

# FUTURE LAND USE MAP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Cville Plans process has generated a lot of interest over the last few months, particularly upon the release of the draft Future Land Use Map. Many concerns have come up, which is understandable – housing and land use issues are very personal because they impact the places we live. At the same time, these issues are often difficult to understand because they involve the intersection of topics including economics, architecture, history, law, politics, and the environment. This document seeks to provide answers to some common questions being asked about housing in Charlottesville. Our hope is that with better understanding, we can enact solutions to address our city’s housing crisis.

Livable Cville is a grassroots group working to make Charlottesville a better place for everyone. If you have any questions, comments, or want to get involved, please email us at [livableville@gmail.com](mailto:livableville@gmail.com) and visit [livableville.org](http://livableville.org) for the latest news and information.

**Q Does Charlottesville really have a housing crisis?**

A Yes! Nearly a quarter of [households in Charlottesville](#) are “cost burdened,” meaning they spend over 30% of their income on housing. Fair market rent in the Charlottesville area is the [highest in the state outside of Northern Virginia](#) and in some areas of the city [more than 50% of renters are cost-burdened](#). This issue affects community members [across a range of ages, incomes, and backgrounds](#). Home ownership is increasingly [out of reach](#) for many in the community. Charlottesville’s housing crisis is consistent with trends in [our region](#) and [many other parts of Virginia](#).

**Q What is the Future Land Use Map and how does it relate to the Comprehensive Plan?**

A The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a document that helps define where and how

the city will grow over time. It is used as the basis for the zoning code and helps to guide which rezonings should or should not be approved. It does not compel any sort of development to occur. It is one part of [Charlottesville’s Comprehensive Plan](#) and is intended to be consistent with the [Affordable Housing Plan](#) that City Council approved in March 2021.

**Q Has this process been rushed? Have there been adequate opportunities for community input?**

A The process has not been rushed – it has taken 4 years at this point and probably has at least another year to go. The Planning Commission started revising the [current Comprehensive Plan](#) in 2017. In 2019, the city hired consulting firm Rhodeside and Harwell to build off the Planning Commission’s work and complete the Comprehensive Plan, develop an [Affordable](#)

[Housing Plan](#), and [rewrite the zoning code](#) via a process dubbed “Cville Plans.” A steering committee [representing various communities and organizations](#) in Charlottesville has met since [January 2020](#). Multiple opportunities for community outreach have occurred so far: [mid 2020](#), [fall 2020](#), and [spring 2021](#). There will be further public input on the FLUM, the Comprehensive Plan, and eventually the zoning rewrite as the process moves along. Further delay will worsen our housing crisis.

**Q Will increased density result in more affordable housing?**

A Allowing more housing types doesn’t guarantee every unit will be affordable, but banning many types of multi-family housing makes building affordable housing nearly impossible. Detached single-family homes are [the most expensive homes in Charlottesville](#): on average,

they cost 50% more than townhomes and twice as much as units in duplexes. We need to allow [smaller, more affordable homes](#) at a variety of price points to take pressure off neighborhoods like Fifeville and 10th & Page. Of note, an [affordable housing overlay](#) has been proposed to tie increased density to the inclusion of affordable units. We need to get rid of things that unnecessarily drive up

for preservation include ensuring unsubsidized affordable housing is available and giving the community control of its land. Rental assistance programs, foreclosure assistance, tenant right to counsel, and [“just cause”](#) eviction laws help stabilize neighborhoods and prevent displacement. Charlottesville should work to implement these solutions and advocate at the state and federal level when necessary.

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## *Allowing more multi-family homes will enable non-profit housing developers to build more low-income housing.*

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housing costs, like [parking requirements](#), [excessive setbacks](#), and bureaucracies that slow the construction of housing and drive up the cost of construction.

