




Prince William County Government
Board of County Supervisors



Rural Preservation Study

May 6, 2014

*Chris Price, Director
Planning Office*

BACKGROUND



- County has long history of rural preservation strategies dating back to 1964
- Strategies have evolved and improved over time
- Existing rural preservation strategies include mix of policies, ordinances, guidelines, and standards
- Current tools and strategies have not been measured or evaluated against best practices and many are not data-driven
- Current rural preservation policies are not linked to urban development goals



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BACKGROUND (cont'd)



■ Existing Rural Preservation Strategies:

◆ Comprehensive Plan

- Land Use Chapter (Rural Area established in 1998)
- Environment Chapter
- Parks, Open Space, & Trails Chapter
- Sanitary Sewer Chapter

◆ Zoning Ordinance provisions

- Large Lot Zoning
- Rural Cluster

◆ Subdivision Ordinance



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Rural Preservation Study Goals



- Provide an overview of the County's rural preservation policies and an evaluation of their effectiveness
- Identify additional rural preservation tools that may be appropriate and effective
- Make recommendations regarding possible amendments to County's land use planning policies



Prince William County Rural Preservation Study

*Presentation of Report to Board of County Supervisors
May 6, 2014*

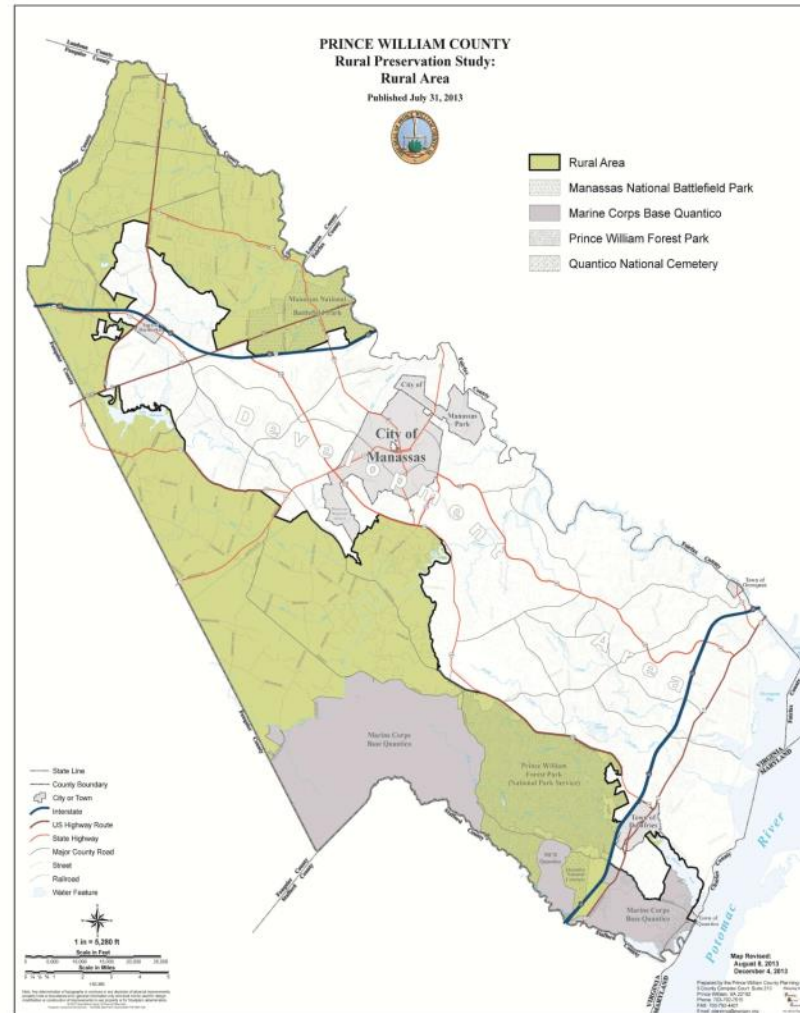
Clive Graham, Principal Planner, ERM

Tom Daniels, University of Pennsylvania

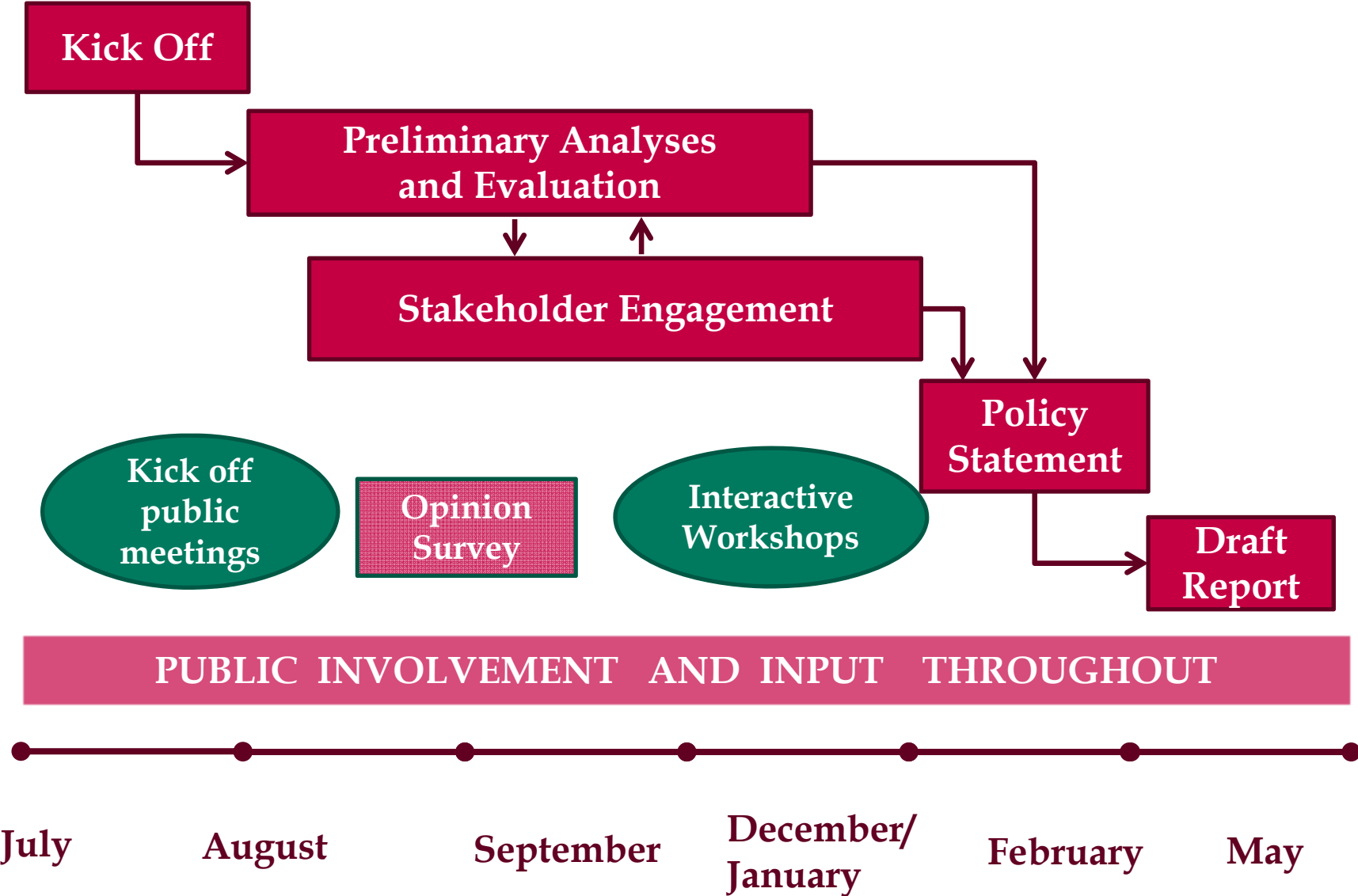


Purpose of Presentation

- Provide overview of Study Process
- Present highlights of the Study
- Present key recommendations and outcomes
- Answer questions



Work Plan



Observations on the Study Process

- Extensive public input
 - Many forms and types of input
 - We feel that all points of view were heard
 - Documented in the Study appendix
- Very engaged citizenry
 - Passionate about the Rural Area
- Extensive support from County staff
 - Assisted the consulting team in producing a well-documented Study with detailed analyses

