

VI. Land Use

Introduction

This land use plan focuses on the pattern, distribution, and character of activities through 2040¹. It is a guide to the use and development of land, showing the preferred generalized use of every parcel within the Town. It is interrelated with many of the other elements discussed in this report and some of the land use ideas and recommendations highlighted here are detailed further in other sections. Land use recommendations for the municipal growth area are provided in Chapter III and should be read in concert with this chapter to appreciate the full scope of Centreville's long range planning.

The land use plan guides commercial uses into downtown, along Railroad Avenue and MD Route 213 and within the Centreville Business Park. It endeavors to make downtown a vibrant center of economic, cultural, and civic life within the region. It seeks to enhance the potential for the private housing market to deliver a variety of housing types to meet the needs and preferences of residents of different income levels and life stages. It recommends open spaces and seeks to protect remaining forests identified in Chapter IV. While embracing growth, it seeks to sustain Centreville's traditional small town character and charm.

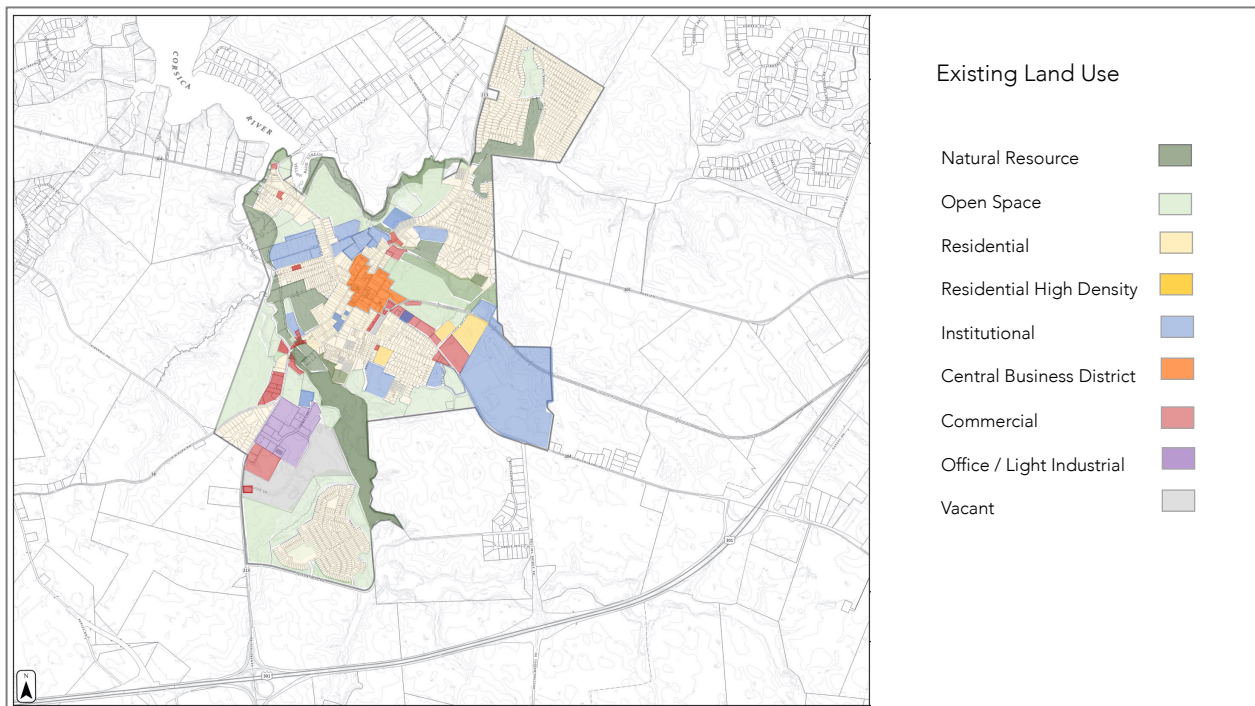
As noted in Chapter III, Centreville will absorb an increasing share of household growth in Queen Anne's County. Over the next two decades, this is likely to happen through the conversion of large tracts to new neighborhoods within the Town's boundaries and to some extent within the planned growth area. With the existing settlement pattern as a general model for future development, Centreville should remain a relatively compact community within a greenbelt of farms and forests.

