chapter 9

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER NINE – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In previous comprehensive plans for Winchester, a future land use chapter outlined recommended changes to designated use of land which could be implemented by amendments to the official zoning map. ~~That~~ The traditional approach relied heavily upon use designation to move the City's growth in a desired direction. This plan takes a different approach focused on New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Design.

Rather than view the zoning ordinance as the primary solution to citywide problems, this plan focuses on the vitality of interconnected neighborhoods. It holds in mind the vision of sustainable communities and identifies the narrowly tailored needs of each neighborhood. It supports the City Council's stated goal for land use: Guide the physical development of the City in a sustainable manner that preserves vibrant, livable neighborhoods and also encourages compact mixed use development to meet the needs of a changing population.

CITYWIDE LAND USE OBJECTIVES

As noted in Chapter Three, City Council also stated ~~seven~~ ten objectives in support of the land use goal:

1) Facilitate development, zoning changes, and growth of the City in accordance with the City Character Map.

2) Incentivize the construction of compact, new mixed use projects as a viable reuse of obsolete strip commercial and industrial properties.

3) Provide the citizens of the community with a healthy, attractive and safe physical environment which includes convenient access for all modes of transportation.

4) Facilitate the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing units and the construction of new housing units in order to attract higher income residents so that Winchester residents are provided with a decent home in a suitable living environment while maintaining and preserving the existing character of vibrant residential areas designated in this plan.

5) Provide a range of commercial facilities which incorporate a mix of retail, service and office facilities, properly served by access through the transportation system, and offer selection of consumer goods, and viable growth potential.

6) Retain and expand upon a diversified, sustainable light industrial base at compatible and appropriate locations which are accessible to transportation facilities, convenient to the workforce, and in harmony with other community development and which attract higher income workers that contribute to the general betterment of the community.

7) Locate public land uses in locations that enhance the livability of the City and facilitate the placement of institutional uses in locations that support the social, spiritual, and health needs of the community.

8) Reduce the conversion of taxable property to non-taxable land uses.

9) Designate the City as an Urban Development Area in accordance with the State code.

10) Work with Frederick County to create complementary development strategies and maintain a strong working relationship.

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To show how these objectives will be met, this chapter presents and discusses a Character Map of Winchester's neighborhoods. It shows the desired changes in different neighborhoods, which must be achieved by a mix of methods. This map replaces the future land use map as the chief tool for planning. Zoning rules are only one of many tools for New Urbanism, so this map gives them less emphasis. Chapter Eleven presents detailed treatments for illustrative sites within each of the ten geographic planning areas.

This chapter also examines planning decisions in Frederick County, particularly with respect to Frederick County's Urban Development Area (UDA) and policies for future development as spelled out in the recent update of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

~~FUTURE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS~~

~~Planning for future development begins with a vision of the future and maintains that vision in mind. After that, a key question is what to change and what to preserve. A good plan uses the right tools to make change occur where it is needed. But those tools should be used carefully to avoid spillover where no change is desired. Other tools are used for preservation, but they, too, must be carefully used to avoid obstructing change where needed or desired. In the past, the land use regulations contained in the zoning ordinance were the planner's primary tools for guiding change or preservation. This plan notes the limitations of Euclidean zoning and embraces a broader set of options with a character map.~~

~~The City Council's stated objectives guide future land use needs. Winchester's land should be used to improve residents' quality of life by developing a more livable, sustainable, welcoming, and prosperous city. Previous chapters have discussed specific goals and objectives related to mobility, housing, business, and other topics. Land use has an effect on those topics, but so many other kinds of policy change~~

1. Facilitate development, zoning changes, and growth of the city in accordance with the City Character Map

THE CHARACTER MAP

Current land usage in the City has increased significantly over the past years, as seen below in the charts comparing land usage sizes from now compared to 1982. To facilitate proper and effective growth of the City, the following Character Map was developed, to chart the overall design of the community fabric in the City.

The next page shows the character map which will guide Winchester's growth. It has eight elements.

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Elements of the Character Map

A. Neighborhood Stabilization Areas

Stable, healthy neighborhoods are the essence of a city. This area covers the largest part of the character map. It represents places where households live, socialize, and raise families in relative quiet. Here, city planning aims to keep things the same, not bring dramatic change. But that is not the same as doing nothing. Sound city policy can actively protect these stable communities from improper development and help preserve what makes them special.