Observations on Current Policies and Trends

- Strong consensus on importance of maintaining a rural area
- The Rural Area is a large, very diverse area (Quantico to Nokesville to Bull Run to Manassas), with different “characters”
- Past zoning policy has had mixed impacts
 - Many points of view: “has killed agriculture”; “was a property taking”; “10-acre lots are too small to farm; too large to mow”; “what’s wrong with 10-acre zoning?”
 - Our view: on balance it has been a good policy:
 - It reduced development capacity
 - It is quite protective – a prerequisite for a successful preservation program
 - But, has had unintended consequences:
 - Loss of agricultural land
 - Uses land in large amounts

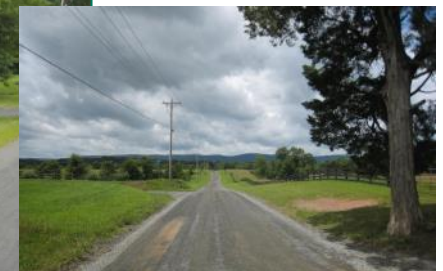
Observations on Current Policies and Trends

- Current development policies treat the Rural Area as a single entity – one size fits all (10-acre zoning)
 - Cluster development option has not been a viable alternative
- Zoning is not enough to achieve preservation goals
 - Much development happens without design review; lost opportunities
 - More tools are needed in the Rural Area land preservation and land development toolboxes
- Rural Area and Development Area policies and outcomes are interconnected
 - Policies can be mutually supportive

Rural Area Prince William County



Rural Area Prince William County



Observations on Current Policies and Trends

- There is farming in the Rural Area, but the type of farming has changed.
 - Agricultural land is a key element of rural character and needs to be a high priority for action
 - “Alternative” farming is occurring: pick your own; agri-tourism; hydroponics; direct sales to consumers, winery
 - Farming needs supportive policies, the window of opportunity to put supportive programs in place is narrow
- Achieving the County’s existing 39% protected open space goal will be major challenge.
 - 39,000 additional acres are needed to meet the goal, but the pool of land to achieve this is limited

Conclusion

Without policy changes, the Rural Area will likely develop in a manner dominated by large lot residential development, with little contiguous open space and significant loss of agricultural lands.

- While not likely the desired outcome, it would not be inconsistent with the current Comprehensive Plan and zoning.

Study Recommendations

- Designed to achieve a clear vision
- Significant, but realistic and achievable
 - Recognize and build on existing field-verified conditions
- Provide more choices for landowners
- Balance landowner concerns with preservation interests
- Require commitment from the County

Study Recommendations

Address the following:

- Vision
- Land preservation
- Residential Development
 - Zoning, Cluster, Sewer
- Rural Character
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Related areas

Key recommendations

Adopt a vision for what the Rural Area should be

Draft for discussion;