Implementation of the objectives and recommendations of this Plan will occur in many ways, but the most prominent way is through zoning. Following adoption of this Plan, a new zoning map would be adopted, and modification of some existing zoning districts is recommended, as well as the creation of additional districts.

¹ A land use plan is not a zoning map. Instead, it is a guide to the use and development of land. The zoning map is more than a guide, it is part of the Town's laws and divides the Town into districts, each having its own set of use and development regulations. While a zoning map is not a land use plan, it derives its substance and content from the adopted land use plan.

Existing Pattern of Use

The term “land use” refers to the way property owners use land and therefore it reflects the cultural, economic, and environmental character of an area. A land use map is the visual expression of that character. Centreville’s existing land uses are shown on Map _____. An overview of the existing pattern of land use follows:



- As the County seat, Centreville is a center of governmental uses which are concentrated in downtown around the historic courthouse and green. Downtown is also home to law and other professional offices, restaurants, and shops. The downtown area is designated “central business district” on Map _____.
- From the downtown core, residential neighborhoods extend westward along Chesterfield Road and eastward between Water Street and Kidwell Avenue. These neighborhoods are made up primarily of single-family detached houses but also include institutional uses including churches and schools. Occasionally there are also commercial uses in these neighborhoods, whose establishment predate modern zoning laws.

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- During the past couple of decades, land further removed from downtown was subdivided, creating neighborhoods such as Providence Farms to the west, Symphony Village to the south, and North Brook to the north.
- Residential apartment buildings and complexes are designated “multi-family residential” on Map __. Since adoption of the 2009 Community Plan, the east side of Little Hut Drive has been developed as a multi-building apartment complex known as the Willows at Centreville.
- The Centreville Business Park is a significant area of commercial and light industrial use, including a community shopping center fronting Centreville Road (MD Route 213). Business offices and light industrial uses are situated internal to the business park. Existing commercial uses are shown in red and light industrial uses in purple on Map __. Much of the business park is vacant.
- An institutional center is emerging along Railroad Avenue (MD Route 304) at its intersection with Kidwell Avenue near the County middle and high school complex. Since the adoption of the last community plan, the County has constructed its main governmental office building there, the YMCA has obtained site plan approval for a major indoor / outdoor recreational facility, and the County Board of Education has appeared before the Planning Commission to discuss a conceptual plan to develop an office complex.
- As documented in Chapter 3, there remains a significant amount of undeveloped land within Town limits zoned for residential use. Nearly 280 undeveloped acres are zoned for residential use. This land is shown in green on the map. There are also about 30 platted vacant lots zoned for residential use.
- Lastly, the extent of natural resource land, including shorelines, wetland and forested stream buffers within municipal limits is substantial. This land use reflects the presence of underlying natural conditions. It is mapped and discussed in detail in Chapter IV of this report and shown here in a dark green color.

Outside of Town, agriculture is the prominent land use. Scattered housing lots and residential subdivisions can also be found throughout the countryside just beyond town limits. The Town’s designated growth area is comprised of very large tracts of land. Each has significant development potential, and with thoughtful planning and coordination, an interconnected arrangement of open spaces and naturalized areas can be preserved for recreational use and environmental protection. The planning goals for this area are found in Chapter III.

The Plan for Land Use

This section of the Plan focuses on the future use of land located within the current Town boundaries. This updated land use plan signals that Centreville will be especially intentional and purposeful in its decisions about development through 2040. The term land use “development” is defined here as the conversion of vacant land to another use and the redevelopment or re-use of existing buildings and sites, in ways that advance the Town’s improvement, progress, and enhancement as described by the Objectives incorporated throughout the Community Plan.

