

## APPENDIX D--COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Citizen involvement is an essential part of writing a Comprehensive Plan. Several public forums were conducted to invite residents to comment on their vision for the Town. Below is a synopsis of each of the meetings that were held.

### **Kick-off meeting—January 28, 2008**

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This initial meeting was held in the Council Chambers to explain the process for updating the Comprehensive Plan and to receive comments from citizens. This meeting described the Comprehensive Plan as an official document adopted by the Council to guide and direct decisions regarding growth and development. The Plan is a statement about what the community is today and what it would like to be in the future.

### **Collecting Comments**

Neighborhood maps were placed around the chambers so that each person could make specific comments about what they wanted to see in their neighborhood, or anywhere in Town, by placing a post-it note on the map in the area referred to in their comment. Along with the maps and post-its there were blank cards positioned around the room so that residents could write down their thoughts on development, drainage, traffic, or whatever their hot button topic was. These comments were recorded in a database to be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Take the Plan to the Community—April 10, 2008**

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The Comprehensive Plan went on the road and its first stop was St. James the Less Episcopal Church. The participants in this forum were randomly assigned to groups of 5 and were given a set of questions regarding various aspects of the Town.

## **COMMUNITY IDENTITY**

### *What contributes to the best qualities of the identity of Ashland?*

Many of the comments regarding the identity of Ashland were limited to the downtown area and included the train, the College, and the social gatherings that take place in the immediate area, such as the Street Parties and events sponsored by the Hanover Arts & Activities Center.

Ashland has many historic buildings that are still in use as homes and businesses today. The Town desires to maintain this character by avoiding cookie-cutter, homogenized subdivisions.

Ashland prides itself on being a caring and active community with many town-wide events that draw many people from the Town and surrounding areas. The Strawberry Faire, the Bluemont Concerts, and the Variety Show are all favorites among many of the Town's residents. They are concerned that if the Town is allowed to grow too quickly this small town atmosphere from a bygone era will disappear, as people may no longer get to know their neighbors.

### **Ashland Loves its Trains**

Amtrak service figured prominently in all of the discussions at this meeting. Ashland owes its beginnings to the RF&P Railroad and it has remained a loyal train town since 1858.

Amtrak brings commuters, students and tourists to the Town. Many residents use the train for pleasure and business travel.

The centrally located train station is not only convenient; it provides an attractive centerpiece for the Town. It is one of the most photographed buildings in Ashland.

Ashland's Historic District, the College and the Town's geographic position in the County give Ashland a sense of place that many communities lack. One resident described it as "the prettiest place on Amtrak" and many people found Ashland for the first time because they rode through it on the train.

### *What can we do to maintain or get to the desired identity of Ashland?*

There were many concerns that uncontrolled development around the Town would make Ashland a cut-through area as opposed to a destination place. It was believed that a good Comprehensive Plan and open communication with the County was needed to avoid this.

It is understood that growth will occur but responsible growth is needed to maintain a low crime rate and good Town services. The concern already exists that the identity of the Town is lost the further you move out from its core.

Many citizens were concerned with preserving their neighborhoods and believed this could be accomplished through design standards for both residential and commercial uses.

Redevelopment of vacant properties was recommended as a strategy for keeping a neighborhood vital.

New construction should not only reflect the neighborhood character but new street names should have a connection with the Town.

Ashland is a town within a county and even though the two work closely together there should be a geographic delineation of the two. The gateways and Town Center should be clearly defined to show the boundary lines of the Town.

### *What are threats to our identity?*

Uncontrolled development was considered a threat to the identity of the Town.

The loss of Amtrak service would considerably alter the Town's identity as a train town and would result in loss of revenue for the businesses, restaurants and hotels.

Homeowners felt that an overabundance of rental properties affected the value of a neighborhood and that moving the schools out of the town would alter the character of the neighborhoods in which they were located.

### **Let Your Voices Be Heard**

All of the participants in the meeting believed it was vital to continue these types of forums and neighborhood meetings, and to encourage others, especially the younger residents, to offer their opinions.

### *How do neighborhoods, the College, and the railroad contribute to Ashland's identity?*

Collectively, they define the Town. The Town's traditional and cultural events have always been centered around the train and the historic neighborhoods. The College has contributed significantly to these events.

## **KEY RESOURCES**

### *What are our key resources?*

The people of Ashland were considered to be its greatest resource. The residents were described as people who care for their neighbors, their property and their Town.

The schools, The Hanover Arts and Activities Center, the College, and Ashland Coffee and Tea were among the cultural resources mentioned.

Government buildings, the street grid, and the Town pool were all resources that the residents believed were valuable to the Town's identity.

A much needed resource was recently added to the Town when a number of concerned citizens formed a free clinic in two local churches. The clinics are staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses and provide services for uninsured residents. A need still exists for medical specialists, urgent care facilities or a hospital.

### **Natural Resources**

The Town has many passive parks and lovely old trees throughout the community. It is the residents desire to preserve as many of the older trees as possible.

It was pointed out that they needed to weigh trees and green space with economics. The town had to exist economically before it could exist physically, there had to be a balance.

### *What resources are missing?*

Although there are many resources the Town does have, there are a few that are still needed. More senior housing close to downtown, museums, art galleries, an open-air amphitheater, community center and a conference center were among the items on this wish list.

It was agreed that there needed to be a balance of resources for all ages and that a retirement center as well as a venue for children's programs should be considered.

### *What are the threats to these resources?*

Uncontrolled development is a threat to natural resources as well as producing increased traffic that threatens the walkability of the town. The residents were concerned that many small town traditions would disappear if the town grew too large.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY**

### *What types of commerce would you like to see in Ashland?*

There was an immediate request for a bowling alley and similar family entertainment. High-end clothing department stores and shoe repair were mentioned, as well as an active movie theater; hobby and art supply store, a large bookstore, and a high-end restaurant, pub or grill.

Some residents expressed a desire for boutique style shopping, art galleries and an outdoor dance and bandstand area.

Businesses and services that couldn't be found in Ashland included non-chain restaurants that offer family style dining, organic or specialty grocery stores, appliance and furniture stores, camera shops, children's stores and Senior Day Care.

It was suggested that if the office buildings on the tracks were redeveloped as retail some of these types of businesses could locate downtown.

The residents believed that appropriate industrial uses for the Town would be clean industries, small companies that were energy efficient and provided high paying jobs.

### *What types of commerce would you not want to see in Ashland?*

The residents believed that adult uses, pawn shops, strip development, truck stops, and industrial uses that created pollution and heavy traffic did not fit the small town character of Ashland. They also did not want to see large malls, named subdivisions or cul-de-sac development occur, as they believed these types of developments segregate sections of the Town.

### *What's exceptional about Ashland?*

#### **Tradition gives a community sense of place**

The events that are held every year put Ashland on the calendar and the map. The Strawberry Faire, typically the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in June, brings people from all over the state. Other events, although smaller, are just as significant. The Railroad Run that benefits the Hanover Arts and Activities Center, a non-profit organization that sponsors many of the Town's local events, drew over 400 people in 2008. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July non-motorized parade grows larger every summer, and the Holiday Parade, held the Sunday before Thanksgiving, features over 100 units each year.

#### **Diversity in Housing Stock**

The stately homes of the Victorian era interwoven with modern 20<sup>th</sup> century homes depict the Ashland of yesterday and today. The residents expressed their desire to see this diversity continue in the subdivisions and infill housing that develop over time.

### *What brought people to Ashland?*

Walkability. The number one answer to this question was that Ashland is a small town and many shops, schools and parks are within walking distance from the residential areas. It was noted that there are very few other towns where you can walk to the train station.

Some people were already familiar with Ashland and some found it by chance. Others married someone who lived here and then made it their home as well. Some came as students or teachers at the College. No matter how they found it, they quickly came to love it. Some who left it for a while came back and settled here with their children. Ashland becomes a part of everyone it touches.

#### **Iconic Places in Ashland**

When asked to name a place where they would meet someone coming to Town, something that everyone would be familiar with, most of the answers centered around the tracks.

The train station for its central location, and the Ironhorse Restaurant for its large windows that looked out on the Town were the two most mentioned, Suzanne's Homemades, Ashland Coffee and Tea and the Town Hall Green were also mentioned as places that were immediately associated with Ashland. The Library Plaza, with its benches and fountain, makes an attractive meeting place and Andy's Restaurant was noted as being a favorite with many of the locals.

