

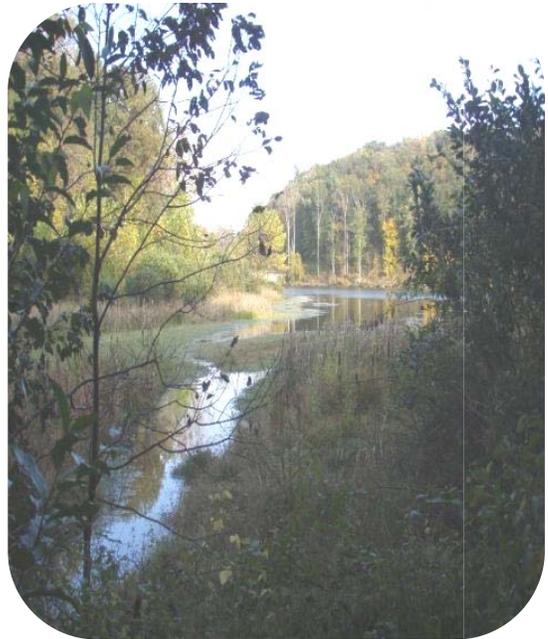
## Chapter 6-Parks & Green Systems

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Retaining green systems and building new parks and greenways are essential to the quality of life expected for Crozet. Green systems, or green infrastructure, refers to active recreation areas, passive recreation areas, and important environmental features, such as lakes, streams, floodplains, and adjacent slopes. Residents expect the green systems to provide for key linkages, such as from Lickinghole to Crozet Park, neighborhoods to the Downtown, and neighborhoods to schools. These systems also help residents enjoy the natural features of the area. However, the strategy in the Master Plan is to preserve and nourish a system integral to the community, rather than account for minimum standards for parks and associated facilities. The proposed open space system can mitigate stormwater runoff, nourish the plant and animal communities of Crozet, create new pedestrian and bike routes, and attract tourism.

For Parks and Green Systems, the goals of the community are to

- Protect sensitive natural systems (centered on the Lickinghole Creek drainage system)
- Reserve public areas of topographical, historical, or cultural interest that characterize Crozet
- Create areas for structured and unstructured recreation
- Link neighborhoods to the Downtown, schools, parks, squares, greens, and the larger region.
- Protect and preserve Crozet's exceptional mountain views from light pollution.
- Link rural area trails to Downtown destinations
- Protect areas shown, as well as identify the location of existing/new parks and greenways on the Parks & Green Systems Map.



### Protection of Natural Systems

Areas intended for parks or for environmental preservation are shown as Greenspace on the Land use Plan. These areas are classified as Public Open Space or Semi-Public Open Space/Flood Plain/Stream Buffer on the Parks & Green Systems map. Due to the rolling terrain and dendritic stream patterns of Crozet, a large portion of the development area is floodplain and steep slopes proposed to be preserved or used as potential greenways.

Existing County regulations provide many protections for these critical environmental features. The Water Protection Ordinance requires a 100-foot stream buffer on all streams in Crozet. Steep slopes and wetlands are adjacent to many of those streams. Where an overlap of a stream buffer and steep slopes exists, little, if any disturbance is allowed. Disturbance of steep slopes (slopes in excess of 25%) requires consideration by the County prior to approval. Slopes designated for preservation on County Plans are given the most protection.

While the Water Protection Ordinance is intended to protect streams feeding into the water supply, it is sometimes applied to swales where there is no daylighted stream. A daylighted stream is one that is exposed, not piped. East and west of Crozet Avenue and north of Three

Notch'd Road, there is a designated stream buffer requirement for a non-daylighted stream. In order to promote mixed use on the few parcels affected by the stream buffer requirement, modifications to the requirements are proposed. These modifications would allow encroachment in the buffer with mitigation/additional plantings.

Slopes and stream buffers are not the only features protected by existing regulations. Disturbance of wetlands requires permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers. Floodplain regulations in the County zoning ordinance also help protect these important environmental resources.

Tree preservation and planting is also important in Crozet. Trees help protect streams as well as mitigate air and water pollution, reduce glare, reduce energy costs, absorb noise, create microclimates, increase property values, create character, and help attract new businesses. It is recognized that an urban forestry plan is a long term goal and that it might be developed in the context of an urban forestry plan for the County's Development Areas.