To ensure that proposed land use changes meet this definition, this Plan recommends that all major proposals proceed through a deliberative process during which the benefits that are delivered to the Town are investigated and established. The Town is receptive to allowing flexibility where needed to achieve quality and competent community design, but where individual proposals fail to meaningfully advance the Town’s development (as defined above), they will not comply with this Plan and should not be approved.

Through 2040, May __, Future Land Use, and the supporting text of this Chapter are to be used to guide the location, type, intensity, and character of development and redevelopment. This means new land development proposals will be evaluated against this Plan.

Objectives

The main goal of this land use plan is that Centreville develops as a healthy, prosperous, and beautiful town with a continual improvement in the quality of life for its residents and the vitality of its businesses. The supporting objectives are as follows:

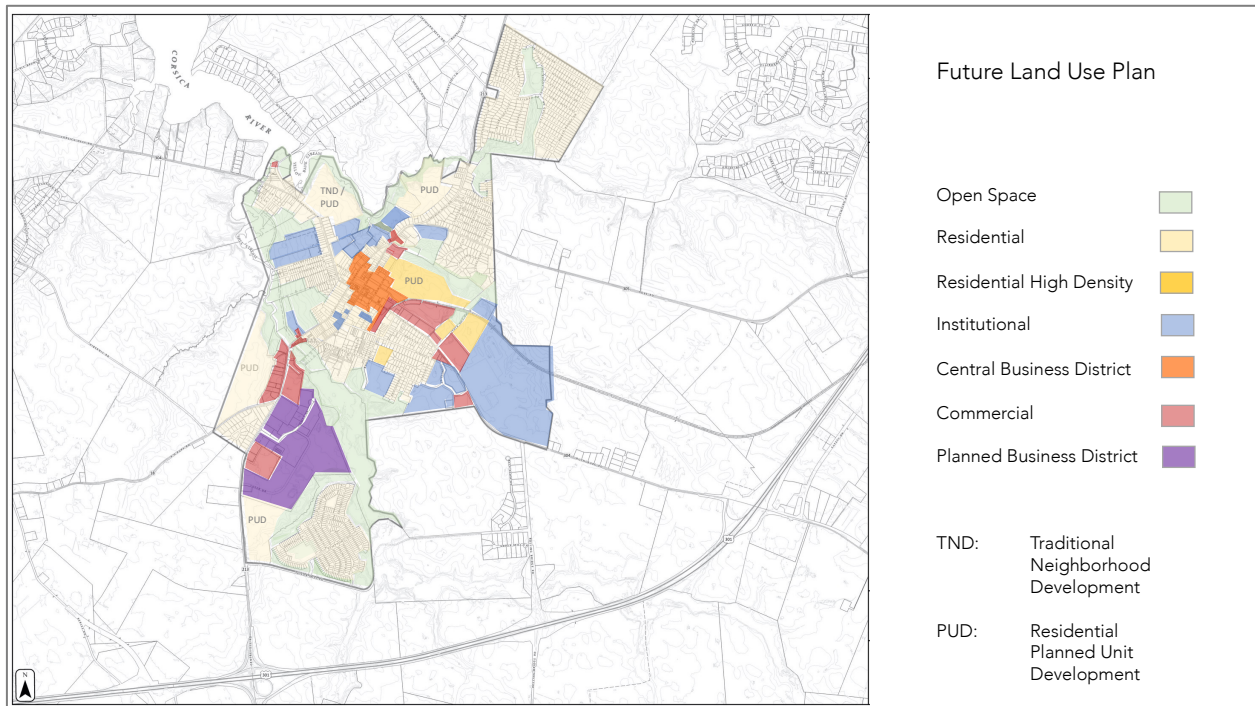
- To create a network of open spaces and resource conservation lands which will secure important environmental functions, form the basis of a town wide recreational asset, and promote community health, vitality, and scenic beauty.
- To guide future neighborhoods into patterns that encourage intergenerational communities, instead of neighborhoods separated by age or income.