### *What features do residents value in Ashland?*

The residents believed significant features included the Victorian architecture, the train, Cross Bros. Grocery Store, the Library, parks, trees, sidewalks and trails.

### **Residents would like to see more involvement from the College.**

There was a desire to see the College become a more active partner in the community. It was suggested that the College be open to different types of students, a specific request was made to provide “Empty Nester” courses.

It was also suggested that Randolph-Macon should put more effort into publicizing the cultural activities and events they sponsor.

### *Can we grow without change?*

It was recognized that change will occur and the Town will grow. Responsible growth, creative thinking, and paying close attention to what develops around the Town are essential to maintaining the Town’s character.

Trying to never change may be as detrimental as changing too fast. The Town must stay current with transportation facilities, technology, services and amenities while phasing development to avoid too much pressure on an already expanding traffic network.

## **Where Are We Now? Defining Community Character**

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On Monday, September 29, 2008, a community workshop entitled “Where Are We Now? Defining Community Character,” was held at Gandy Elementary School. The workshop drew more than 50 community residents.

A detailed description of the planning process was given that focused on ways in which the community’s basic physical elements – open space, streets and buildings – affect its overall character. It was explained that the comprehensive plan would provide policy direction on how and where these physical elements could be enhanced or improved, with specific guidance on how future growth could be shaped in order to promote the desired characteristics of the community while optimizing economic development opportunities.

Participants then moved to facilitated breakout tables, sharing ideas on what they would want to preserve and what they would want to change within each of the Town’s eight focus areas. At the conclusion of the evening, the entire group reconvened to review the comments from each table. General themes and ideas that were raised throughout the evening’s discussions are summarized below.

### **Open Space: Preserve and enhance the Town’s natural beauty and community gathering places.**

- Add more green space, parks, and recreational space for people of all ages, especially children and teenagers.
- Preserve trees and tree canopies.
- Improve town-wide landscaping, streetscapes, and lighting.
- Connect parks and pathways throughout the Town, linked to key locations such as schools, recreational facilities, bike parking areas.

**Streets: Create complete grid networks and promote the pedestrian.**

- Maintain the existing dense, walkable grid in older neighborhoods; discourage cut-through trips by installing traffic calming devices and promoting alternate routes.
- Build interconnected street networks in newer areas to improve town-wide circulation and reduce traffic congestion.
- Build a complete network of bicycle and pedestrian routes and paths, including strategically located, safe crossings on major roads, sidewalks and bike routes in commercial areas, and a mix of pathways in residential areas. Make it clear that the pedestrian has priority on residential streets.

**Built Environment: Design seamless visual and physical connections that link revitalized core areas with newly developing industrial, commercial, and residential areas.**

- Downtown: Increase the density and mixture of the downtown business district with carefully designed infill, redevelopment, and parking systems that preserve small-town, historic character. Improve accessibility to downtown (make England Street the “red carpet”) in order to promote it as a regional destination.
- Residential neighborhoods (old and new): Build and maintain neighborhoods that encourage a diverse mix of residents. Provide more multi-family options, particularly townhouses and condominiums. Encourage a mix of housing sizes within new residential areas.
- Emerging development areas: Establish local transportation networks that optimize the town’s proximity to Interstate 95 and major regional roads, attracting more attract major employers and industries to emerging commercial areas while preserving the historic and scenic quality of rural areas on the fringe of town.
- Gateways: Draw travelers from large-scale developing areas and major corridors to the small-scale core of the town. Use public art, landscaping, signage and icons to reinforce these connections. Encourage redevelopment and improve the appearance of existing commercial areas such as Route 54 between Route1 and I-95. Use traffic control measures to manage arterial corridor congestion rather than widening roadways.

**Where Are We Going? Generating Scenarios**

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On the evening of Wednesday, November 5, 2008, the Town of Ashland held its second workshop at Gandy Elementary School to give community members a chance to voice their ideas for channeling growth in Ashland for the update of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. The workshop drew over 20 community residents.

An overview of the planning process and a summary of the issues and opportunities identified at the previous community workshop were provided to begin the evening. Both consultants and town staff introduced the dot map game and described its use as a gauge of where community members would like to place future development. Participants then split into five groups and moved to facilitated breakout tables, each provided with a series of colored stick-on dots representing varying densities of commercial and residential development, and a large map of Ashland. Each group illustrated their goals for growth on their map before placing dots, to begin to establish consensus about where they thought growth was appropriate. Dots were then laid down to form a numeric illustration of each group’s intent. Finally, group members “connected the dots,” drawing new roads, bike paths, and greenways to improve

mobility and enhance the character of Ashland. At the conclusion of the evening, two group members from each table presented their ideas to the entire workshop. General themes and ideas that emerged among the groups throughout the evening's discussions are summarized below.

Western Ashland:

- Add some residential development; either single family homes or a retirement community
- Place limited retail or convenience stores near residential area
- Improve the scenic gateway into town

Downtown:

- Promote some mixed-use infill development, while still preserving Ashland's small-town character

Northern Ashland:

- Between Route 1 and the railroad tracks, develop either a mixed-use community or a suburban residential community similar to that directly south of downtown

Route 1 to I-95 corridor:

- Enhance light industrial or commercial uses.
- Promote destination retail or hotels
- Extend Hill Carter Parkway to enhance access to commercial and retail uses

Southern Ashland:

- Slightly increase density of commercial and clean industrial uses along Route 1

Eastern Ashland:

- Groups proposed a diverse array of options, including:
- Preserve or establish green space to support wildlife habitat
- Promote mixed-use development, including a potential retirement community
- Create a suburban neighborhood similar in scale to existing low-density residential areas

### **Where Do We Want To Be? Evaluating Scenarios**

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In February and March of 2009, the Town of Ashland held its Comprehensive Plan Update Focus Area meeting series to gather public input on four potential development patterns that the Town could implement to accommodate planned growth. The workshops were held in various locations throughout town, with each focusing on a different geographic area.

Each meeting began with an overview on the background and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, as well as an update on the progress of the Comprehensive Plan update. This was followed by a summary of the development scenarios, and the visual and physical characteristics of the place types used to populate the scenarios. Participants then moved to facilitated breakout tables, reviewing the development scenarios on a series of maps. Individual written surveys geared to determine the desirability of each scenario were also given to participants. At the conclusion of the evenings, the entire group reconvened to share comments and ideas from each table. General themes and ideas from the discussions, and survey results are summarized below.

## Place Types and Scenarios

Overall, Scenario Two appears to be the most desired; however some groups noted that some aspects of the other scenarios would be appropriate in certain areas.

Comments included:

- The mixed-use nodes should be closer to existing built-up areas, if not possible then access to these areas must be addressed.
- Some groups were concerned that the new mixed-use nodes would compete with the existing downtown, or that the existing downtown should be built out prior to new mixed-use nodes.
- Ensure that open space is truly preserved, not just shown on the plan as open space, only to be developed later. Also, open space should be on high quality land where possible, not just left-over or undevelopable land.
- Higher density development is appropriate, so long as the small town character is maintained.
- Commercial development should be confined to existing corridors.
- Some property owners were upset that their land was shown as open space on all alternative

Low density Residential

- This place type was acceptable to some groups, while still considered too suburban for some.

Medium Density Residential

- Desirable, especially for infill.

High Density Residential

- Should be geared toward owner-occupancy units and senior living, as there is already an abundance of multi-family and rental property in Town.

Low Density Commercial

- Most stated that this was too suburban for Ashland.
- It was suggested that we seek to phase out the Low Density Commercial development that we currently have, seeking something more typical of medium density, as properties redevelop, even on Route 1 and 54.

Medium Density Commercial

- It was suggested that this should become the norm for commercial development outside of the downtown area.

High Density Commercial

- Mixed opinions on this place type. Some stated this would be appropriate for areas proposed for office uses.

