

Chapter 6-Parks & Green Systems Plan

Retaining green systems and building new parks and greenways are essential to the quality of life expected for Crozet. Green systems refer to undeveloped land or open space with important environmental features, such as lakes, streams, floodplains, and adjacent slopes and active and passive recreational areas. Green system areas are shown on the Land Use Plan as Greenspace. On the Parks and Green Systems map, they are identified by type of open space.

Residents expect the green systems to provide for key linkages, such as a greenway 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 existing and 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 contribute to the character of 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 Plan.



The Parks and Green Systems Plan is shown on the following page. The categories are further described below:

Environmental Features

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. Areas intended for environmental preservation are shown as Environmental Features on the Parks and Green Systems Plan.

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.

Replace with Parks and Green Systems Plan

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.

Privately Owned Open Space

Some environmental features in Crozet are already preserved in properties owned by homeowners associations and civic groups. Land which is not shown with the environmental features and that is owned privately by a group or organization is designated on the Parks and Green Systems Plan as Privately Owned Open Space. This designation includes Claudius Crozet Park and properties which are in conservation easements.

Other Open Space

Other Open Space is shown on the Parks and Green Systems Plan in the lightest color of green. The designation represents properties that are to be preserved in the future that are not part of environmental systems. These properties meet other goals of the Master Plan which are further described below:

- Vegetated buffers along Crozet Avenue, Route 250, and Three Notch'd Road are intended to help retain a rural appearance along these corridors
- Properties along Route 250 that are west of Crozet Avenue and east of the School complex are intended to retain their rural character and agricultural activities and reinforce the goal for no new commercial activities in this corridor.
- Properties to the east of Crozet Avenue and north of Route 250 are intended to retain their rural open appearance as part of the goals for Scenic 250. No new development is proposed in this area as part of the desire to have density closest to the center of Crozet.
- Properties east of Eastern Avenue and north of Lickinghole Creek have a system of slopes that fall off towards Lickinghole Creek. This area is intended to provide for private open space for new development on Tax Map 56 Parcel 95B.
- Property east of Park Ridge Drive (Tax Map 56 Parcel 91A) is intended to remain rural and undeveloped to help break up the appearance of continuous development along Three Notch'd Road.

Community Facilities

Existing and proposed schools, libraries, fire stations, rescue squad stations, and future civic spaces are shown on the Parks and Green Systems Plan. Future civic spaces are not identified in an exact location. They are shown in the general location where a park or open space should be, with one exception. The old Crozet Elementary School is currently leased to a private middle school for boys. In the future, it is expected to function as a community building for civic activities.

Parks and Public Open Space

Existing and proposed areas for parks and public open space are shown on the Parks and Green Systems Plan in an olive color. This designation includes school grounds, the Lickinghole Basin, the future Eastern Park, and other publicly owned lands. The color on the plan does not separate out environmental features from the designation as public open space. It should be noted that some of the publicly owned lands include important environmental features such as steep slopes, streams, stream buffers, and floodplain. The parks are further described in the section below.

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 similar in 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).

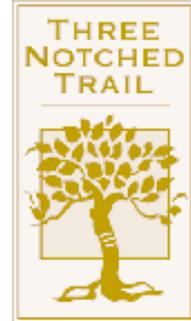
Other Parks

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 additional field space if the school site is acquired and developed. 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 Plan, offers an opportunity to connect neighborhoods with each other and the Downtown. Public paths in greenways are identified separately from expected privately owned pathways. The Greenways follow the stream corridors within the 100 feet 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 multipurpose path along west side of Crozet Avenue or where feasible along the corridor.
- Create a multipurpose path in right-of-way acquired for Eastern Avenue to provide pedestrian and bike connections before the road is completed.
- Construct key trail linkages as public trails:
 - 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-Trail program.
- Gather and distribute information on tax incentives for landowners to donate easements for Greenways (floodplains).
- Develop signage for greenways trails
- Complete Western Park according to the park master plan as funding is available.
- Create a Downtown community green.
- A trailhead park is recommended at a central location along the Crozet Avenue corridor.
- 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: data could be collected by groups such as students, Boy Scouts and other volunteers.

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.