1960s	0.6%	Scattered infill development
1970s	4.7%	Very little development. Annexation of Several neighborhoods.
1980s	2.4%	Trotter Mill condos -- 35 units Sedgefield MHP -- 265 units Slash Cottage -- 206 units Hanover/Laurel Woods -- 80 units
1990s	1.2% (0.8% w/o VSA)	Arlington Square -- 53 units Myrtle Street Commons -- 18 units VSA annexed -- 105 units
2000s	1.6%	Ashland Woods -- 150 units North Macon Terrace -- 46 units Omni Park Place -- 60 units Maple Street -- 23 units Berkeley Woods -- 20 units Cottage Greene -- 54 units Carter's Hill -- 23 units

Source: Planning Staff

TO DO LIST

1. Update Zoning Code:
 - Adjust zoning to agree with residential designations
 - Specifically define what actions are necessary to receive density allocations
 - Adopt an ordinance to design guidelines included in neighborhood plans
 - Implement form based zoning where applicable
 - Adopt changes necessary to support Transit Oriented Development
2. Create England Street Design Overlay District and update Design Guidelines from downtown to the Interstate exit.
3. Fund and complete a Downtown Plan.
4. Create Route 1 Design Overlay District.
5. Develop a plan for the following Key Intersections to guide and spur investment:
 - Route 1: Archie Cannon Drive, England Street/Route 54, Ashcake Road, and Maple Street (extended)
 - Route 54: Hill Carter Parkway and Mount Hermon/Frances Road