Lower Density Mixed Use (Primarily Residential)

- Desirable

Lower Density Mixed Use (Primarily Commercial)

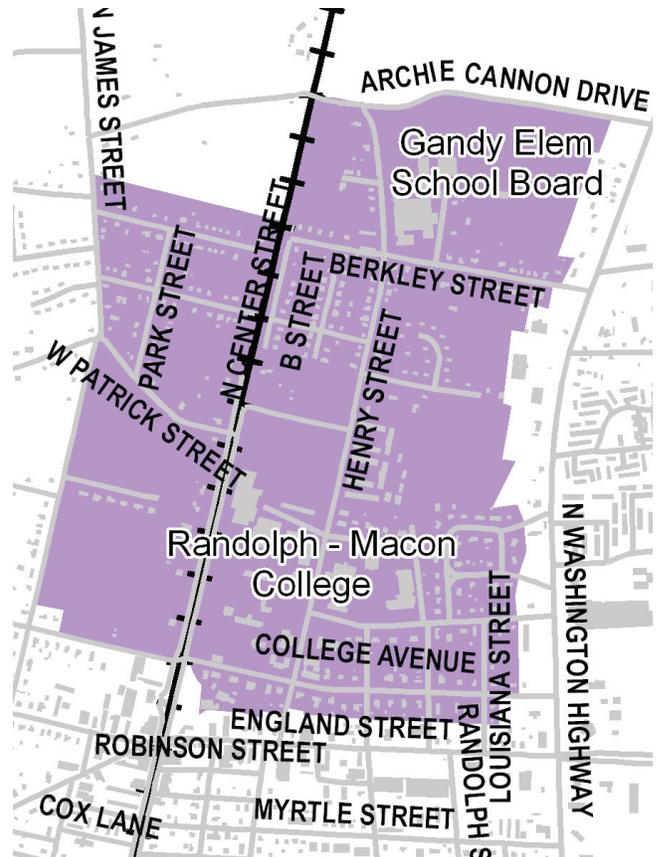
- Desirable

Higher Density Mixed Use

- Some felt that this category was much too urban for downtown Ashland.

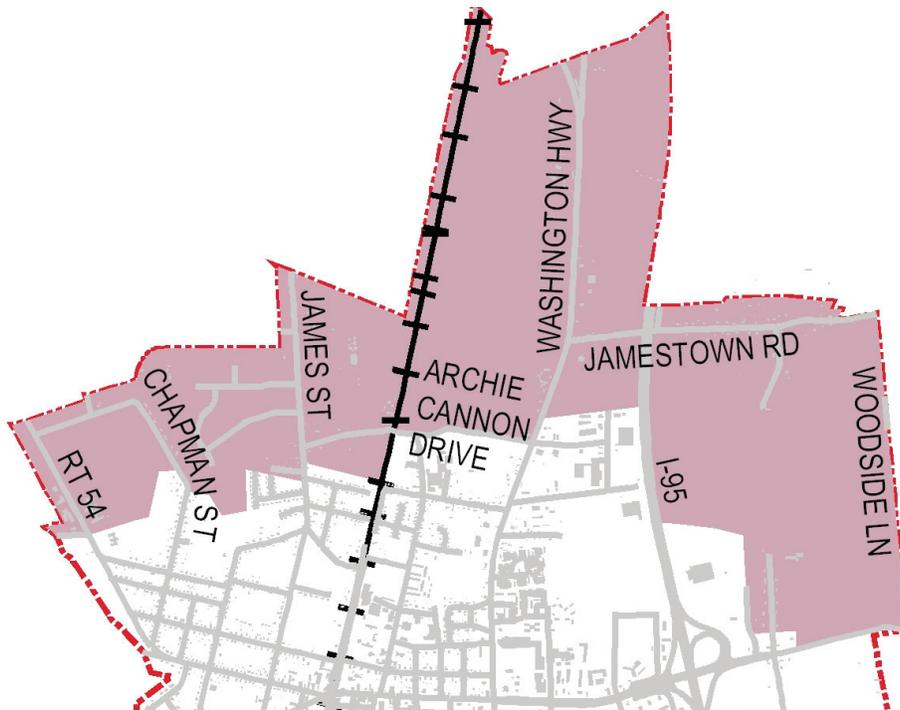
## NORTH ASHLAND

- Do not complete the extension of Berkeley Woods Drive to U.S. 1, or mitigate cut-through traffic.
- Randolph-Macon students should live on-campus rather than living off-campus in single-family neighborhoods.
- In the Linden/Park/Elm area, provide streetlights, curb, gutter, and sidewalks.
- Enhance the Railside Trail; it is an asset to the Linden/Park/Elm neighborhood.
- Preserve and maintain existing alleys.
- Realign the intersection of North James, Patrick and Snead Streets.



## NORTHERN FRINGE

- *Western Mixed-Use Node.* A variety of opinions were given regarding the mixed-use node at the western edge of Town, on Route 54:



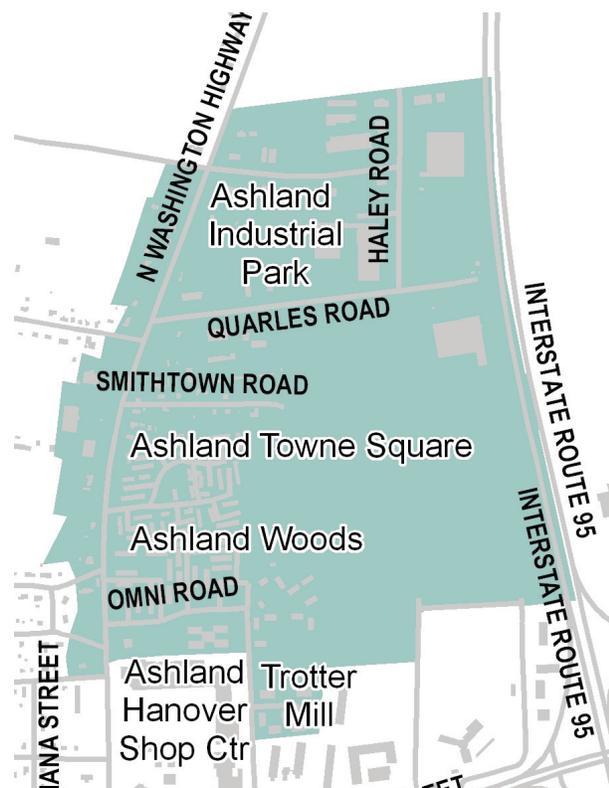
- Some groups were accepting of a more compact mixed-use development in this area
- Several preferred low-density residential in this area to provide transition prior to entering the county.
- Some suggested this was an appropriate location for senior housing, and medical facilities.
- There was dislike for the idea of commercial here, but some saw merit as it would intercept some trips that are currently made to use services on the east side of town.

## appendix d: community participation

- *Northern Mixed-Use Node.* Generally, mixed-use development in this area was accepted, however a few groups had some alternate ideas.
  - A few groups preferred low-density residential on this tract, with some higher-density commercial uses along U.S. 1.
  - Mixed-use would be more appropriate between U.S. 1 and I-95.
  - Residential uses should be buffered from U.S. 1.
  - Medium-density commercial is appropriate along U.S. 1.
  - Commercial uses along U.S. 1, with industrial behind would be a more appropriate treatment for this area.
  - Clean industry, medical uses, and higher end restaurants should be encouraged in this area.
  - Attractive light industrial uses should be located on the west side of U.S. 1, to be consistent with those across the road.
  - Heavy industry is not appropriate west of U.S.1.
- *East Ashland Mixed-Use Node.* There were not many comments made regarding the East Ashland area, however some other ideas were expressed:
  - Work/live units are appropriate in this area.
  - Since the East Ashland development is already approved, density should be increased in this development, and not implemented at all in the other suggested mixed-use areas.
  - Woodside Lane should be re-aligned to intersect Route 54 opposite from the proposed East Ashland entrance.
  - An appropriate gateway feature should be created on Route 54 at the eastern Town limits.
- *Land between Proposed Lacy Park/I-95/Route 54/Jamestown Road.* None of the scenarios suggested mixed-use development in this area, however one group noted that residential mixed-use may be appropriate here.

