

Vision

Maintain and strengthen Vienna's traditional community feel, and its connection to the broader region, characterized by healthy neighborhoods; a mix of commercial- and community-serving uses, including schools, churches, and public facilities; and a variety of parks and green spaces. As regional growth continues, manage change in a way that preserves Vienna's unique identity and reinforces its sense of place.

Goals

1. ~~Strengthen~~Maintain Vienna's core single-family residential neighborhoods, while allowing for other neighborhood-compatible uses that enhance community life.
2. Provide opportunities for diverse housing options ~~for the full range of residents.~~
3. Promote and strengthen Vienna's commercial and corporate areas ~~so that they continue~~ to provide goods, services, and employment opportunities.
4. Retain and support industrial/flex spaces that meet ~~Vienna's~~the diverse needs of ~~Vienna's residents.~~
5. Ensure that governmental and institutional uses, including educational facilities, have places in Vienna to serve the community.
6. Protect and preserve Vienna's green space and the natural resources land that supports environmental sustainability and resilience.
7. Promote key locations in Vienna as special planning areas, deploying tools and policies from all portions of the Comprehensive Plan.
8. Enforce and regularly adopt updates to zoning and other regulations to align with community goals and evolving needs.

Introduction

The Land Use chapter is the core of any Comprehensive Plan. This chapter describes the Town's vision, goals and policies for the types of development and uses that should occur in all properties that are not right-of-way. ~~To provide background, t~~he chapter also provides descriptions and trends of the types of uses that are found in Vienna.

Community input, both for this plan and through surveys, has reinforced the Town's desire to preserve its suburban character and high quality of life, while also supporting a locally focused and economically vibrant business environment. Residents value the mix of residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that contribute to the Town's identity. This Plan seeks to preserve what makes Vienna distinctive, while also encouraging thoughtful land use decisions that accommodate a changing region and ensure long-term fiscal and community health.

Since the adoption of the last Comprehensive Plan in 2016, Vienna and the surrounding region have continued to evolve. This Plan acknowledges that change is inevitable and, when thoughtfully guided, can enhance the community. Land use changes are supported

when they are consistent with the Town's vision and maintain the character, scale, and livability that residents value.

This chapter provides some basic data and trends in land use for Vienna, as well as policies that further Vienna's vision and goals for Land Use.

Current Uses of Land Use and Zoning

The Town of Vienna consists of 2,376.3 acres (excluding rights-of-way) within its corporate limits. Of that total, the zoning is distributed as follows:¹

- Single-Unit Residential – 80.2%
- Multi-Unit Residential – 4.2%
- Commercial/Industrial/Mixed-Use – 10.2%
- Parks – 5.4%

In most cases, current use land is consistent with the zoning, with uses that are permitted by right or through the approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Exceptions are when developments are in place from approvals and construction prior to the zoning having changed ("vested" or "grandfathered" uses).

Development Trends

Vienna

For more than 70 years, Vienna has guided land use and zoning decisions to preserve and enhance its traditional community character as a predominantly single-family detached residential town. At the same time, the Town has supported a mix of housing options, a strong local business environment that ensures adequate retail and services, and dedicated areas for larger employers and light-industrial uses that serve residents and diversify the local economy.

Vienna has managed these land use priorities in the context of intense growth in Fairfax County, Northern Virginia, and the entire Washington, DC metro area. In these past 70 years, the growth of the region's residential development and employment centers into Loudoun County and beyond has rendered Vienna as more of an inner suburb than as its previous position as an edge location. Key impacts have been higher demand for housing, rapid escalation in house prices, and additional traffic sourced from surrounding development.

¹ Existing land uses are different than zoning districts. Zoning reflects authorized uses and is a key regulatory tool to achieve the land use goals of the comprehensive plan. Existing land uses depicts what is actually "on the ground," whether permitted by right, as a conditional use, or because of vested rights.