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- To foster an economically vibrant downtown, preserve its historic elements, promote residential uses in and near downtown and link downtown to other parts of the Town with an efficient system of streets, walkways, community open space, and public utilities.
- To foster continual real estate investment, the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties, and the redevelopment or improvement of properties that do not contribute to the Town's overall wellbeing.

Future Land Use Map

Map __ shows the 2040 future land use plan. Each of the major categories are described below.



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Open Space

Areas planned for Open Space include improved public and private outdoor recreational areas, specialized open areas like the Chesterfield Cemetery, and natural resource areas such as the shorelines and 100-year floodplains associated with the Corsica River and its tributary. These areas are, to the extent possible, meant to be protected so they can perform their resource functions, like retaining flood waters, recharging municipal ground water supplies, and protecting downstream water quality. See Chapter IV for a discussion of these resource areas and recommendations for their protection.

Residential

The yellow areas shown on Map __ encompass existing neighborhoods and residential lots that are primarily zoned R-1 and R-2. The primary purpose of the designation is to signal the Plan's intent that these areas be conserved in residential use and/or continue to be developed for housing under approved plats. It also encompasses four of the five major residential infill tracts that are discussed in Chapter III. As discussed later in this chapter, the Plan recommends that these infill tracts be developed as residential plan unit developments (PUDs) with an overall density approximately five housing units per acre. Supporting recommendations on Housing can be found in Chapter VI.

As shown on Map ___ TND designation, standing for Traditional Neighborhood Development, also applies to the Carter Farm on Chesterfield Avenue. The purpose of this designation is to signal a preference for patterns consistent with pre-WW II residential neighborhoods that feature a mix of housing types, open spaces, institutional uses, and possible small-scale complementary commercial uses. The generally recommended form of development is a grid street pattern with rear access alleys and strong pedestrian orientation where single-family detached houses have shallow front yards.

Residential, High Density

The primary purpose for the "high density" designation is to signal the plan's intent to conserve existing multiple-family housing areas in residential use and promote other residential neighborhoods featuring a variety of housing types. For the most part, this designation covers existing townhouse neighborhoods and apartment complexes, zoned R-3 but it also includes the Turpin Farm. The Turpin Farm is centrally located adjacent to the CBD and its development as a residential neighborhood should support the economic vitality of downtown. The recommended overall density of the housing units in R-3 districts is 8 housing units per acre. Supporting recommendations on Housing can be found in Chapter VI.

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Institutional

This designation signals the Plan's intent of keeping the existing institutional uses as the preferred uses on those properties so designated. The Plan supports the development of institutional uses such as places of worship, schools, nursing homes, and day care centers in certain residential and commercial areas, and the Zoning Ordinance should continue to accommodate them. The Plan recommends that an Institutional zoning district be established and that the significant institutional properties, especially the publicly held ones, be rezoned to this new district.

Central Business District

This designation encompasses properties within downtown where mixed-use development is encouraged, and a broad array of commercial and institutional land uses would continue to be allowed. The Plan also encourages residential apartments above commercial storefronts and new residential buildings with densities that can meaningfully increase the resident population in the CBD, such as one housing unit per 1,200 square feet of lot area, or about 36 units per acre. More specific recommendations are provided in the next section of this Chapter.

Commercial

As shown on Map __ recommended commercial areas are clustered along Water Street and Railroad Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Centreville Road, south of Town and Church Hill Road north of downtown. With few exceptions every lot designated on Map ___ for Commercial use is already developed. The two main exceptions include the 9.8-acre pasture and farmstead located on the north side of Delmarva Power at 2612 Centreville Road, and the 4-acre parcel at Ruthsburg Road, opposite the high school which is owned by Queen Anne's County. Both parcels are zoned C-2, General Commercial.

The C-2 district is a general commercial zone. It allows retail, service and office uses and is intended to provide convenient locations for local shopping. The district is located along Centreville Road, the southern gateway from MD Route 18 to the Mill Stream Bridge, at the northern gateway into downtown along Centreville Road and near the future YMCA site.