B. Neighborhood Revitalization/Infill Areas

In these areas, residents said quality of life was not what it should be. Problems of vacancy, blight, crime, and isolation hurt a neighborhood's prospects and pride. So, the vision for Winchester in these areas focuses on the opportunities created by vacant buildings and low property values. Redeveloping parcels and infilling with higher residential densities and mixed uses costs less in these areas. A new park or other community hub is important. Revitalization means making neighborhoods more attractive both to new residents and to those who have called them home for many years. It means bringing back to life.

C. Commerce Centers/Corridors

Today, most of the Winchester's business occurs in these areas. That should continue. As the stable neighborhoods provide housing, these stable areas provide jobs and income. City plans strive to sustain a friendly business environment where it already exists. This designation also recognizes that New Urbanism does not mean burdening successful firms with rules. No radical change should come to the City's major retail and industrial areas, except where they have been identified as redevelopment or revitalization areas.

See appendix for large-scale version of the Character Map

D. Commerce Area Revitalization/Infill

The Character Map calls for change in these areas. While zoned for commercial use, there are vacant or blighted properties, and many others contributing little to the community. Creative partnerships between the City and investors should target these areas. Bringing new kinds of business to the City, building new infrastructure, or offering new or better are public services may create new jobs and attract new customers from far afield. Revitalization and infill means attracting new and stronger companies, increasing property values, and promoting businesses that contribute to the sustainability of the community.

E. Civic, Institutional, and Park Areas

These places knit a community together and help make it unique. Public areas form hubs where people can meet, socialize, play, or rest. They serve public needs and host interesting activities. Sometimes they are cultural or artistic centers. While the benefits of these diverse places may not be easy to quantify, unhealthy neighborhoods with no civic or social hub tend to suffer from social isolation and alienation, greater crime, lower property values, and weaker public health. The vision of Winchester includes a network of civic areas within walking distance of most residents. The Green Circle Trail is the signature effort in this regard as it connects the park hubs of several neighborhoods.

F. Redevelopment Sites

These areas consist of properties that are the keys to reinvigorating a neighborhood. In early input meetings, groups of citizens agreed with professional analysts that these sites, in their current underused or blighted forms, hold neighborhoods back. They may be underutilized, ugly, unsafe, or just wrong for the community. But because of their size, location, or infrastructure, they have great potential. These sites may be among the first to realize New Urbanist principles. Given new investment, they can become neighborhood hubs and build a new sense of community while attracting jobs and new residents. The vision of Winchester uses a range of city policy tools to nudge investment into these critical points.

G. Redevelopment Scenarios

City Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development staff, working together with consultant planners and engineers, designed some concepts for selected redevelopment sites in each of the ten Planning Areas. The drawings show New Urbanist principles and Traditional Neighborhood Design in action: compact mixed uses, traditional neighborhood architecture, greenery, and pedestrian features. Actual partnerships and construction on the parcels will look different, but these concepts signal the kind of project which will be favored for

redevelopment sites.

H. Old Town Revitalization Area

The oldest part of Winchester has unique character, assets, and needs of its own. This special designation recognizes Old Town's place as the City's center and its potential for mixed use growth. Key growth demographics may be attracted downtown, but special city policies will be needed for parking, flood control, architecture, and many other issues. However, too much regulation may prove a barrier to new investment. Government must strike a careful balance to foster growth here.

2. Incentivize the construction of compact, new mixed use projects as a viable reuse of obsolete strip commercial and industrial properties.

There are a number of properties in the City which have been constructed in strip malls and several industrial sites. These properties were designed during a time where these developments were quite popular and successful. Since that time, as areas become less car-centric, these properties have been rendered obsolete. Additionally, a number of industrial sites have become obsolete. Unlike the viable industries in the Winchester Industrial Park or O'Sullivan, several industries are not viable and would be better suited being reused for other projects. Some of these locations, most notably the Federal Mogul site, have significant environmental clean-up required, which hampers the ability to reuse the site. Other locations include Virginia Apple Storage and Winchester Cold Storage. Additional sites are highlighted in section 4 of the Character Map.

These properties can be reused for other developments and projects, promoting mixed-use and the compact design that this plan promotes. The City should take measures to incentivize the construction of these properties, turning them into mixed-use projects (see Chapter 11).