Nearby Fairfax County

Significant development continues in portions of Fairfax County that are near the Town, including Tysons and Merrifield. Nearby development of large-scale office and retail space provides Vienna residents with shopping and employment opportunities that are frequently not available in Vienna because of smaller parcel sizes and more-restrictive zoning. Housing options, especially in large multifamily developments that are more accessible to Metrorail stations, are also available for those who desire them. Residents of those housing developments are also customers or employees of Vienna businesses.

Negative impacts sometimes also occur from this development. Vienna retail, restaurants, and services may be in competition with their counterparts just outside of Vienna, for example in the Mosaic District. Also, the large-scale development may adversely affect traffic and overburden public service facilities within Vienna. As a result, the Town continues to monitor and inform Fairfax County government of the effects of such development on residents of Vienna and the surrounding areas of Fairfax County. Of particular concern is the proposed gaming/gambling development in Tysons, which the Town has resisted along with other Fairfax County residents.

Commented [LD1]: Will be expanded to include current uses of land and current zoning percentages.

Land Use Policies in Vienna

The majority of the rest of this chapter is a discussion of each key land use in Vienna, by category. It also addresses a requirement of the Code of Virginia for comprehensive plans: urban development areas.

Urban Development Areas

The Code of Virginia requires (Sec 15.2-2223.1) that Comprehensive Plans include "urban development areas." It defines an "urban development area" to be "an area designated by a locality that is (i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment and infill development." The Code of Virginia also provides definitions for densities that are categorized as urban development, which includes all residential Land Use categories that have densities of 4 dwelling units per acre or higher. In Vienna, RS-10 zoning, which is the most common residential zone, meets this definition, while RS-12.5 and RS-16 zones do not. All of the other land use and zoning categories meet the other components of the Code's definitions. As such, the discussion below, combined with the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map, addresses the Code's requirement to address urban development areas.

Commented [LD2]: Newly added brief discussion, to provide assurance to the State that a Code of Virginia requirement is being met.

Residential Land Use

The Town of Vienna will continue to be characterized by strong single-unit detached neighborhoods but will also continue this past decade's actions in finding ways to accommodate some additional housing diversity at prices that are more affordable to the full range of the Vienna community. Home-based businesses and community-serving

institutions are appropriate and encouraged in residential areas, as long as there are minimal negative impacts on the neighborhood.

Existing Residential Uses

Fairfax County's Department of Management and Budget estimates that there were 5,804 housing units in the Town in 2023. Of these, 80% are single-unit detached housing units; 9% are single-family attached; and 11% are multifamily, either as apartments or condominium units. Vienna has one major apartment complex, the 300-unit Vienna Park Apartments that is next to the Cedar Park Shopping Center at the northwest corner of Park Street SE and Cedar Lane SE. Most of the remaining multi-family units are clustered in the center of the Town along Locust Street SE, between Park and Glyndon Streets, and on Church Street. An approved but as yet unbuilt project is located at the site of the former Wolf Trap Hotel on the 400 block of Maple Avenue West. If it is built to plan, there will be 151 additional multifamily units (plus 20,000 square feet of retail). This project has yet to break ground but remains approved.

Townhomes, ~~and~~ duplexes and small-scale multi-family residences are in various locations, with many being within two one blocks of, but not facing, Maple Avenue. A townhome development was completed with retail space below, in the block between Maple Avenue West and Church Street NW. A senior housing facility, Sunrise Assisted Living, opened in 2023 on Maple Avenue West. Neighborhoods with single-unit detached housing remains the dominant land use in the Town of Vienna. Such properties are zoned RS-10, RS-12.5, and RS-16, which reflect, respectively, minimum lot sizes of 10,000 square feet, 12,500 square feet and 16,000 square feet.

There is very little land available for additional development, other than small-scale subdivisions of larger individual lots. There is, however, a significant amount of RS-zoned property that has been approved for conditional use permits for institutional or governmental uses. Uses include churches, schools, a large country club, local government (i.e., the Town of Vienna), and others. Were any of those uses to leave or close, as has happened in Vienna, the property would revert to the underlying RS zoning and be available for development of single-unit detached homes. The property owner would also have the option to pursue a new conditional use permit.