The other Commercial zoning district is C-3 (Intense Commercial). It is located on the south side of MD Route 18 east of MD Route 213 and along Railroad Avenue from the Acme Shopping Center to Pennsylvania Avenue. The east side of Pennsylvania Avenue is also zoned C-3. Commercial uses including automotive garages, motor vehicle fuel stations, bottling and beverage distribution, wholesale businesses and warehousing, and manufacturing are permitted in the C-3 district. These uses, if located along Railroad or Pennsylvania Avenues, could adversely impact the character of adjoining residential neighborhoods, and introduce heavy truck traffic onto local streets. This Plan recommends that zoning amendments be considered to promote more compatible commercial uses in these areas.

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Planned Business District

Intensive business and light industrial uses are recommended in the Centreville Business Park shown in purple on Map _____. The business park is currently zoned Planned Business Development (PBD) District which permits a variety of commercial land use activities.

Because only two other sizable commercial parcels remain undeveloped within Town boundaries and their conversion to commercial use cannot be assured, it is likely that pressure will mount to develop the remaining lots in the Planned Business Development (PBD) District through 2040. This plan strongly recommends that space in the business park be reserved primarily for major and intensive commercial uses that may not be compatible elsewhere in Centreville and which can strongly contribute to the local economy and employment. The business park is designed to accommodate large scale commercial buildings and site operations.

Other Recommendations

Promote the Economic and Cultural Vitality of Downtown

Downtown Centreville, the central business district, is the institutional center for the Town and Queen Anne’s County. It is also the traditional center for shopping, entertainment, restaurants, and professional offices aligned with the downtown’s courthouses and governmental offices. From a land use perspective, to promote the preservation, upkeep, and adoptive reuse of historic buildings, the Town should consider incentives to encourage developers to rehabilitate buildings and to incorporate residential apartments on the upper floors where possible. Where feasible, without disrupting the historic character, this Plan encourages the development of new mixed-use buildings featuring commercial at street level and residential apartments above.

Promote the Development on Complete Neighborhoods

This recommendation applies to the large infill development tracts as described in Chapter III; generally, tracts of about 10 acres or more, which are so designated on the Future Land Use Plan, Map _____. These tracts are intended for master planned communities with a mix of housing types (single-family detached, duplexes, tri-plexes, attached houses, and apartment buildings) and supporting non-residential uses, like institutions, parks, open spaces, and limited commercial buildings under certain conditions.

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To achieve this, this Plan recommends residential planned unit developments (PUDs). The Town's zoning ordinance currently has a PUD zoning district. It is a "floating zone", which can be thought of as a special zoning district that floats over certain pre-qualified tracts of land and is allowed to settle down onto the tract upon request by the owner if approved by the Town. Under current regulations, a PUD must go through an extensive process of meetings and hearings, involving both the Town Council and the Planning Commission.

In an alternative approach, which this Plan recommends be considered, the PUD is not a separate zone, but instead a set of standards that guide master planned neighborhood development. In this approach, every qualifying tract, such as parcels exceeding 10 acres and zoned R-2 and R-3 are granted, by-right, flexibility in certain pre-defined development standards and are required to use that flexibility to achieve exceptional community design.

The main difference between the approaches is that the PUD floating zone requires multiple Town Council meetings to review and approve the project because, in effect, legislation is needed to establish the special standards for the district. By contrast, with the PUD-standards approach, parameters for flexibly applying standards are set down within the text of the Zoning Ordinance from the beginning and thus the plan review and approval function remains within the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission. In both cases, the PUD provides the Town with more discretion in the approval process and the developer with more flexibility in plan design.

It is this Plan's general intent with either PUD approach to guide the placement, design, use, and density of well-planned residential neighborhoods that can offer a variety of building types and uses with optimal freedom to achieve great community design within the context of a site's location and special attributes. The purpose statements for Town's PUD floating zone are set forth in Section 170-28 of the Centreville Zoning Ordinance. This Plan recommends that they be maintained, and activity implemented in the review and approval of future development.