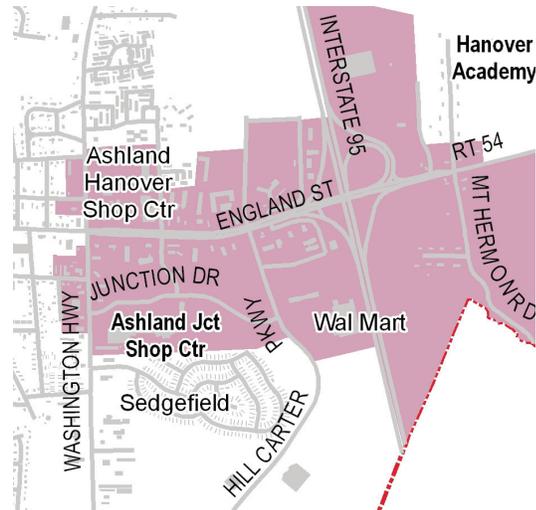
### ROUTE ONE NORTH CORRIDOR

- Pedestrian access is very difficult in this area. This is a high pedestrian area with the concentration of multi-family.
- Commercial uses should be concentrated on the vacant tract.
- Little input was received relative to the off-ramp shown on Southbound I-95 in Scenarios 1 & 3.

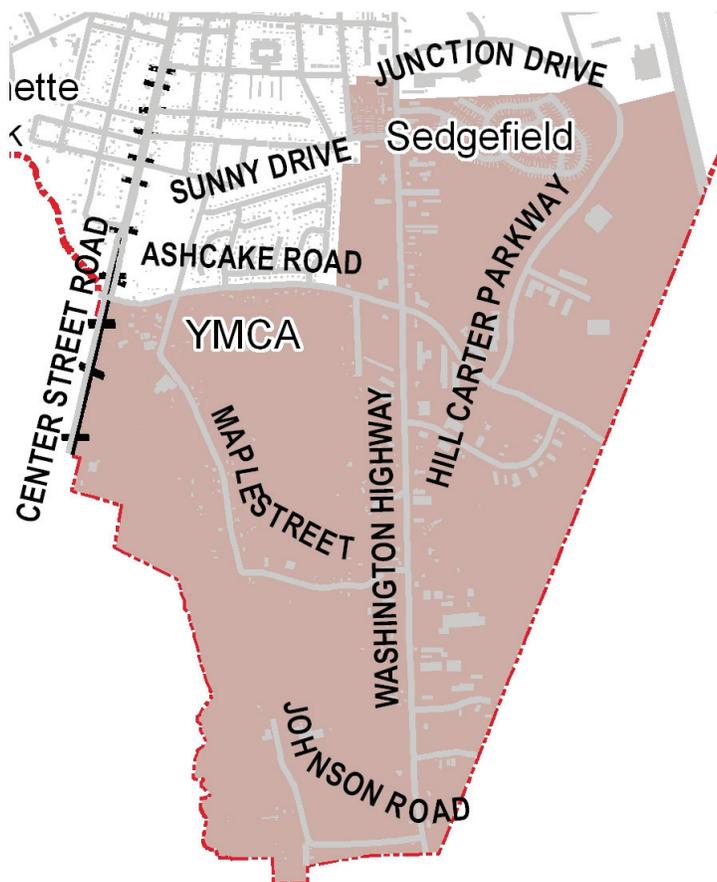


## REGIONAL SERVICE AREA

- Encourage higher density in this existing built-up area. Address pedestrian safety issues along U.S. 1, especially at the intersection of Route 54.
- Tractor-trailer traffic has a detrimental effect on our roads in this area.
- Limit access points and traffic signals on Route 54 east of I-95.



## SOUTHERN FRINGE

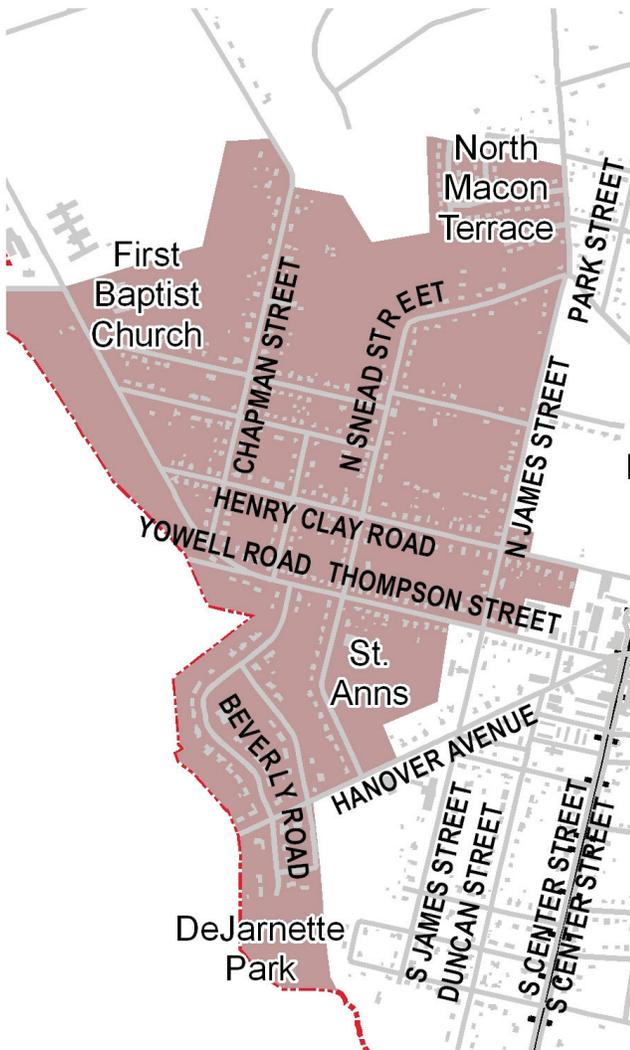


- *North of Ashcake Road.*
  - Large-scale commercial uses (i.e. big boxes) should not be on the west side of U.S. 1, adjacent to the residential areas. These should be located near Wal-Mart.
  - U.S. 1 lacks consistency in land use and character. Some suggested continuing existing development patterns in this area.
- *South of Ashcake Road.*
  - The mixed use node, shown on Scenario 3 would be more appropriate around the intersection of Ashcake Road and U.S. 1. Some felt that no additional density would be appropriate in the Southern Fringe.
  - The existing land use pattern is appropriate, however the aesthetics of this area must be improved.

### SOUTHERN FRINGE CONTINUED...

- Commercial uses along U.S. 1, with industrial behind would be appropriate.
- Light industrial and commercial east of U.S. 1 is appropriate.
- Fix alignment of Maple Street Extended.
- Preserve the 'rural hamlet' along Maple Street. Some additional low-density residential in this area may be appropriate.
- Additional residential density near the YMCA is appropriate.
- Provide bike trails along Maple Street Extended to U.S.1, and ensure that the connection to the Hanover County Trolley Trail is kept open.
- Provide water and sewer to encourage commercial reinvestment.
- Preserve buffers along Stony Run

### WEST ASHLAND



- Specifically, Scenario 3 was preferred in the West Ashland area, as it had the least amount of infill suggested.
- Save the old BP station on Route 54. Suggested reuses included: restaurant, office, community center.
- There were concerns about the preservation of the wooded area between Stony Run and Route 54.
- Complete the extension of Snead Street northward to tie into the Vaughan Road Extension.
- Traffic cut-through concerns were expressed regarding the possibility of intense development at the western node in some of the Northern Fringe scenarios.