Even where single-unit detached housing is the existing use, there has been a large amount of construction activity throughout Vienna since the last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2016, and even earlier. In the past fifteen years, more than 1,000 single-unit detached homes have been demolished and replaced by new and larger single-unit detached homes. At the peak of such construction, approximately 100 projects of this sort were occurring per year, though the rate has slowed in recent years to approximately 60-80. Whether this trend continues at a high pace will depend on many market factors, though it is expected that at least some additional redevelopment will take place for the foreseeable future. The financial result has been, on average, higher property values, which in turn has provided higher revenues from property taxes for both the Town and County.

Some residents have expressed concern about the change occurring in the look and feel of some neighborhoods. The Town's zoning regulations for single-unit detached lots, including those related to lot coverage and building heights, provide some assurance that

Commented [LC3]: Mention others on/near Maple?

the high-aesthetic quality of Vienna's neighborhoods will be preserved; and this plan supports appropriate and effective regulations. Small adjustments may be made, ~~such as adding or altering regulations related to outdoor living space (decks, patios, etc.),~~ without being in conflict with the policies of this plan.

Zoning That Does Not Match Property Sizes

~~For historical reasons, there are many single-unit detached lots that do not match the expected zoning. Some properties are larger than the anticipated size, based on zoning. This circumstance would occur when, for example, a lot of 18,000 square feet has a zoning of RS-10 rather than a more natural RS-16 zoning. Because the residential zones are defined (and named) related to the minimum size permitted, and have no maximum sizes, there is no regulatory challenge related to this issue.~~

~~More problematic are properties that are smaller than the minimum size of the zone in which it sits. Approximately _____ properties are in this category. Even more problematic are properties with RS zoning that are smaller than 10,000 square feet. There are approximately _____ properties of this nature. This plan encourages exploration of potential approaches to resolving these nonconformities, which include rezoning a series of properties. Such a project, if carried out, would need to be done in coordination with property owners.~~

Housing in Commercial Areas

While the Maple Avenue corridor is mostly commercial in nature, some residences have been built. This plan endorses Maple Avenue remaining available for additional residential development that is compatible with and supports, rather than displaces, commercial activity along Maple Avenue.

Multi-unit housing may be built on upper stories. For all developments that face Maple Avenue, non-residential uses are required on the ground level. In some cases, for example when a site is large and a rear portion of that site directly abuts residences or other non-commercial uses (e.g., a park), housing on the ground floor may also be considered. Such housing must not have adverse impacts on the abutting residential uses and must not preclude the remaining portion of the site, including the entire frontage on Maple Avenue, for commercial uses. The Future Land Use Map (Figure _____) identifies areas within the corridor where residential use may be considered on the ground floor.

In the Church Street historic overlay district, housing should be permitted on upper stories but prohibited on the ground level because of the goals for street-level commercial activity of this portion of the Church Street corridor.

Other portions of the Church Street corridor are more appropriately considered as transitional areas, as discussed in the section of Housing in Transitional Areas.

Housing in Transitional Areas

Transitional areas in the Town are the properties between the Maple Avenue corridor and the single-family detached residential zones on both sides of Maple Avenue. A large portion of these areas have traditionally been reserved for service-oriented and professional offices; though these areas also include some retail, single-unit attached homes, single-unit detached homes, and apartments/condominiums.

Commented [LD4]: Does the PC want this line in the plan?

Commented [DL5]: Does the PC want to mention this issue? It can be deleted from the plan, but it is a fact. Former CM Steve Potter repeatedly expressed concern about it. Kelly - can you dig up the numbers on this one?

Commented [LC6]: Doug: Maybe study how grade deviation over a lot impacts housing heights?

Commented [DL7]: This would be a new policy. Does the PC like this idea? It could be a conditional use.

Commented [DL8]: Perhaps consider changing the name of Transitional zone, as it really only permits office uses. This section in the Plan is covering more territory than what the Transition Zone covers.