### **Q What can be done to prevent displacement of low-income residents?**

A It will take multiple strategies to reduce displacement of low-income residents of Charlottesville. Broadly speaking, anti-displacement efforts fall under [three categories](#): housing production, preservation, and neighborhood stabilization. Research indicates that while new housing production is key, at the same time new development [should be focused](#) in places where there is reduced impact on low-income families, such as in affluent downtown neighborhoods and in student housing areas along JPA and 14th Street. High impact solutions

### **Q How can we achieve deep affordability for people with very low incomes?**

A More market-rate housing on its own [won't be enough](#) for low-income families because often [even inexpensive market-rate housing is unaffordable](#) to families on fixed incomes. That's why we also need increased federal, state, and local funding for housing subsidies and stronger tenant protections to help vulnerable tenants avoid eviction, all of which are called for in Charlottesville's [Affordable Housing Plan](#). Money spent subsidizing housing will stretch further if we don't have a housing shortage. And allowing more multi-family homes will enable non-profit housing developers like Habitat for Humanity and Piedmont Housing Alliance to build more low-income housing without having to go through a lengthy (and expensive) review process.

### **Q Won't this all just benefit developers and real estate investors?**

A No. Outside investors and existing landlords benefit from housing scarcity: Owners of apartment buildings uniformly cite new construction as a risk to their business, because they have a harder time raising rents when there are more competing properties for tenants to choose between. Invitation Homes, the largest single-family rental landlord in the country, [says](#) construction of new apartments is a threat to its business because development would give its customers – people who need a place to live – too many other options. Multi-family housing is more affordable than single-family housing. Allowing more multi-family housing benefits families who can't afford a detached house. It's true that developers make money building new housing, but if we don't allow more multi-family housing, developers will instead make money building luxury single-family homes and flipping older homes while driving up prices.

### **Q Will the proposed land use map lead to the construction of large apartment buildings like on West Main Street in my neighborhood?**

A The [draft Future Land Use Map](#) would allow up to two- or three-family homes in much of the city and small apartments in a few neighborhoods. It wouldn't force anyone to build denser housing. Our zoning ordinance describes the maximum density for a prop-

erty, but homeowners and developers are free to build less than the maximum if they choose. The current rules say only detached single-family homes – the most expensive housing type – can be built in the vast majority of residential areas in the city.

**Q Don't we have too much new construction in Charlottesville?**

A Much of the new construction you see in Charlottesville every day is office buildings or businesses, not homes. We're building relatively few homes each year – [just 130 in 2020](#). Instead, new construction is primarily to accommodate employers who see Charlottesville as a great place to do business. We're not building to accommodate the people who make those workplaces go.

In the last 30 years, our region [added 35,000 jobs](#) and [7,500 UVA students](#), but only 7,000 more residents in the city – a 17% increase. During the same time period the population of Albemarle County grew 62%, Louisa County 85%, Greene County 100%, Orange County 76%, Augusta County 39%, and Fluvanna County 117%. Lack of housing near job centers [drives up household spending on transportation](#) as people pursue more affordable housing in the surrounding areas.

Charlottesville's lack of housing is consistent with patterns in many growing areas throughout the United States: It has been estimated the U.S. [needs](#) somewhere between 3.8 million and 5.5 million new

homes broadly speaking. Furthermore, our country needs [6.8 million rental homes](#) for very low income individuals.

**Q It feels like the city is going about this alone. Don't Albemarle County and UVA have a role to play?**

A Albemarle County and UVA certainly have a role to play; this is a regional issue. The [Affordable Housing Plan](#) approved by City Council in March 2021 calls on both Albemarle County and UVA to change the way they approach affordable housing, land use, racial inequality and tenant protections. [UVA is planning to build 1,000 to 1,500 affordable homes](#) on university-owned land over the next decade. UVA is also planning to expand on-campus housing to [include all second-year students](#), which could help free up some housing in the city. Albemarle County has

[commute from surrounding counties](#) to jobs in Albemarle County and Charlottesville. [Development patterns](#) in our area have contributed to car dependency and increased traffic by putting homes far away from where people work, go to school, grocery shop. In other words, every person who can walk, bike, or take the bus to work is one fewer car on the road during rush hour. [The EPA found](#) that infill development reduces traffic congestion and car emissions, and [studies indicate](#) increased proximity often results in a decrease in traffic.

