

Chapter 4 Plan Framework

Introduction

The Plan Framework Map provides an overview of the main ideas and themes to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The map highlights areas where some degree of change is encouraged or anticipated. Table 4-1 summarizes the guiding policies for each highlighted area on the map. The map is provided at the end of this chapter.

Table 4-1: Plan Framework Guiding Policies

Framework	Guiding Policies
City Gateways	Strengthening the City’s image and attractiveness by improving entries.
Corridor Enhancement Areas	Improving the condition, character and quality of primary and secondary travel corridors.
Greenway Park System	Providing a connected system of parks and greenways.
Low Density Mixed Residential	Encouraging a mix of large and small-lot single family detached residential development areas combined with parks and green spaces.
Medium Density Mixed Residential	Encouraging a mix of small-lot single family detached and attached residential development areas combined with parks and green spaces.
Mixed Use Development Areas	Promoting planned mixed use areas offering innovative combinations of residential and business development.
Downtown Revitalization Area	Reviving downtown as the heart of the City – the civic, economic, cultural, and symbolic center of city life.
Edom Road Revitalization Area	Promoting reinvestment and sensitive redevelopment in this older commercial and industrial district.
Neighborhood Conservation Areas	Improving the quality of life in the City’s mature neighborhoods.

This chapter further elaborates on the guiding policies provided above and addresses each area identified on the Plan Framework Map. The chapters following this one, particularly Chapter 5, provide the detailed goals, objectives and strategies that will guide the City in the implementation of the framework plan policies in this chapter.

City Gateways

The Framework Map identifies the City’s primary and secondary gateways—selected areas where the regional road network crosses a City boundary. Primary gateways are identified at the City’s interstate interchanges. Secondary gateways are found at major secondary road corridor entrances, the entrances for Route 33 (Market Street), Route 11 (Main Street), Route 42 (High Street and Virginia Avenue), Route 659 (Port Republic Road), Route 710 (Reservoir Street), and Route 726 (Erickson Avenue and Stone Spring Road). These gateways serve as the community’s front door, establishing first impressions and reinforcing images and perceptions of Harrisonburg’s character, quality of life and vitality. The City should prepare an evaluation of the visual quality and entry experience at each gateway and plan for appropriate improvements. Such improvements

could include updated entry signage, landscape plantings, screening of unsightly views, and new development and redevelopment recommendations.

Corridor Enhancement Areas

The Plan Framework Map highlights the important local and regional travel routes into and through the City, many of which are commercial destinations. Their quality and character strongly influence the City's accessibility, attractiveness and economic vitality. This plan recommends that a special study of each of these corridors be carried out to address such issues as:

- Land use and design quality
- Streetscape improvements
- Vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle circulation
- Access management
- Development, redevelopment and reuse opportunities
- Conservation of special features
- Improvements to utilities and public facilities, and
- Signage.

Some of these corridors include residential areas, which may be under stress due to increased traffic along the corridor. It is particularly important that the corridor studies examine whether these areas should remain residential or be permitted to convert to non-residential uses on a location-specific basis. Conversion to non-residential uses can result in building improvements along the corridor. On the other hand, continuous strips of retail and/or office uses can cause access management problems, with many commercial driveways causing dangerous traffic situations. Another consideration regarding conversion to non-residential use is the resultant expansion of the supply of potential retail/office sites in the City. If the demand is not high enough, the result may be spotty conversions that further destabilize the neighborhood. In some cases, existing residential areas along corridors can be improved by the installation of street trees and landscaping that buffer the houses from the road and by traffic calming measures. A mix of residential and non-residential uses may also be appropriate, if the best sites for conversion are identified in the corridor plan, and if design standards are applied to mitigate adverse impacts of non-residential uses on neighboring residential uses and on traffic safety.

Greenway Park System

This network of green spaces serves both recreational and environmental functions along with being an alternative means of transportation. It preserves vital elements of nature in the City – the streams, floodplains, and unique wooded sites. These ribbons of green could connect the City's parks with sidewalks and bicycle and/or shared-use paths and linear open spaces, providing protection from flooding, visual relief from urban development and an attractive recreational environment. The goal of the City is to preserve the environmental and recreational values of these lands through enlightened conservation practices on its own lands and cooperative efforts with private landowners. The latter might include the purchase, acceptance of donation, and suggestion of proffers of land and easements from willing participants. Some of the concepts of this system are similar to the City's adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan ideals.

Mixed Residential Areas

This plan proposes some new patterns of residential development for several remaining large undeveloped and some underdeveloped areas of the City – planned mixed residential. Two types of mixed residential use are proposed, low density and medium density, as described below:

Low Density Mixed Residential

These areas identified on the Plan Framework Map and located at the edge of the City are planned for residential development containing a mix of large and small-lot single family detached dwellings and attractive green spaces. Planned “open space” (also known as “cluster”) developments are desired. The City encourages innovative residential building types that permit creative subdivision design solutions for neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and protection of environmental resources. Examples of such innovative residential building types could include zero lot-line development and patio homes as well as other new single family residential forms. The gross density of development in these areas should be in the range of 1 to 6 dwelling units per acre.