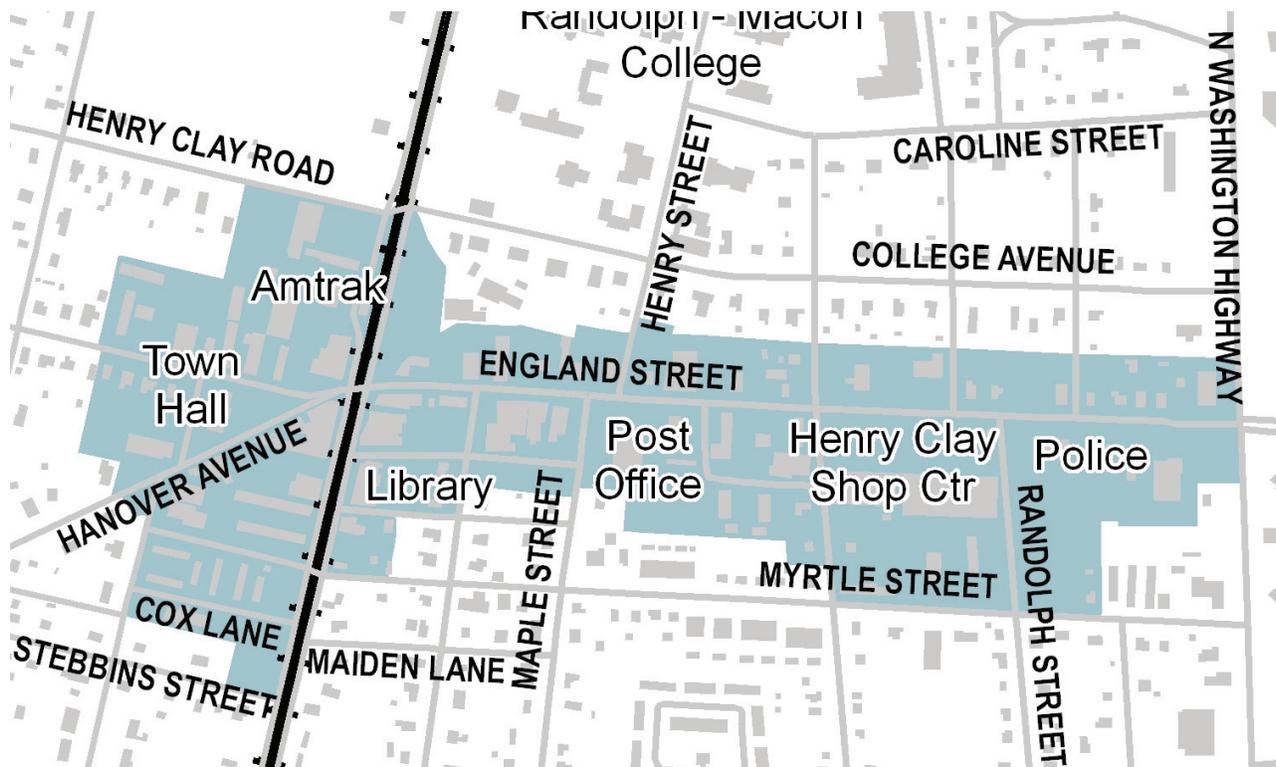
## SOUTH ASHLAND

- Additional density is not desired, as shown on some of the scenarios.
- Slash Cottage’s role in the Town is not well defined. Should it be an ‘enclave’ or integrated into the grid with the rest of the Town?
- Connect South Taylor Street to Ashcake Road.
- Generally, traffic calming is desired throughout this area.



## DOWNTOWN

- Scenarios, Place Types, and Land Use.
  - Downtown should be filled in prior to the other mixed use nodes being built.
  - Overall, Scenario 2 received the most support. There was a mix of opinions as to whether higher density was appropriate all the way east to U.S. 1. (this is the most notable difference between Scenario 2 and 3)
  - The mixed-use suggested by Scenarios 2 and 3 at U.S.1 & Rt. 54 should not be too tall, also, outside space, such as a large court or patio should be encouraged at the corner.
  - Buildings should be two to three stories in height. There are varying ideas on whether or not four story buildings should be considered appropriate in the Downtown area, as opposed to the current maximum of three stories.



### **DOWNTOWN CONTINUED...**

- England Street should have varying facades and setbacks, rather than all buildings abutting the street line. It was suggested that if taller buildings are desired, they should have an increased setback.
- Don't construct infill development on the R-MC parking lot at Center Street and Rt. 54. This is an attractive parking lot, and is needed.
- Professional office space should not be located at the street level. Retail should take over existing street level office space. Sufficient retail is needed downtown to make it a regional destination.
- Residential mixed-use development along Robinson Street is acceptable, but should be limited to two stories.
- Green space should be created within the downtown area.
- Do not allow commercial to spread further west along England Street or Hanover Avenue. Also, protect Virginia Street and College Avenue from commercial development.
- Downtown is appropriate for senior housing.
- Existing zoning at eastern edge of this area does not make sense.
- *Community Character*
  - All new buildings should be high quality, and the architecture should reinforce the surrounding small-town character.
  - Improve the appearance of existing buildings.
  - Overhead power lines downtown should be eliminated or hidden in alleyways.
  - Provide some green space and landscaping at the Henry Clay Shopping Center.
  - Parking should never be in front of buildings downtown.
  - Improve the maintenance of sidewalks and public spaces.
- *Parking. Parking is a constant point of discussion in the downtown area, and there is not consensus as to whether or not a perceived parking problem truly exists.*
  - Clear directional signage must be provided to parking areas downtown.
  - Parallel parking should be encouraged along England Street.
  - Remove parking on Railroad Avenue, and make it more of a pedestrian-oriented street.
  - Provide sufficient parking in the downtown area.
- Develop Downtown Ashland into a cultural arts destination.
- Relocate the Farmers Market from Town Hall to a more central location in the CBD.

### **Community Character and Design**

- New development in Town must be the highest possible quality.
- Desire for an Architectural Review Board, and additional attention for historic preservation. (This was not mentioned at any of the meetings, except the Downtown meeting. Interestingly, every group independently came to this same conclusion)
- With infill development, there seems to be a concern about the inconsistency of new housing with the existing surrounding housing, as well as concern about 'cramming' houses onto smaller infill lots.
- Along commercial corridors, a consistent landscaped buffer, with no parking between streets and buildings, and harmonious building facades should be encouraged.

- An appropriate gateway feature should be created at town entrances.
- Industrial uses should not front on main corridors, also, it is not realistic to expect these uses to be as attractive as higher-profile commercial uses.
- ‘Village Greens’ should be provided in new developments.
- Some examples were given of development in other communities to serve as a model for Ashland:
- Potomac Yard, Alexandria
- Oak Park, Chesterfield County
- Businesses were concerned about not being able to use outside display.
- Ensure that surrounding development in Hanover County is compatible with the Town.
- Increased buffers and additional development standards should be developed for commercial development that abuts residential districts.

## Transportation

- *Rail*
  - Ensure that passenger rail continues to stop in Ashland.
  - Begin to plan for the high speed rail planned through town.
  - Encourage a commuter rail stop downtown.
- *Streets*
  - Median strips are undesirable, as they make it difficult for some businesses.
  - Extend and enhance the street grid network.
  - Provide better connections with the road network on the east side of Town.
  - Provide a bypass around the town. This is not limited to the Vaughan Road extension, some suggested a route to the south.
  - Prioritize completing the Vaughan Road East-West Connector with a railroad overpass. Also, limit truck traffic from using the proposed Vaughan Road East-West Connector.
  - Keep Ashcake Road two lanes.
  - Prefer streets with parking available on both sides.
  - Use roundabouts.
- Desire for the proposed local transit system, especially for seniors, and along U.S. 1.
- *Pedestrian Improvements.*
  - Use a more holistic approach when installing new sidewalks. Currently, sidewalks appear to be implemented in a spotty manner without much reason.
  - Sidewalks should be placed where residents prefer them, as many have expressed desire not to have sidewalks on specific streets, especially those with lower traffic counts.
  - Improve pedestrian connections along U.S. 1.
  - Sidewalks should be no less than 5 feet in width, not just the ADA minimum.
  - Ensure that sufficient parking is provided for all uses.
- Desired trail connections
  - South Taylor Park to Slash Cottage.
  - Stony Run Trail to DeJarnette Park.
  - To Patrick Henry High School
  - Extend Trolley Line Trail to Elmont.

## Uses

- No more strip retail (almost every group made this comment)
- Senior Housing options desired. (almost every group made this comment)
- Desire for Medical: i.e. specialists, urgent care.
- Provide manufacturing jobs in Town, however some suggested that heavier industrial uses are not appropriate.
- Set aside land for high quality professional offices.
- Desire for a community garden.

## General

- Concerns about rising taxes to support the infrastructure that will be required of this new development.
- Concern about new outlying development (including the proposed mixed-use nodes) negatively affecting existing built up areas.
- Ashland should strive to be an economically self-sustaining community. (i.e. not dependent on Richmond for jobs)
- Physically, our schools are not the highest quality or newest schools in Hanover County, which may hinder higher quality residential development.
- Consult with Hanover County Public Schools on this plan, there is concern about the Town losing its schools.
- Drainage problems may increase with additional development.
- Currently there is insufficient code enforcement. Will this only get worse with additional development?
- How do we ensure that developers abide by design guidelines?
- Lower income housing should be as high quality as possible, and should be dispersed throughout the community.
- Encourage conversion of existing multi-family developments to convert to owner occupied condominiums or townhouses.
- The college is a major asset to the Town, however, there is concern about its expansion, and how it could affect the tax base, since it is tax-exempt.
- The Town should focus on branding and encouraging tourism.
- New construction should be LEED or EarthCraft certified.