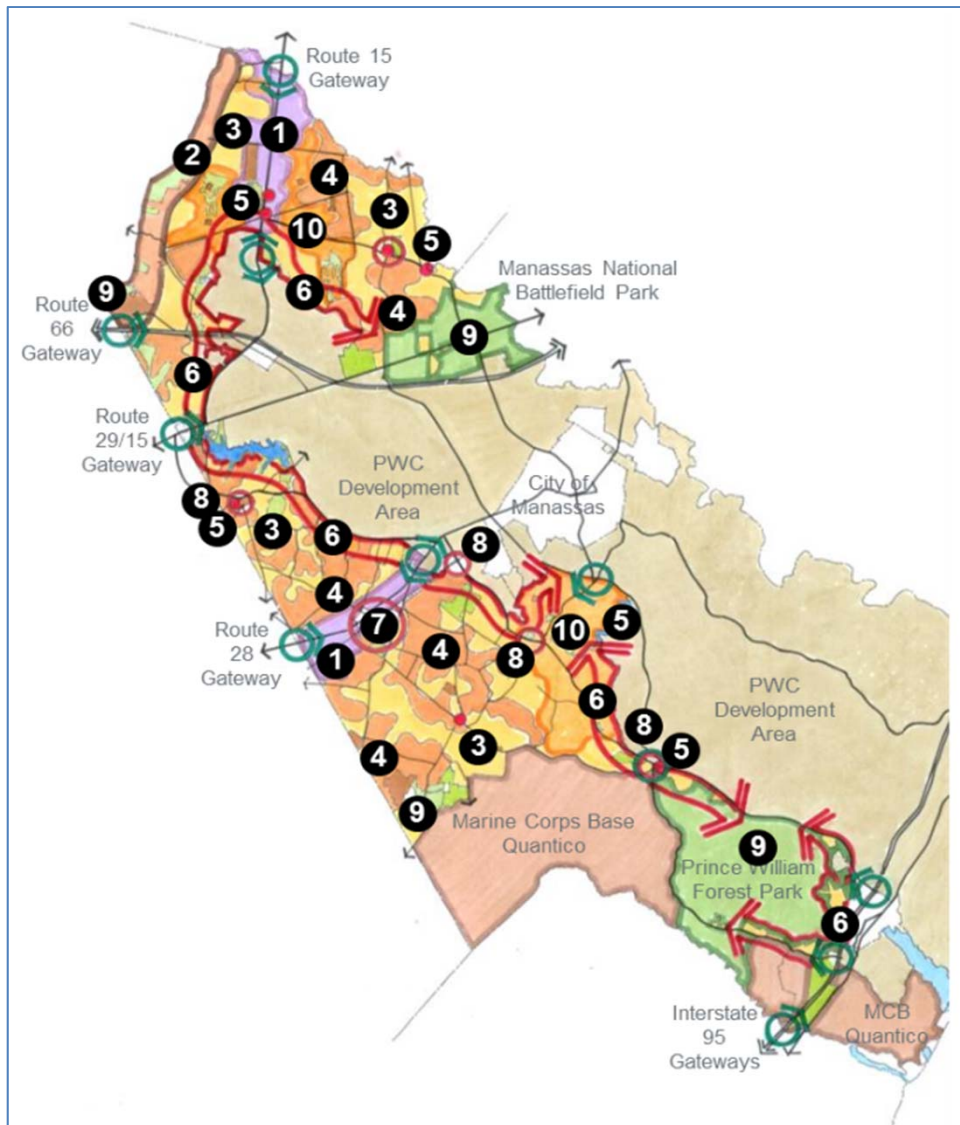
“The Rural Area is a landscape dominated by agriculture, woodland, open space and other undeveloped land. The Rural Area allows for low-density residential development but such development is planned and designed to not dominate the landscape.

The Rural Area accommodates a variety of activities and lifestyles associated with rural areas including farming of all types, low density residential living, rural businesses, cultural heritage, recreation, and preservation and enjoyment of the natural environment.”

Key recommendations

- Adopt a Rural Area land preservation acreage goal:
 - We suggest 60 percent of the remaining undeveloped land in the Rural Area (17,000 acres)
- Create a purchase of development rights program (PDR)
 - Landowners receive cash, land stays in productive use
- Create a transfer of development rights program
 - Private transaction; similar to PDR
- Use “rural character areas” as a basis for policies to protect/enhance character in different parts of the Rural Area;
- Incentivize the rural cluster development provisions and require increased preservation of open space

Rural Character Areas



1. Rural Gateway Corridors
2. Bull Run Mountainside
3. Stream Valley Estates and Subdivisions
4. Valley Agriculture and Forests
5. Crossroad Commercial Areas
6. Transitional Ribbon(s)
7. Nokesville Village
8. Mixed-Use Hamlets
9. Protected Lands
10. Older, Smaller-Lot Residential Enclaves