## **Parks**

### **Western Park**

Western Park (in Old Trail) is a new 35.8 acre County park. Land for the park was given in conjunction with the adjacent Old Trail development. The County has developed a master plan for this park that has recreational facilities of multi use field, pavilion, playground, small amphitheatre, open space play areas, and natural areas with trails. The park will be developed in phases as funding allows and construction funding has been delayed in the most recently approved Capital Improvements Program.

### **Eastern Park**

Eastern Park is located on a high point on the eastern side of the Development Area. When established, this park will provide views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Downtown Crozet and will have multiple trail access points. The expectation for the park is that it will be a similar size to Western Park and have a similar relationship to surrounding neighborhoods. It should have a mix of recreational uses (sports fields, trails, picnicking, and preserved areas).

### **Other Parks**

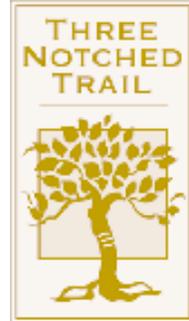
Other parks are expected with new development and some redevelopment. The addition of a new elementary school on the eastern side of the Development Area will bring an additional 8 acres of field space. A three-acre trailhead park, centrally located on Crozet Avenue, is recommended to provide parking and access to the greenway system although its exact location is not yet determined. Other small pocket parks and greens, averaging one acre in size, will serve new and old neighborhoods. These neighborhood parks would be created through private funding or by developers fulfilling their open space requirements

## **Greenway Trails**

The greenway system, a linear network of open space and streams shown on the Parks and Green Systems Map, offers an opportunity to connect neighborhoods with each other and the Downtown. Recommended Greenways are shown on the Parks & Green Systems map. The Greenways follow the stream corridors within the 100' wide stream buffer through both public and private land. In situations where the Greenways access urban areas, they connect with the urban infrastructure of sidewalks and bike lanes. Bike facilities as described in Chapter 5-Transportation are also shown on the Parks and Green Systems map. The plan identifies

priority segments for completion based on providing key linkages to Downtown, schools, parks, and centers.

Implementing and maintaining a greenway system will require a public/private partnership involving many different people and groups. Access to and use of these areas would have to be negotiated. It is expected that large sections of the greenway system would be built, as opportunities arise, by civic groups and/or members of the development community. There is an active group of citizens in Crozet who have organized to help construct trails, plan for future trails, and conduct other trail related activities. Where parks are public, the County is primarily responsible for maintenance of the system. However, to minimize cost, portions of the system could be adopted by volunteer groups, under an Adopt-A-Trail program. Greenway trail construction standards are identified in the *Albemarle County Design Standards Manual*.



Not only do trails connect to important centers in Crozet, there are opportunities to connect to nearby parks outside the Development Area, such as Mint Springs and Beaver Creek. There is also an initiative underway, spearheaded by the Three Notched Trail Foundation, to create a scenic and safe walking and biking route from the Rivanna River near Monticello to the Blue Ridge Mountains along the historic Three-Notched Road.

#### Parks and Greenways Recommendations:

- Create a multi-purpose path along west side of Crozet Avenue or where feasible along the corridor.
- Create a multi-purpose path in right-of-way acquired for Eastern Avenue to provide pedestrian and bike connections before road is completed.
- Construct key trail linkages:
  - Crozet Connector Trail (Lickinghole to Crozet Park)
  - Trails to Downtown, Schools, and other Centers
- Establish a not-for-profit Crozet Trails Foundation (like the Rivanna Trails Foundation) for design, construction, and maintenance.
- Create an Adopt-a-Trails program.
- Gather and distribute information on tax incentives for landowners to donate easements for Greenways (floodplains).
- Develop signage for greenways trails
- Complete Western Park
- Establish Eastern Park with Public/Private Collaboration
- Explore potential access points to Lickinghole Creek Basin
- Organize the gathering of GPS data for mapping these routes: these could be collected by groups such as students, Boy Scouts and other volunteer.

#### Dark Skies

Protection from light pollution is recommended in this master plan. Outdoor lighting should be minimized in areas that are widely visible from other parts of the community, such as upland areas or flat expanses that do not have the benefit of a visual buffer created by topography, vegetation, or existing structures. Street lights should be used which avoid lighting up the sky.