**Survey Results**

Each survey asked:

Do you consider the place types shown as appropriate for Ashland?

1 = appropriate, 5 = not appropriate. [This was not asked at the first meeting]

|         | Residential |     |     | Commercial |     |     | Mixed- Use |     |     |
|---------|-------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|
|         | HIGH        | MED | LOW | HIGH       | MED | LOW | HIGH       | MED | LOW |
| Average | 2.0         | 3.5 | 3.8 | 2.3        | 3.7 | 2.4 | 2.6        | 3.6 | 3.3 |

How do the scenarios rate compared to your vision for how the town as a whole should grow?

1 = worst, 5 = best.

AND

How much of the Town’s overall development should be allocated to this focus area?

| Focus Area:          | Scenario |     |     |     | Desired allocation of: |            |
|----------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|------------------------|------------|
|                      | Current  | 1   | 2   | 3   | Residential            | Commercial |
| Northern Fringe      | 2.4      | 2.5 | 3.7 | 2.5 | 50%                    | 26-50%     |
| Rt. 1 North Corridor | 2.5      | 3.6 | 3.1 | 2.4 | 26-50%                 | 25%        |
| Regional Service     | 2.9      | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 26-50%                 | 26-50%     |
| Southern Fringe      | 2.9      | 2.5 | 3.6 | 3.0 | 50%                    | 26-50%     |
| North Ashland        | 1.8      | 2.7 | 3.3 | 1.9 | 10-25%                 | 10%        |
| West Ashland         | 2.5      | 3.2 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 50%                    | 10%        |
| South Ashland        | 3.1      | 3.7 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 50%                    | 10%        |
| Downtown England St. | 1.3      | 2.4 | 4.7 | 2.4 | 26-50%                 | 51-75%     |
| TOWNWIDE:            | 2.1      | 2.9 | 4.0 | 2.3 |                        |            |

The comments received with the surveys thus far have been consistent with, and supportive of the comments listed above.

**This is What We Heard. Is This What You Said?**

A community Open House was held in June 2008. The Guiding Principles created by the Planning Commission were posted around the room adjacent to correlating public comments that were received at the Focus Meetings. Community members were asked to review the comments and give their input as to whether they had been heard correctly.

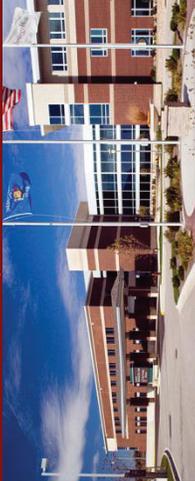
| Guiding Principles  | Y/N | Comments  |
|---|-----|---|
| <b>Guiding Principle 1. Keep Small Town Character</b>                                 |     |   |
|   | Y/N | Comments:   |
| Tree lined walkable streets   |     | To desired destinations   |
| Railroad  |     |   |
| Old Downtown  |     | Restrict businesses to retail, no services, no manufacturing  |
| Historic District   | 2 Y | The historic district provides the ambiance Expand historic district to include Hanover Avenue, S. James from Thompson south and related area.  |
| Mix of housing stock- front porches, close to street, encourage community interaction | N   | Physical design   |
| Churches within the community   |     |   |
| Friendly, familiar, helpful neighbors   |     |   |
| Safe  |     |   |
| Community events  |     |   |
| Merchants know you  |     |   |
| Government accessibility within downtown  |     |   |
|   |     | Light manufacturing and office park should be encouraged – better jobs. Don't call it "industrial."   |
|   |     | We need more crosswalks and they need better enforcement, especially Route 54, pedestrians who cross provide break in stream of cars allowing cars in side streets to cross Route 54.   |
|   |     | It is (illegible) that a large area of town west of the RR will have to depend on Farrington for fire fighting when trains are running through town. Many old historic houses.          |
|   |     | Ashland Needs nicer housing, higher property tax revenues and other benefits. Need more Oak Park (Chesterfield) developments with alleys, front porches and closer proximity to street. |
|   |     | High quality  |

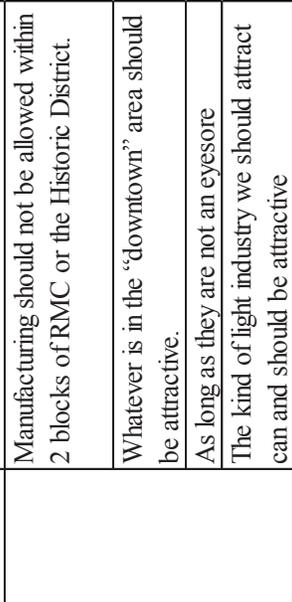
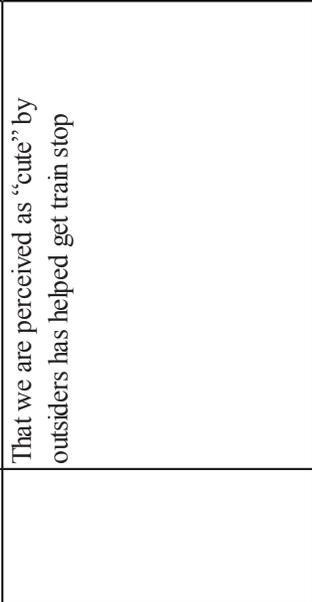
| Guiding Principles   | Y/N | Comments  |
|--|-----|---|
| <b>Guiding Principle 2. Economic Vitality</b>  |     |   |
| Variety/Diversity of small and large businesses and industry   |     |   |
| Merchants know you   |     |   |
| Continuity of businesses, family owned and passed down   |     |   |
| All needs should be met in Town (create a subset of needs that currently can't be met in town, such as appliances, clothing, etc.) |     | Lowe's, bookstore   |
| Farmers Market   |     |   |
| Government support of new and existing businesses  | Y   |   |
| Improve Rt. 1/54 intersection  |     |   |
| Sustainable businesses   |     |   |
| Clean up Rt. 1 corridor  |     |   |
| Job Creation   |     |   |
|  |     | The County needs to treat the Town better rather than dismissing it or drowning it in crappy development on its borders. Use the Town as an asset aid for economic development. |
| <b>Guiding Principle 3. UNIQUE CHARACTER</b>   |     |   |
|  | Y/N | Comments  |
| Railroad   |     |   |
| Downtown   |     |   |
| Not suburbs/Not Short Pump   |     |   |
| Sidewalks  |     | Yes, I agree, sidewalks   |
| Small neighborhood schools   |     |   |
| Diversity of people who all interact - Income, age, race, education, religions   |     |   |
| Randolph Macon College   |     |   |
| Mixed Housing Stock  |     |   |
| Trees  |     |   |
| Grid system  |     |   |
| Front porch interacting  |     |   |
| Historic District  |     |   |
| YMCA   |     |   |
| Bikers/Runners   |     |   |
| Library  |     |   |
| Post Office  |     |   |

| Guiding Principles   | Y/N | Comments   |
|--|-----|--|
| <b>Guiding Principle 4. Tree Cover</b>                                 |     |  |
|  | Y/N | Comments   |
| Need to plant native/appropriate trees                                 | Y   |  |
| Require buffers between residential and commercial areas               | 5 Y |  |
| Continue corridor landscaping  |     |  |
| Maintain buffer between I-95   |     |  |
| Educate business owners and residents on landscaping maintenance, etc. |     |  |
| Street Trees- Large shade trees of appropriate species for location    |     | Don't use trees that have surface roots to break up sidewalk! like large shade trees better than little bushes. Easier to see, easier to maintain, creates a mega-landscape<br>We need a list of what constitutes a shade tree- not crepe myrtle and little plums! |
| Preserve mature trees  | Y   |  |
|  |     | Work with Dominion Power on pruning  |
|  |     | We need (Power) lines in alleys, not along street. Best would be underground   |
|  |     | We need a tree ordinance   |
|  |     |  |
| <b>Guiding Principle 5. PRESERVING OUR GEMS</b>                        |     |  |
|  | Y/N | Comments   |
| Train Station  |     |  |
| Cross Brothers   |     |  |
| Randolph Macon College   |     |  |
| Railroad   |     |  |
| Downtown   |     |  |
| Historic District  |     | We need official ARB and signs   |
| Town Green   |     | We need to recognize that HAAC is also a Town Green. It is used that way.  |
| Plaza  |     |  |
| Library  |     |  |
| Post Office  |     |  |
| Historic District  |     |  |
| Ukrop's  |     |  |
| YMCA   |     |  |
| Trees  |     |  |
| I-95   |     |  |
|  |     | Ashland Movie Theater, too.  |
|  |     | What about Town pool and parks   |