3. Provide the citizens of the community with a healthy, attractive and safe physical environment which includes convenient access for all modes of transportation.

Connecting the citizens of the City with a healthy environment relies heavily on the ability to access the different portions of that environment. This makes multi-modal transportation crucial in this objective. Chapter 6 looks at accessibility and transportation in-depth, focusing heavily on the current characteristics and needs of transportation in the City. A number of objectives in Chapter 6 overlap specifically with this goal and goal 5. These are goals 14, 11, 7, and 5(see Mobility Chapter 6 for more information). The City should continue to pursue these goals to ensure accessibility within the urban environment.

4. Facilitate the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing units and the construction of new housing units in order to attract higher income residents so that Winchester residents are provided with a decent home in a suitable living environment while maintaining and preserving the existing character of vibrant residential areas designated in this plan.

Redesigning the housing units in the City is necessary to accommodate the future growth of the City. In Chapter 7, strategies are outlined which promote this design. Goals 8, 6, 5, 4, and 3 outline rehabilitating existing housing stock that is substandard, developing affordable housing, increasing home ownership, and creating higher quality and more affordable housing stock. Similar to goal 3, the City should pursue all aspects of Chapter 7's goals to achieve this goal. The Character map identifies infill and revitalization locations in section 2.

5. Provide a range of commercial facilities which incorporate a mix of retail, service and office facilities, properly served by access through the transportation system, and offer selection of consumer goods, and viable growth potential.
Currently, in the City, there is demand for commercial facilities to be better accessible. There is also a significant limit on land in the City that is available for development. Because of these factors, the solution to providing more diverse commercial facilities is to create more mixed-use development sites. A number of sites for these developments were identified in the Character Map, under sections 1,2, and 8. By following along the outline of the Character Map, the City can work towards this objective.

6. Retain and expand upon a diversified, sustainable light industrial base at compatible and appropriate locations which are accessible to transportation facilities, convenient to the workforce, and in harmony with other community development and which attract higher income workers that contribute to the general betterment of the community.

Industrial jobs have had a long-standing position in the City, providing well-paying jobs to those who have not attained a college degree. In recent years, those jobs have been declining. This results in significant unemployment in workforces that are trained for other careers. Over-industrialization, however, can create numerous environmental and health problems. The City should avoid expanding intensive industrial uses, and seek to preserve and grow the light industrial uses in the city. The City should seek to not convert existing M1, Limited Industrial District, into other zoning types. The City should also make efforts to increase the industrial base at appropriate locations, namely the industrial park in the southern end of the City. Public land uses within the City should be developed to enhance the livability of the City, particularly in areas that are underserved. The Character Map outlines locations for reutilization at section 6 of the Comp Plan.

7. Locate public land uses in locations that enhance the livability of the City and facilitate the placement of institutional uses in locations that support the social, spiritual, and health needs of the community.

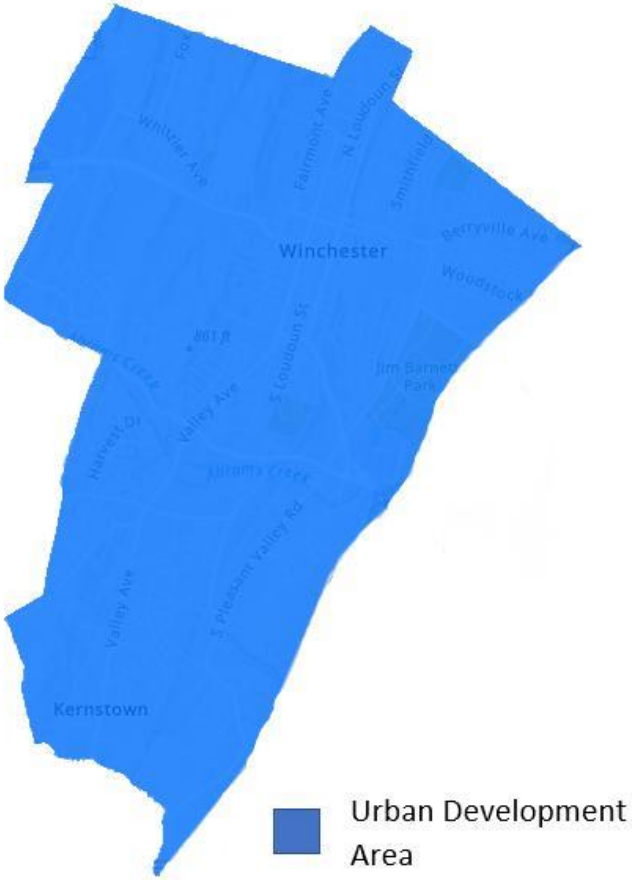
An example of this is the lack of parks in the northern end of the city. There is a notable lack of parks in comparison to the rest of the city in the northern most parts of the city. Locating public land uses in locations that support the community, and also evenly spread services throughout the City will serve to enhance the livability for the residents. Appropriately placing institutional uses for the community in areas that are easily accessible from multi-modal uses and close to residents additionally increases the livability of the City.

