12. CLEAR BOUNDARIES WITH THE RURAL AREAS

The Development Area boundaries are the places where the Development Areas meet the Rural Areas. It is anticipated that, in most circumstances, development in the growth areas will extend to the boundary so that the full potential of the Development Areas can be achieved. A “blended edge” that is so frequently associated with sprawl is discouraged. This section suggests ways in which the boundaries can be discernible and compatible with their surroundings.

Where the Development Area Boundary is a River or a Stream

Where the Rivanna River or one of its tributaries such as Powell Creek form the boundary of the Development Area, a wooded buffer between the watercourse and the developed area can help to form a Greenway to provide an environmental as well as recreational and civic benefit. If a street is provided adjacent to a watercourse, it is preferable to have residences up to the opposite side of the road so that the view to the watercourse is public. An urban park can also be placed alongside a river or stream where that watercourse forms the rural boundary.

Where the Development Area Boundary is a Road

Where a Development Area boundary is a street or road, the treatments may be “buffered” or “Unbuffered.” A buffered boundary could consist of a heavily vegetated or landscaped area of 50 - 100 feet alongside the roadway inside the Development Area where property dimensions permit such a buffer. This approach should not be used casually. The Development Areas are limited in area and use of this technique will reduce the net buildable area. It may be used when surrounding residents are concerned about encroachment of the Development Area beyond its boundaries. (See Figure 6:124).

An unbuffered boundary creates an obvious distinction or “hard edge” between a Development Area and a Rural Area. Figures 6:116 and 6:120 show development up to and fronting on the bounding thoroughfare. This treatment may be appropriate for highly traveled roadways or where a Development Area might be expanded, if it is ever to be expanded. Wherever this solution is used, it is important that no residences “back up” onto these roadways. Where development abuts a roadway, it is important that it act as a “front door” to the community.

Figure 6:122 A riparian buffer alongside a stream accommodates a road.

Figure 6:123 The residential edge of a proposed neighborhood. Houses front a road that parallels a stream valley and its buffers.
Where the Development Area Boundary is a Ridge

Where a Development Area boundary is a ridge, such as the top of a watershed, care should be taken to keep development below the ridge line, if the ridge is significantly higher than the land on the Development Area side of the boundary. This treatment is sometimes known as a military crest (See Figure 6:110). If the land on the Development Area side is rolling, then the heights of the building are of less concern and the “hard edge” is created without any environmental feature delineating the boundary.

Where the Development Area Boundary is the City of Charlottesville

Where the City of Charlottesville abuts the Development Areas and a watercourse is not the boundary, neighborhoods adjacent to the City should be considered in light of their ability to join with other neighborhoods. In these situations, the County’s neighborhoods would not show a clear boundary.

Where the Development Area Boundary is along a Power Line

Easements exist along power lines in all areas. In Development Areas, where the boundary is a power line, a 50-foot wooded buffer between the easement and the building areas should be provided for visual and physical separation.

Where the Development Area Boundary is a Drainage Swale

Swales are natural drainage areas that make up open space corridors, as described in Section 3. They are the most advantageous areas for groundwater recharge. As such, they should be retained as or planted as a riparian buffer.