

**CROZET DOWNTOWN ZONING** Consultant Recommendations**Executive Summary** September 4, 2007

Crozet is a special place with a strong identity. Those who participated in the Crozet Master Planning process remember the saying: “all roads lead to downtown”. The Master Plan identified downtown as the largest and most important of the centers of residential and economic activity. Over the last five months, the consultants (CP+D) have been working with Albemarle County and community members to recommend zoning which will help implement the Master Plan vision for a thriving Downtown Crozet.

The following are goals of the community, and these have informed the new, proposed zoning regulations:

- Increase pedestrian-friendly environment
- Make downtown easier for infill and redevelopment
- Increase the utility of the land
- Increase employment downtown
- Keep the uniquely diverse character of Crozet

This study includes recommendations for two major areas of focus: new zoning regulations for Downtown Crozet and recommended zoning district boundaries for where those changes would potentially take place. A map reflecting the consultant’s recommendation for the proposed boundaries is included with this packet, along with a comparison of the existing zoning and Master Plan recommendations for downtown. Approximate acreages have been included to compare the scale of these recommendations. Materials included in the Crozet Downtown Zoning submission (9/4/07):

- Executive Summary
- CP+D Crozet Downtown Zoning Recommendations
- Recommendation Assessment: Benefits, Concerns, and Public Commentary on Key Issues
- Community Meeting Agendas and Public Comment Notes

**Recommended Boundaries for Downtown Zoning**

The recommendations for downtown include the creation of several new zoning districts, including a ‘Downtown’ district center of greater intensity and a ‘Transition’ or edge area, which connects Downtown and the mainly low-density residential areas beyond. These boundary recommendations are generally consistent with the Master Plan, which identifies the benefit of establishing separate zoning districts that corresponding to land uses and place types and are accompanied by standards appropriate for implementation (Master Plan p. 28). Boundary lines also consider the topography, development potential, street network, and sense of place. Using the basic foundation of the Master Plan CT-6 zone, described as the commercial “hub” for Crozet, Downtown will be more intense which will help focus investment and jump start infill redevelopment. The Transition area serves as a bridge between the primarily residential neighborhoods surrounding Downtown and the more intense development in the historic center. The recommendation also provides for employment uses in the area designated Downtown 2.

**Recommended Zoning Regulations**

Throughout the course of this study existing limitations with the current zoning code were investigated and best practices in communities of similar size and scale were studied. This packet contains mainly text recommendations for key zoning issues in the Downtown and Transition districts. Illustrations are provided to further explain the zoning recommendations, and these draw on ideas derived from best practices elsewhere.

To achieve the goal of a pedestrian-friendly environment, the proposed new zoning rules call for not only the conventional “minimum” setbacks of buildings from the street, but in some cases also a “maximum” setback. This is necessary in order to ensure that new buildings help “frame” the street, thereby creating a sense of spatial enclosure for pedestrians – an essential element for pedestrian comfort. However, these types of rules mean that the new regulations would not simply add flexibility or choice for landowners and developers in Crozet, but in some cases would be more demanding or restrictive, and not simply more flexible. Without such provisions however, conventional market forces would not provide the incentive to create pedestrian-friendly streetscapes – an essential goal of the Master Plan.

The appropriateness of the proposed new regulations can be judged against three main criteria, as expressed in various ways by the residents and business owners of Crozet:

*1. Will the new regulations make the land in downtown Crozet more developable compared to the existing zoning regulations that pertain?*

We believe the answer to this question is yes, because a greater number of uses are allowed and the permitted land use intensities are generally greater than current regulations allow.

*2. Will the new regulations help create a more streamlined process for zoning decisions of all kinds?*

We also believe the answer to this question is yes, because:

- the new regulations are aimed at supporting, fostering, and encouraging development and redevelopment at greater intensities, rather than restricting or inhibiting such development.
- the new regulations provide for the liberal use of administrative modifications when needed, to facilitate development that meets the intent, goals, and spirit of the zoning ordinance and master plan.
- the County has the option to enact the new regulations by rezoning (or “prezoning”) on its own motion, rather than waiting for each landowner to submit an individual rezoning application. This would, in turn, lead to by-right development by property owners in the Downtown districts.

*3. Will the new regulations create development that conforms to the Vision for the future of downtown Crozet?*

We also believe the answer to this question is yes. In addition to the points listed above, the new regulations contain provisions such as maximum as well as minimum building setbacks, expanded height limits, and other such requirements that will help ensure a more intensive, compact, pedestrian-friendly environment.

The County will be considering how the consultant recommendations for zoning text and suggested map changes are ultimately implemented. One important consideration that results whenever new zoning rules are applied, is that there will inevitably be situations where existing uses and structures do not match the new regulations. It is recommended that the County consider the use of a State Code provision that allows “administrative modifications” (also called administrative waivers) in order to ensure that the new zoning regulations are implemented fairly and effectively. Using this provision will allow the County to ensure that the new zoning regulations help meet the goals for Crozet listed above, while also being as fair and reasonable as possible to individual landowners.