— Valley Agriculture and Forestry — Valley Estates and Subdivisions —



Waterloo crop farm



Beef and dairy farms



Livestock stables



Turf and sod farms



Long-standing working farms and Fallow farmlands



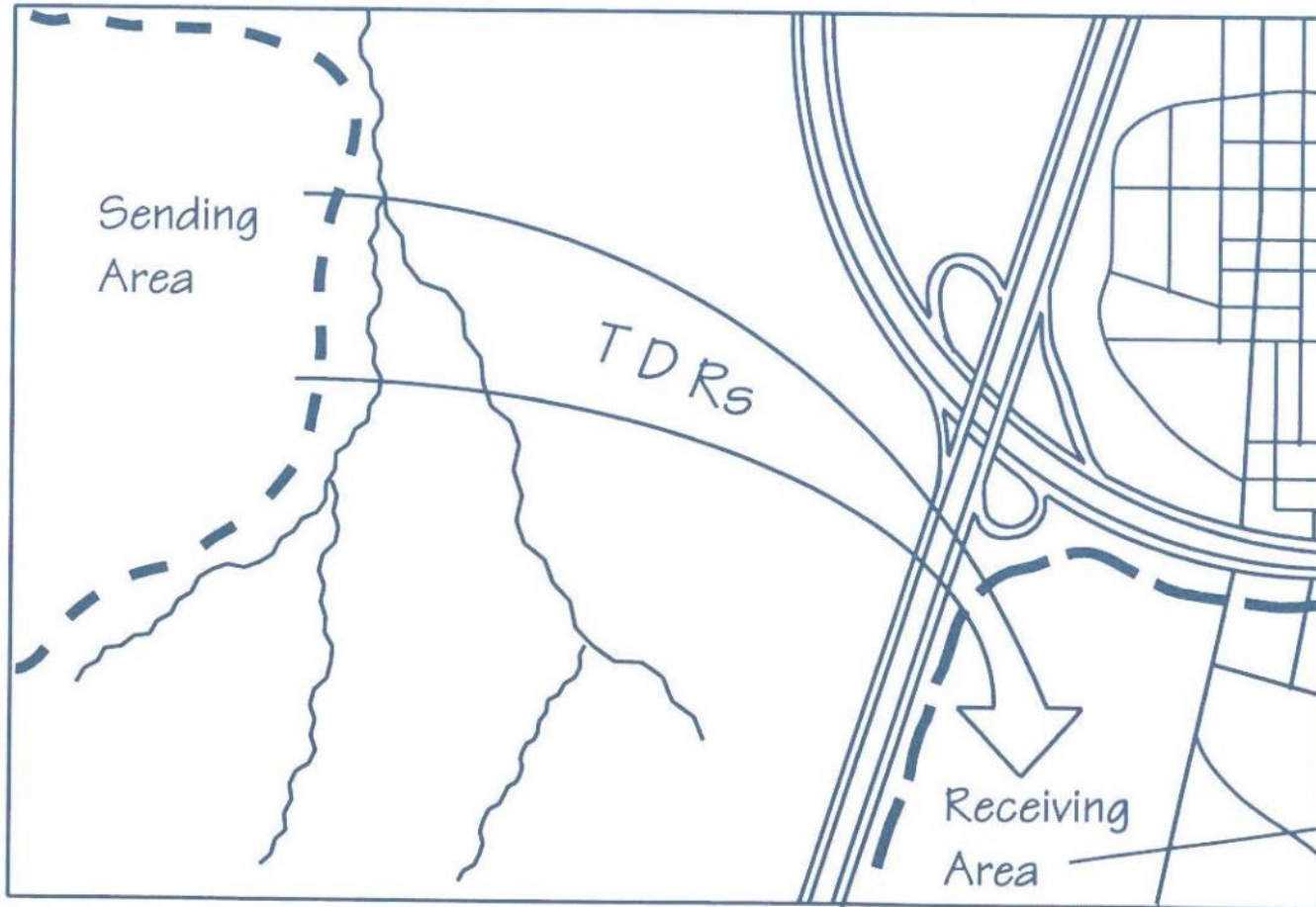
Single homes/lots along roadways (North & South areas)



Valley living - 1:10 Acre rural subdivisions (North area)