Medium Density Mixed Residential

These largely undeveloped areas continue the existing medium density character of adjacent areas, but in a different form. They are planned for small-lot single family detached and single family attached neighborhoods where green spaces are integral design features. They should be planned communities that exhibit the same innovative features as described for the low density version of mixed residential development described above. The gross density of development in these areas should be in the range of 4 to 12 dwelling units per acre and commercial uses would be expected to have an intensity equivalent to a Floor Area Ratio of at least 0.4, although the City does not measure commercial intensity in that way.

Mixed Use Development Areas

These areas combine residential and non-residential uses in planned neighborhoods where the different uses are finely mixed instead of separated. Quality architectural design features and strategic placement of green spaces will ensure development compatibility. These areas are prime candidates for “live-work” and traditional neighborhood developments. Live-work developments combine residential and office/service uses allowing people to both live and work in the same area. Live-work spaces may be combined in the same building or on the same street. All buildings have a similar residential scale.

Traditional neighborhood development permits integrated mixing of residential, retail, office and employment uses to create a neighborhood with the following characteristics:

- The design of the neighborhood allows residents to work, shop, and carry out many of life’s other activities within the neighborhood.

- A mix of land uses is provided. The proximity of uses allows residents to walk, ride a bicycle, or take transit for many trips between home, work, shopping, and school.
- A variety of housing types is provided at a range of densities, types (multifamily, townhouse, and single family), and costs. Neighborhoods are heterogeneous mixes of residences in close proximity to commercial and employment uses.
- The neighborhood includes a retail, office, employment, and/or entertainment core to provide economic and social vitality, as well as a major focus and meeting place in the community. The core area may contain high density residential uses as well, particularly in the form of multifamily units on the upper floors of buildings over retail or office uses.
- Architectural, landscape and/or other design measures are employed to ensure compatibility between the different uses.
- The circulation system serves many modes of transportation and provides choices for alternative transportation routes. Streets, alleys, and pedestrian and bicycle paths connect to the surrounding area. Streets and alleys generally follow a grid pattern to provide these route choices and connections. Traffic calming techniques may be used to reduce vehicle speed and increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- The overall intensity of development is designed to be high enough to support transit service.
- A system of parks; open spaces; and civic, public, and institutional uses is included to create a high quality of life and civic identity for the community.
- The cluster concept is embraced so as to concentrate development in environmentally suitable areas and to preserve and protect important environmental and cultural resources.

Live-work areas should include most of the qualities of traditional neighborhood developments except that a concentrated core area is not required, the retail component is very minor, and residential-scale office uses may be more finely mixed with residential uses. Live-work development is recommended for the following mixed use development area shown on the Plan Framework Map:

- The area north of Country Club Road, east of I-81, and west of Linda Lane.

Traditional neighborhood development is recommended for the following mixed use areas shown on the Plan Framework Map:

- The area west of I-81 bounded by Old Furnace Road, Smithland Road and I-81, and
- the area between Long Avenue and Hawkins Street south of East Market Street.

The City will be flexible in applying the above location recommendations for the types of mixed use areas. The City may permit a live-work development in a recommended traditional neighborhood development area and vice versa, if the proposed plan exhibits excellent design qualities and is compatible with neighboring areas.

Apartments are permitted only if single family detached and attached units are also provided and together cover a greater percentage of the project site.

Revitalization Areas

The following areas of the City are already developed, but have experienced some symptoms of decline. Revitalization and selected redevelopment, according to thoughtful detailed plans, are needed to ensure that these areas remain assets to the City, property owners, businesses, and residents.

Downtown Revitalization Area

In concert with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, the City of Harrisonburg seeks to revive downtown as the heart of the City and region, an economic engine, source of civic pride, arts and entertainment center, and quality place to shop, work and live. The boundaries of the downtown area coincide with the City's identified Arts & Cultural District and include the central business core, portions of the James Madison University Campus, and transitional mixed use/residential areas that connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods. Court Square is the historic and symbolic center; a quarter mile radius from the center of the square defines the area within easy walking distance. The Virginia Main Street approach to revitalizing downtown forms the core principles for improving the area and focuses on organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring. In regard to design, the City will work with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance to guide the rehabilitation and development of the area including the appropriate densities, intensity and character of downtown. Further guidance on the revitalization of downtown is provided in Chapter 14.

Edom Road Revitalization Area

The City seeks to create a redevelopment and revitalization plan for this area located next to downtown, an area that currently exhibits low quality and deteriorating building stock and conflicting land uses. The goal is to encourage reinvestment and to seek coordinated redevelopment of the area transforming it into an attractive and vital City asset. See Chapter 14 for additional guidance.

Neighborhood Conservation Areas

Although many are rich in historic and cultural fabric, some neighborhoods face challenges to reinvestment and rehabilitation while others confront preservation issues. Some are suffering from poorly maintained, deteriorating, or vacant homes and spot conversions of single family homes to apartments, often for students. Other areas contain older deteriorating apartment buildings. Some are affected by encroaching commercial development or inappropriate conversion of houses to non-residential uses. Impacts of traffic on highly traveled roadways may also be creating neighborhood stress. This plan recommends that for each of these areas a community-based neighborhood plan be developed to address these and other issues raised by the community.

Chapters 6 and 14 provide goals, objectives and strategies to guide the conservation of these existing neighborhoods.