8. Reduce the conversion of taxable property to non-taxable land uses.

The size limitation of the City is not just a limitation of the land and growth, but also in terms of finance. The City has a limited amount of taxable land available, which serves to fund the services and facilities the City provides. When institutions such as schools or churches convert land from other uses, it becomes non-taxable. The City should encourage any development of institutions to be focused on land that is already designated as non-taxable, rather than converting taxable property, such as Shihadeh Innovation Center being constructed on land already designated for education.

9. Designate the City an Urban Development Area in accordance with the State code.

The City should be designated as an Urban Development Area (UDA), in accordance with the State code, § 15.2-2223.1 . This will allow the City to qualify for grant funding from the state, which requires a UDA designation within a locality. By designating the whole city as a UDA district, the City would satisfy that requirement, and would also allow the city to encourage more urban design.



CHAPTER NINE - FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

CHANGES TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

Winchester's Zoning Ordinance guides what kind of structures can be built in different parts of the City and how they can be used. It is an important tool for shaping the character of the City's neighborhoods, though not the only one. The current zoning ordinance does not align with the Character Map, so changes are needed.

The fundamental philosophy of the current Zoning Ordinance is exclusivity: uses and occupancies which are not defined or provided for within the Ordinance are excluded from the City. Each zone has a separate list of tolerated uses. This strategy lags behind societal and technological change, requiring a reactive effort in bringing the Ordinance up-to-date through text amendment proposals. Form-based codes and New Urbanistic principles often place a much lower priority on the types of uses and instead employ strategies to create a more sustainable and harmonious building development within a particular area. The progressive result of such strategies generally amounts to less reliance on the automobile as the sole means of transportation, promotes mixed-use opportunities, and creates an environment more suitable for public transportation and walking.

As previously cited, the current Zoning Ordinance segregates uses and occupancies, often requiring dependency upon the personal automobile as a means of transportation between live, work, and play destinations. The character map shows an attempt to create a sense of community within various geographic regions of the City. The historic downtown core retains its character and opportunities for other core areas are identified, the benefits to which include: ease of transportation; sustainability; neighborhood identity, autonomy, and self-preservation; and, direct community input for the future development and desired character of the area. But this concept conflicts with the rules in today's Zoning Ordinance.

One way to address these discrepancies is to establish an alternative means for future development through a comprehensive revision of the Zoning Ordinance, based more in form-based zoning rather than traditional land use zoning. Form based codes are codes that are based in the design and structure of developments, rather than specific land uses. Using these codes will encourage mixed-use that shares a cohesive design, while also encouraging the development of the City in line with the Character Map. Form-based codes don't completely eliminate land uses though, but rather just define broad categories, unlike specific uses. It may not be necessary to re-write the entire Ordinance; however, it is essential that certain guidelines be included so as to provide a mechanism for form codes and New Urbanism consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. By implementing form-based codes that emphasize design, rather than traditional land-use codes, the City would be able to promote the ability for the design to be more in tune with the character map. The end result may resemble a hybrid document which will serve to protect certain areas of the City from inappropriate infill development while generating opportunities for careful and considerate redevelopment and place-making.

THE FREDERICK COUNTY LAND USE PLAN

Many sections of the City's Comprehensive Plan document the close relationship between Winchester and Frederick County. Despite two separate governments, their histories are intertwined, and their economic, environmental, and social connections only increase over time. Planning the future of Winchester's neighborhoods requires attention to the County's direction.

