11. **SITE PLANNING THAT RESPECTS TERRAIN**

The Neighborhood Model calls for sensitivity to existing terrain through site design and architecture that fits into grades. Where significant regrading is necessary, reconstructed slopes are called for that are attractive, functional, and easy to maintain. Minimizing destruction of natural terrain will help Albemarle County retain its beautiful landscapes.

The topography of the Blue Ridge Mountains and foothills poses specific challenges to applying the Neighborhood Model, but it also holds opportunities. In fact, the natural changes in topography can be the foundation for an appealing built environment. Some steep sites can be preserved as enclaves of green. On others, clever development can create distinctive and memorable building sites. When developing on hillsides, however, care must be taken to preserve prominent views for others to enjoy.

The Neighborhood Model must recognize both the constraints and the opportunities of the topography of Albemarle County. The 1/4-mile, five-minute walk must be adapted in terms of “uphill” and “downhill.” Where difficult steeply sloping terrain will impact the distance that can be covered in five or ten minutes, the distance should be reduced in area. Pedestrian circulation in these areas requires special consideration. Roads in mountainous areas can become quite steep and especially difficult to traverse even in good weather. A good plan considering such sites will often provide alternative paths for circulation that are easier on the pedestrian and more direct.

**Figure 2:30** These homes sit majestically above the road overlooking a neighborhood park.

**Figure 2:31** View of townhouse development for steeply sloping terrain. Groupings of eight townhouses are arranged to form parking courts where slopes make the provision of rear alleys impossible. A pedestrian stair is provided as part of a garden sequence in order to navigate terrain much too great for vehicular navigation. Access to the upper areas by the disabled is afforded by an alternative thoroughfare network that navigates a more gently sloped area of the site.