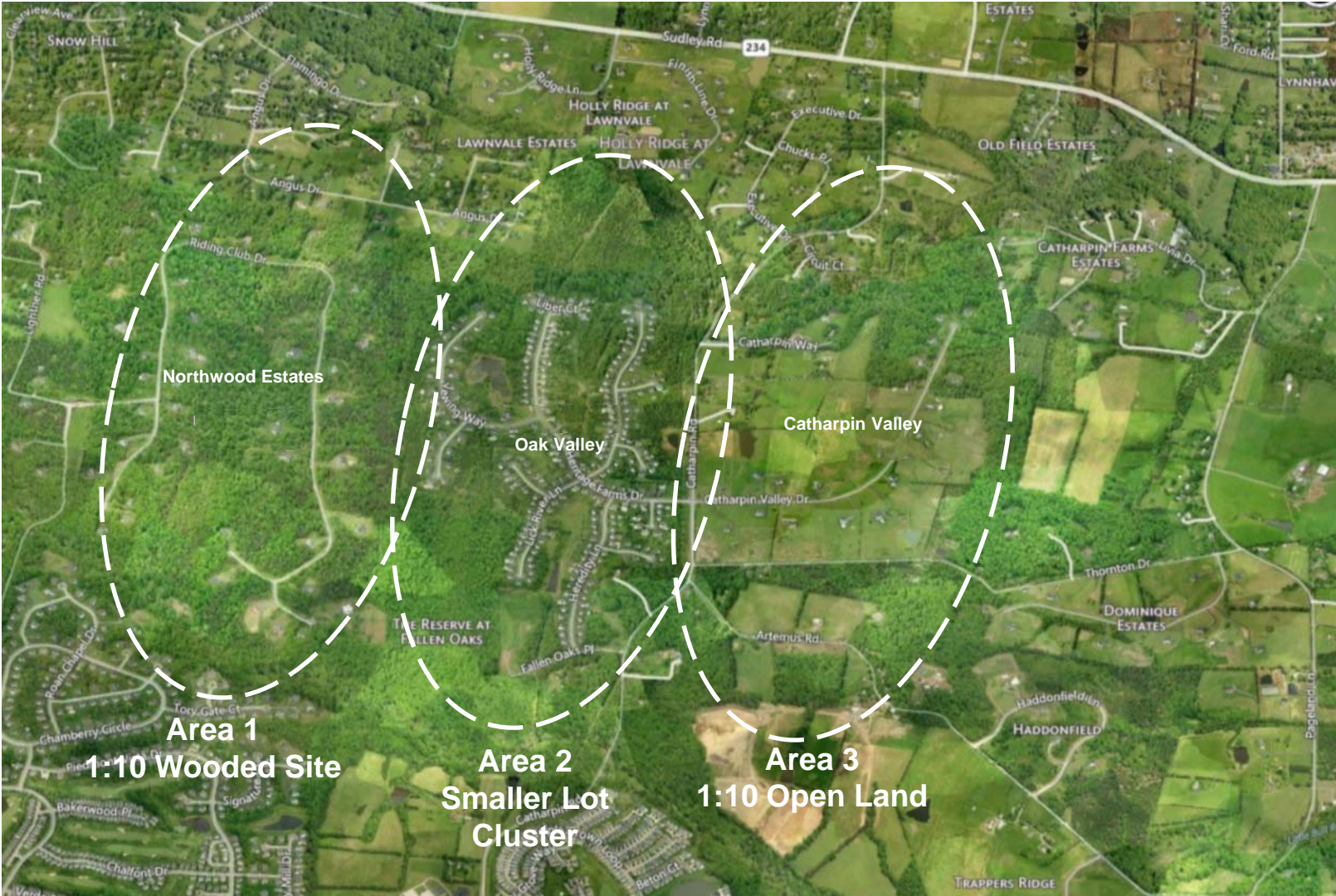
Wooded residential lots and residential overlooking farming



Key recommendations

- Maintain the A-1 zoning density of one dwelling per ten acres, but create policy flexibility in locations where adjustments would advance the vision for the Rural Area
 - Enhanced cluster in areas dominated by farming
 - Limited extensions of sewer in selected rural character areas, to achieve character, land preservation and environmental goals
- Give recognition to and support farming, agri-tourism, and rural recreation as making real contributions to the County's economic development and quality of life.
- Create a mechanism for the agricultural community to provide feedback on land use regulations to support agriculture.

Effects of Policy on Land



Other related recommendations

- Promote environmental protection.
- Enhance cultural resources and integrate them into a broad-ranging rural preservation strategy
- Plan for public facilities
- Enhance the rural economy
- Refine the Comprehensive Plan's Open Space and Corridor map into a detailed, unified, interconnected open space vision

Impacts of recommendations

If adopted and implemented

- Clear vision for the Rural Area
- Significant increase in preserved land
- Existing zoning stays largely in place
- More choice for landowners
- Modest increase in dwelling units, balanced by significant increase in contiguous, open space
- Enhanced rural character
- More opportunities and support for agriculture
- Land use that can support Total Maximum Daily Load and other environmental needs

Planning Team

- Clive Graham. Principal Planner, Environmental Resources Management
 - Founded in 1977, 5,000 staff in 39 countries
 - Offices in Annapolis, Washington D.C., Richmond
 - Planning, Engineering, Environmental Science, Sustainability

Tom Daniels, PhD, Professor of City and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania

Keith Weaver, ASLA, Principal with EDSA., national landscape architecture firm

Next Steps



- Consultant will finalize report
- Staff will recommend an implementation strategy for BOCS consideration
- Staff will continue to work with stakeholders to development recommendations supporting implementation of the Study



Questions?



- For project information, visit:

www.pwcgov.org/planning



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