CHAPTER NINE - FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

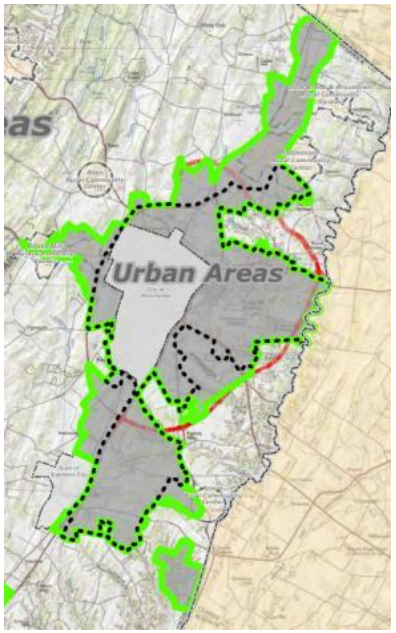
~~An update to Frederick County's Comprehensive Policy Plan was underway at the same time that this update to the City's plan was underway~~. The most recently adopted version of the County plan (adopted in 2017) ~~(updated in 2007)~~ contains a detailed chapter on land use.

The County's land use vision entails continued economic growth and development while preserving natural and agricultural areas. It seeks a compromise between traditional character and dynamic new prosperity. Three trends of the County's land use plan include:

1. . Increase density in the Urban Development Area (UDA).

   The Virginia Employment Commission projects Frederick County's population to increase from about 86,000 in 2017 ~~77,000 in 2010~~ to over 114,000 by 2030. County planning aims to concentrate new housing in the existing Urban Development Area, shown outlined in purple in the following graphic. Farms and forests in the west should not turn into suburbs. The contrast between the more urban eastern area and the more rural western part of the County should become sharper.

   Current land use plans easily allow for 7,500 new dwellings in the UDA at a suburban density level of three units per acre. Density outside the UDA is slated to remain in the range of one unit per five to ten gross acres. In the urbanizing areas, townhouses and multistory apartments will become more common. Preservation of agricultural and forestal resources is called for outside of the UDA. As has occurred in Fauquier and Loudoun counties, wealthy immigrants may still be inclined to build new homes on large parcels in the rural area.

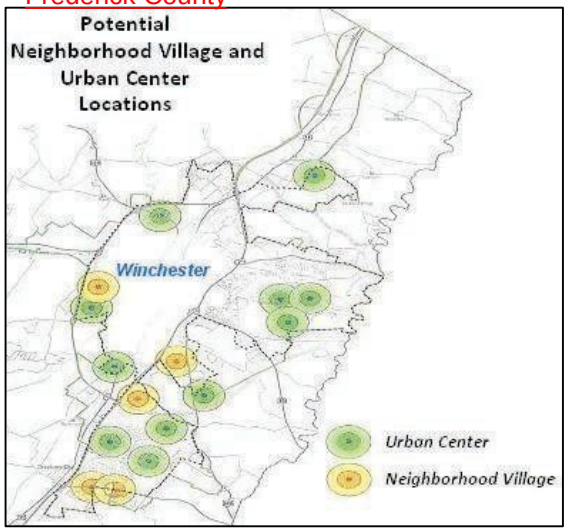


Urban Development Area in Frederick County

2. Promote New Urbanist hubs and villages.

   County plans intend to promote New Urbanist concepts to maintain a distinctive sense of place and avoid generic suburban sprawl. In the County's early history, villages like Gore, Brucetown, and Marlboro served as business and social hubs for rural residents far from Winchester. The densest commercial and residential growth should occur in and near these historic crossroads and hamlets as concentric walkable communities rather than auto-oriented strips.

   Accordingly, the County's plans frame development in the context of Neighborhood Villages and Urban Centers which cluster dense housing within half a mile of life's needs: work, shopping, and entertainment. The villages also incorporate social and recreational hubs like parks, schools, and historic sites. Thousands of new residents will live in the 16 communities, which display the compact mixed use principles of New Urbanism.



A quick review of the two graphics on the previous page depict how the future center of the population base is shifting and will continue to shift south and east of the City. Although the County UDA includes all of the area in the northeast portion of the County, there are developmentally sensitive areas – civil war battlefield sites and wetlands – that limit opportunities for new urban centers in those areas. Other than Sunnyside immediately to the northwest of the City and the Snowden Bridge urban center depicted to the northeast of the City, all of the other potential urban villages are concentrated to the south and east.