A key to reducing congestion on Charlottesville roads is increasing local transit ridership. Charlottesville Area Transit is taking steps to make that happen by [becoming fare free](#), [improving route efficiency](#), [adding buses to increase frequency](#), and [expanding park and ride options](#).

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been working on its affordable housing plan and the Board of Supervisors has [committed to supporting policies](#) related to affordable housing.

**Q Will increased density increase traffic?**

A People will have to drive less and drive fewer miles if we build more homes close to our jobs. Thousands of employees [already](#)

**Q Will increased density hurt the environment?**

A No. In fact, allowing more multifamily homes is the single best thing Charlottesville can do to fight climate change. [Research from Cal-Berkeley](#) has found that population-dense areas contribute significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions than suburban areas. Furthermore, single-family homes are not particularly

good for the environment. Larger detached single-family homes are [among the largest contributors](#) of residential greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. And multi-family homes [use significantly less energy over time](#) compared to detached single-family homes.

**Q Do we have adequate water infrastructure if the city’s population increases?**

A Yes. [The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority has said](#) the area’s urban water supply will be adequate [until around 2060](#) and plans are already underway to expand capacity before then.

help pay for additional school expansion. Charlottesville’s aging schools are not unique in Virginia, and [momentum is building for additional state funding](#) for school facility improvements.

**Q Won’t this make parking in my neighborhood worse?**

A [Around 20%](#) of the land in the city of Charlottesville is dedicated to parking. Broadly speaking, the issue with parking in Charlottesville is not supply, but management. Some neighborhoods do have limited parking because their design pre-dated widespread car use. Improved policies for

means that only certain types of housing – detached single unit homes – can be built on land zoned R-1. Exclusionary zoning became widespread nationwide in the immediate aftermath of a 1917 Supreme Court ruling that banned explicitly racial zoning, and [research has found](#) that it increases segregation by reducing the quantity of affordable housing throughout cities. One of exclusionary zoning’s greatest apostles was Harland Bartholomew, who in 1919, as St. Louis’s city planner, completed a zoning plan to discourage movement into [“finer residential districts... by colored people.”](#) Charlottesville later hired him to lay the groundwork for our next century of land use policy, and he stayed true to form, recommending policies to keep Charlottesville segregated. Bartholomew [planned for the destruction of Vinegar Hill](#) and recommended [prioritizing single family homes and banning row housing](#). Currently [over 70% of residential land](#) in Charlottesville is zoned R-1. Partly as a result of exclusionary zoning and other practices like [racial covenants](#), the homeownership rate among African-Americans in the city has fallen [from 50% to 27%](#) over the last 90 years. Getting rid of R-1 zoning is not the only step needed to overcome the impacts of Jim Crow era housing policies, but it certainly is a necessary one.

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**Q What about overcrowding in the city schools?**

A The city school system has anticipated increased enrollment and is [currently in the design phase](#) of a major reconfiguration that will create a preschool center at Walker and turn Buford into a 6th-to-8th grade middle school. The most recent major facilities update in CCS was 47 years ago in 1974, when Charlottesville High School was built. [According to a 2017 capacity study](#), elementary school expansion eventually will be necessary, though enrollment growth has slowed since 2017. Additional density will likely lead to increased enrollment, but a larger residential tax base will also

parking permits could help limit the number of commuters parking in residential neighborhoods.

The biggest thing we can do to improve parking in Charlottesville is to invest in the things that make getting rid of excess cars easy: Improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure and bus service will help reduce car dependency and encourage reduced car ownership in the city. Our priority as a city needs to shift from housing cars to housing people.

**Q What is the history of R-1 zoning? Is it racist?**

A Through its history, R-1 zoning has been intertwined with racism. It is an example of “exclusionary zoning,” which