| Guiding Principles   | Y/N | Comments  |
|--|-----|---|
| <b>Guiding Principle 6. PHYSICAL AND COMMUNITY DIVERSITY</b>   |     |   |
|  | Y/N | Comments  |
| Housing - Lot size, style, architecture, design, setbacks, type  |     |   |
| Businesses - Size, scale, products - Absence of diversity in neighborhoods has led to undesirable business development |     |   |
| People - Blending of new and old into community - New and lifelong citizens  |     |   |
| <b>Guiding Principle 7. Government Services</b>  |     |   |
|  | Y/N | Comments  |
| Brush pickup   |     | Need more timely brush pickup   |
| Trash pickup, Recycling  |     | Sponsor community cleanup days on scheduled dates year round  |
| Parks and pool - Distribution and location   |     | They need to connect to residential areas   |
| Police/Public Safety   |     |   |
| Sidewalks/Streets - Build new and maintain existing, Grid System, Walkable   |     | Work on the planned (??) overpass now!  |
| Snow removal   |     |   |
| Accessibility to government services and officials   |     |   |
| Familiarity with government staff  |     |   |
| Quick Response   |     |   |
| Planning   |     |   |
| Farmers Market   |     |   |
| Drainage   |     |   |
|  |     | In moving back to Ashland I can't believe you are not providing fire protection west of the RR tracks, Bad Planning |
|  |     | Provide fire fighting capability in the Town west of the RR tracks even if Town has to get back into fire business  |
|  |     | We need more 4-way stops in residential areas. Forget what VDOT says, it is traffic calming                         |
|  |     | Yes, College and Calhoun (ref 4-way stop)   |

| Guiding Principle 1. Preserve Small Town Character                                    |  | Y/N           | Comments  |
|---|--|---------------|---|
|    | Higher density development is appropriate, so long as the small town character is maintained.  | North Ashland | Y   |
|    | Downtown should be filled in prior to the other mixed use nodes being built.   | Downtown      | Y   |
|   | Since the East Ashland development is already approved, density should be increased in, and not implemented at all in the other suggested mixed-use areas. | N. Fringe     |   |
|  | Improve the maintenance of sidewalks and public spaces.  | Downtown      |   |
|   |  |               | But as you infill provide for breaks in facades and for open space. |

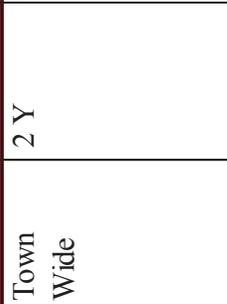
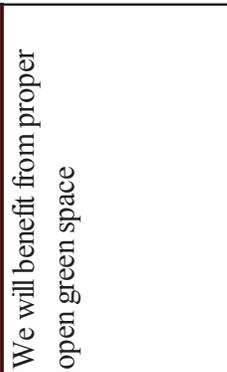
| Guiding Principle 2. Economic Vitality  |  | Comments     |  |
|---|--|--------------|--|
|    | Desire for Medical: i.e. specialists, urgent care.   | Town Wide    | 2 Y<br>We need urgent care and medical   |
|    | Provide manufacturing jobs in Town, however some suggested that heavier industrial uses are not appropriate  | Town Wide    | Don't rezone what exists - think Wal-Mart  |
|    | Set aside land for high quality professional offices.  | Town Wide    | 3 N  |
|   | Professional office space should not be located at the street level. Retail should take over existing street level office space. Sufficient retail is needed downtown to make it a regional destination. | Downtown     | Large professional office buildings contradict the "small-town" feel   |
|  | Work/live units appropriate  | East Ashland | Y<br>Partner with RMC on their 20 year plan. Suggest infill by RMC on tracks between their houses with residential 2 <sup>nd</sup> floors and retail on street level to extend our Main Street Streetscape |

| Guiding Principle 2. Economic Vitality  | Comments  | Y/N | Community Design |
|---|---|-----|------------------|
|    | <p>Businesses were concerned about not being able to use outside display.</p>   |     | Community Design |
|    | <p>Industrial uses should not front on main corridors, also, it is not realistic to expect these uses to be as attractive as higher-profile commercial uses</p> |     | Town Wide        |
|   | <p>The Town should focus on branding and encouraging tourism</p>  |     | Town Wide        |
|  | <p>Ensure that sufficient parking is provided for all uses.</p>   | Y   | Downtown         |

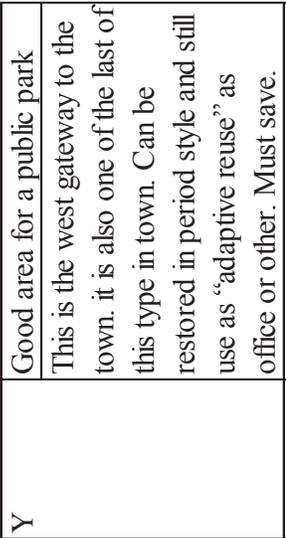
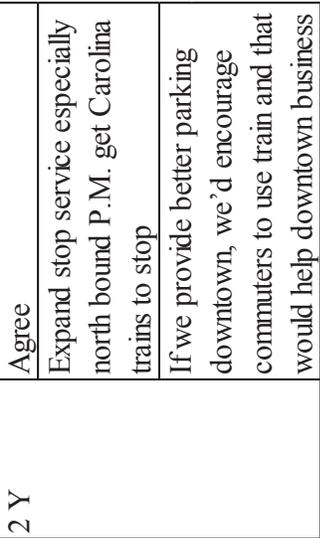
| Guiding Principle 2. Economic Vitality  |   | Y/N   | Comments   |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | <p>Ashland should strive to be an economically self-sustaining community</p> <p>Commercial development should be confined to existing corridors.</p> <p>Some groups were concerned that the new mixed-use nodes would compete with the existing downtown, or that the existing downtown should be built out prior to new mixed-use nodes.</p> | <p>Town Wide</p> <p>Town Wide</p> <p>Downtown</p> |  |
|   | <p>Large-scale commercial uses (i.e. big boxes) should not be on the west side of U.S. 1, adjacent to the residential areas. These should be located near Wal-Mart.</p>   | <p>Southern Fringe</p>                            | <p>Wal-Mart is in the area that we originally planned as office park – light warehouse, light manufacturing. Do we really want more retail jobs? Don't use up that area on big-box</p> |
|   | <p>Commercial uses should be concentrated on the vacant tract.</p>  | <p>Rt. 1 North Corridor</p>                       | <p>Rt. 1 should be correctly used as a commercial corridor within reason</p>   |
| <p><b>SEE MAPS</b></p>  |   |   |  |