3. Use rules and partnerships to preserve nature, farming, and history.

Outside the UDA, the County plans seek to maintain green space and agriculture or other low-impact development. Zoning standards will limit the density of residential growth and concentrate it in existing communities. Historic rural villages like Gore and Gainesboro may accommodate denser development, and planned subdivisions like Lake Holiday may be accommodated with greater densities and mixed uses.

Transferable development rights will be a critical tool. Under this system, a rural landowner places a parcel –of say, 50 acres – under conservation easement so it may never be built upon. A builder buys the development rights to the five or ten houses which could have been built there and builds to extra density in the UDA, perhaps a compact mixed use facility with 20 townhouses and apartments on a smaller parcel. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) uses no public funds even as it preserves green spaces. Rural landowners get a lump sum of money, and builders get a more valuable project.

County policies will aim to preserve rural character in a number of ways. Form regulations will locate residential concentrations out of sight from main roads by using hills or forests as buffers. Construction will consider soil types. Zoning, tax, and educational incentives will support innovative agriculture. In general, County planners recognize that rural character is a public good which must be carefully tended, as it cannot be replaced once lost.

Frederick County's plan to adopt some New Urbanist elements and concentrate residential growth in more compact and walkable communities will benefit Winchester in important ways. City residents may enjoy better air quality, less traffic congestion, and less strain on social services. However, the mixed use communities of the City and County may compete for residents and businesses. It remains to be seen whether such competition will be mutually beneficial. However, it is preferable to current trends of unsustainable auto-oriented suburban sprawl in the County.

CHAPTER NINE - FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERSHIPS WITH FREDERICK COUNTY

The trends and policy changes noted in this and previous chapters lend themselves to partnership with Frederick County. Cooperation will help both governments get better results at lower cost to taxpayers. Four possible partnerships include:

1. . Transferable development rights (TDR).

The TDR program described as part of Frederick County's land use plan could be used to benefit the City of Winchester through partnerships. For example, a large condominium and apartment complex which might normally violate the Zoning Ordinance's density limits could be allowed if the developer agreed to preserve a hundred acres of prime farmland in the County. Such an agreement would revitalize a neighborhood in Winchester, attract new residents to the City, and prevent suburban sprawl in the county. TDR may work better in the City where public transportation and public services are concentrated.

Transfer of Development Rights Map

2. Consolidated social services.

While multiple studies have rejected the unification of City and County governments, they have also recommended consolidation of certain agencies or services. The social services departments, which function much like a state agency, seem prime for partnerships or consolidation. Users of social services are often transient and move between the City and County frequently. Consolidating the two departments would improve the quality of service and cut costs. Chapters Seven and Eight have more detail on social services in Winchester.

3. Coordinating parks and trails.

Many County residents come into Winchester to play or swim at Jim Barnett Park, and many City residents go into the County to play soccer, tour a battlefield, or ride a bike. The City and County parks and recreation departments may benefit from consolidation. They should cooperate closely when planning new facilities and programs at parks.

Both the City and County plan to build more multi-use trails. Often paralleling roads, paved trails offer safe paths to walk, run, or ride a bike for recreation or commuting purposes. City and County trails should connect together, and planners should cooperate when building them. Chapter Six discusses trails in more detail.

4. Gateway corridor overlay zoning

Winchester uses Corridor Enhancement zoning districts to promote a more welcoming urban form where main roads enter the City and lead to the core historic area. The overlay districts, detailed in Chapter Ten, create additional rules and guidelines for structures along Valley Avenue, East Cork Street, Cedar Creek Grade, and other roads of entry.

On the main corridors, development continues beyond the City limits. As visitors come to Winchester for business or pleasure, they first pass through urbanized areas of the County. As such, County construction affects first impressions of the City. At the same time, the County benefits from corridor enhancements just as much as the City. Cooperating on corridor enhancement standards would help both localities.

The next chapter takes a closer look at urban design and, where advocated, historic preservation. It begins to focus on New Urbanism as the preferred approach to future development. As the City becomes less focused on the array of land uses and more focused on design, the importance of newer methods of development review, including form-based code, are addressed.