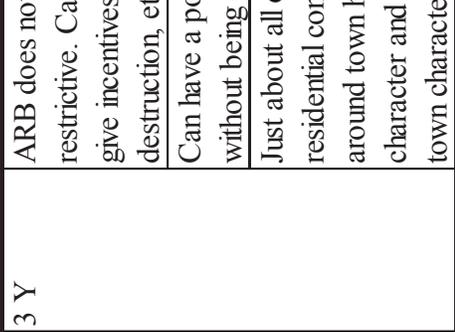
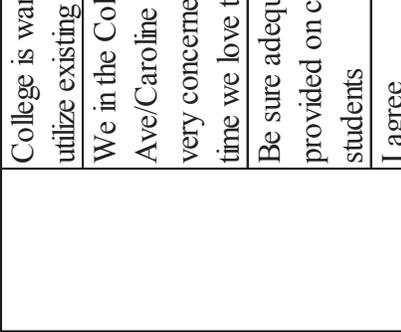
| Guiding Principle 3. Unique Character  |  | Y/N             | Comments  |
|--|--|-----------------|---|
|   | An appropriate gateway feature should be created at town entrances.  | Town Wide       | I like the signs – need more trees and raised medians at the entrances  |
|   | Preserve the 'rural hamlet' along Maple Street. Some additional low-density residential in this area may be appropriate.   | Southern Fringe | Yes, leave it rural -open   |
|  | The mixed-use suggested by Scenarios 2 and 3 at U.S.1 & Rt. 54 should not be too tall, also, outside space, such as a large court or patio should be encouraged at the corner. | Downtown        | Yes, do not want to feel claustrophobic<br><br>Yes. Houses behind should not be overwhelmed with 3 & 4 stories looking into back yard (College Ave) |

| Guiding Principle 3. Unique Character   |   | Comments  |     |  |
|---|---|-----------|-----|--|
| Y/N   |   | Y/N       |     |  |
|  | <p>New buildings should be high quality, similar to existing buildings, and the architecture should reinforce the surrounding small-town character</p>  | Downtown  | Y   | Be mindful of access and parking   |
|   | <p>Physically, our schools are not the highest quality or newest schools in Hanover County, which may hinder higher quality residential development</p> | Town Wide | 1 Y | Although Ashland doesn't build schools we should preserve/designate sites for a future elementary school so that Hanover County will not use "no place" as excuse to move out of town. |
|   | <p>Consult with Hanover County Public Schools on this plan, there is concern about the Town losing its schools</p>                                      | Town Wide | 1 N |  |

| Guiding Principle 4. Tree Cover  | Y/N       | Comments   |
|--|-----------|--|
|   | 2 Y       | We will benefit from proper open green space                               |
| <p>Ensure that open space is truly preserved, not just shown on the plan as open space, only to be developed later. Also, open space should be on high quality land where possible, not just leftover or undevelopable land.</p> | Town Wide | Don't take owner's right to use without compensation                       |
|   | Downtown  | Green space should be created within the downtown area.                    |
|   | Downtown  | Provide some green space and landscaping at the Henry Clay Shopping Center |
|  | Y         | Good idea  |

| Guiding Principle 4. Tree Cover   |   | Y/N       | Comments  |
|---|---|-----------|---|
|  | <p>'Village Greens' should be provided in new developments</p>  | Town Wide |   |
|   |  <p>New construction should be LEED or EarthCraft certified.</p> | Town Wide | <p>In the long run this saves HVAC, higher resale value, and uses less resources</p> <p>Defeats concept of affordable housing partners, businesses need customers</p> <p>Will attract office and retail businesses that are compatible with Ashland</p> |

| Guiding Principle 5. Protect Our Gems   | Y/N                 | Comments   |
|---|---------------------|--|
|  | <p>West Ashland</p> | <p>Save the old BP station on Route 54. Suggested reuses included: restaurant, office, community center.</p>   |
|  | <p>Downtown</p>     | <p>Good area for a public park<br/>This is the west gateway to the town. it is also one of the last of this type in town. Can be restored in period style and still use as “adaptive reuse” as office or other. Must save.</p> |
|   | <p>2 Y</p>          | <p>Agree<br/>Expand stop service especially north bound P.M. get Carolina trains to stop<br/>If we provide better parking downtown, we’d encourage commuters to use train and that would help downtown business</p>            |
|   | <p>Y</p>            | <p>Begin to plan for the high speed rail planned through town.<br/>Encourage a commuter rail stop downtown.</p>  |
|   | <p>2 Y</p>          | <p>Downtown</p>  |

| Guiding Principle 5. Protect Our Gems  | Y/N                  | Comments  |
|--|----------------------|---|
|   | <p>Downtown</p>      | <p>3 Y</p> <p>ARB does not have to be restrictive. Can offer advice, give incentives, prevent destruction, etc.<br/>           Can have a positive effect without being overly intrusive<br/>           Just about all of the new residential construction in or around town has little or no character and destroys the town character</p>   |
|  | <p>North Ashland</p> | <p>The college is a major asset to the Town, however, there is concern about its expansion, and how it could affect the tax base, since it is tax-exempt</p> <p>College is wanted but needs to utilize existing property<br/>           We in the College Ave/Caroline Street area are very concerned but at the same time we love the college.<br/>           Be sure adequate housing is provided on campus for college students<br/>           I agree</p> |

| Guiding Principle 6. Physical & Community Diversity                                  |   | Y/N                    | Comments  |
|--|---|------------------------|---|
|   | U.S. 1 lacks consistency in land use and character. Some suggested continuing existing development patterns in this area. | Southern Fringe<br>4 N | Rt. 1 is an unnecessary eyesore. No reason business district has to be ugly. Needs to change, more shade trees, smaller signs, shade trees in parking lots  |
|   | Lower income housing should be as high quality as possible, and should be dispersed throughout the community              | Town Wide<br>2 N       | Do not allow lower income housing built at the expense of existing homeowners. This adversely affects resale/appraisal values. We have our share of "Title 1 families" - they should be disbursed throughout Hanover County.<br>We have our share of Section 8. Should go elsewhere in County.<br>Ashland has its share. Hanover's a larger area. |
|  | Develop Downtown Ashland into a cultural arts destination.  | Downtown<br>4 Y        | Our new development needs to be small scale (1 or 2 blocks at a time) like in previous eras. That provides naturally for more diversity.<br>It is happening slowly anyway, need to enhance  |

| Guiding Principle 6. Physical & Community Diversity                                  |  | Y/N                | Comments   |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
|   | Residential mixed-use development along Robinson Street is acceptable, but should be limited to two stories. | Downtown<br>N      | Yes, 2 stories not 3 stories would overpower existing development  |
|   | Randolph-Macon students should live on-campus rather than living off-campus in single-family neighborhoods   | North-Ashtand<br>N | Yes, as per recent Herald Progress article, students/parents should be out of nearby neighborhoods look on Caroline Street.  |
|  | Senior Housing options desired.  | Town Wide<br>3 Y   | Yes, students have different lifestyles than families, parties, messy yards, parking in yard, etc.<br>Senior housing would be a plus to neighborhood. It would give a needed balance<br>Seniors need to be walking distance to Doctor, pharmacy, etc. so mixed-use |

| Guiding Principle 6. Physical & Community Diversity                                 |  | Y/N           | Comments  |
|---|--|---------------|---|
|  | Encourage conversion of existing multi-family developments to convert to owner occupied condominiums or townhouses   | Town Wide     | Yes, owner occupied residences are better kept. Also allows for affordable housing. Ashland ratio of rental to owner is way off-balance, too much rental. |
|   | <p>Slash Cottage's role in the Town is not well defined. Should it be an 'enclave' or integrated into the grid with the rest of the Town?</p> <p><b>SEE MAPS</b></p> | South Ashland |   |

| Guiding Principle 7.<br>Government Services  |   | Y/N | Comments   |
|--|---|-----|--|
|   | Concerns about rising taxes to support the infrastructure that will be required of this new development | Y   |  |
|   | Drainage problems may increase with additional development.   |     | Get into Federal Flood Insurance Program<br>Flood Insurance? Better not to have floods and to require proper development |
|   | Desire for the proposed local transit system, especially for seniors, and along U.S. 1.                 |     | I like this, would allow us to incorporate east of I-95.   |
|  | In the Linden/Park/Elm area, provide streetlights, curb, gutter, and sidewalks.                         |     |  |

| Guiding Principle 7.<br>Government Services  |   | Y/N             | Comments   |
|--|---|-----------------|--|
|   | Preserve and maintain existing alleys.  | North Ashland   | Some alleys are barely passable<br>Yes, save the alleys<br>Save the alleys for utilities, trash, etc.<br>Also allows some of us to access rear of properties<br>Open some right of way, not (illegible) well defined |
|   | Median strips are undesirable, as they make it difficult for some businesses. | Southern Fringe | Need strips to stop folks from cutting across traffic<br><br>Wrong! They make traffic safer, allow for green landscaping and u-turns. Read the research which proves that business climate actually improves.        |
|  | Prefer streets with parking available on both sides.                          | Town Wide       | Yes, look at Main Street Fairfax. They put parking back on street and pedestrians returned   |