Commented [LC9]: Steve: Identify rough locations for townhouses, perhaps?

In the past 20 years, ~~housing that is higher density than single-unit detached multi-unit housing~~ has been developed in certain former office locations, including in cases when the Town Council has approved rezonings along with conditions of approval offered by the property owner (proffers) ~~that defined the redevelopment projects~~. These new units, which have all been either duplexes or townhomes, in various formats, have proven to be in high demand and have provided housing that would otherwise not be available in Vienna.

The context for this evolution has included: 1) the obsolescence of some of the older office complexes relative to what office users desire; 2) an overall weakening of the office market in the region, especially in locations that are not visible from major corridors; and 3) the long-term increased demand for housing options other than single-family detached.

The Town is confronted with two goals that sometimes are mutually supporting and sometimes competing for the same transitional properties: increasing housing diversity and keeping office uses in Vienna. If there were a robust market for office redevelopment in these transitional locations, the Town would be in a strong position to retain ~~resist~~ these ~~changes and preserve these~~ locations exclusively for office uses. However, real estate market conditions, in recent years and for the foreseeable future, are unlikely to create demand for new office space in these low-visibility locations. As such, it can be anticipated that additional requests for changes from office use to residential use will be presented during the time frame of this plan. There may also be proposals to add residential density to properties where there are existing low-density residences and where the Future Land Use Map identifies a property as Low-Density Residential, in these transitional areas.

In determining whether to approve rezonings for higher-density residential ~~multi-unit~~ development, factors to take into account should include: the appropriateness of the proposed new housing development in the specific location proposed, relative to the existing use; the expected impacts of the proposed new housing on the adjacent and nearby commercial and residential uses; and the anticipated viability of ~~the existing commercial uses~~, if applicable, at the specific site.

This plan encourages exploration of a variety of housing types, beyond simply single-family detached, townhomes and multifamily apartment/condominium buildings. Creative approaches have been successful in Vienna (e.g., cottage housing, duplexes in different alignments), though the Town always desires to ensure that new development is compatible with Vienna's existing community in terms of design aesthetics and impacts.

Neighborhood Mixed Use

A development that is unique in Vienna is a mixed-use project in the middle of a single-unit detached neighborhood. The development, completed in 2018, is located on the corner of Tapawingo Road SE and Glyndon Street SE. This project has low-impact commercial activity on the ground floor and condominiums on the second and third floors. In the 2023 update to the zoning code, a new zone was introduced to address this type of project so that it could be conforming to the zone in which it lies.

The new zone allows retail uses that would not have negative impacts on the surrounding residences and multi-unit residences. This plan does not propose rezoning any properties to

Commented [LC10]: Dave: Is this sufficiently strategic? Does this raise any red flags with office employers (i.e.: NFCU)?

Commented [LC11]: Doug: Be more specific about what multi-unit means.

Commented [DL12]: Because this new zoning was created, we believe that the Comprehensive Plan should address it.

Neighborhood Mixed Use. However, property owners are permitted to apply for a rezoning. Approval of any such proposal must demonstrate that it is compatible with its neighbors and context. ~~For example, a important guidelines to following include that a~~ any proposed rezoning where the adjacent and nearby neighboring properties are residentially zoned ~~must~~ be able to show that impacts on the community are minimal with respect to parking, traffic, noise, and other criteria that are relevant to the specific site proposed.

Commented [LC13]: Jessica: Perhaps mention these are guidelines so as not to be overly prescriptive or restrictive?

Housing Affordability and Diversity

The ~~Code Commonwealth~~ of Virginia (Sec. 15.2-2223.D) requires that Comprehensive Plans include the "designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated."

Commented [LC14]: Matt/Doug: Affordability wasn't explicated in this chapter, nor was downsizing or aging in place.

~~discuss, assess, and plan for affordable housing options.~~ Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development defines affordable housing in a manner that is consistent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It states the following: "If someone is paying more than 30 percent of gross household income on housing costs, then the household is *cost-burdened*. If an owner or renter spends more than 50 percent of gross income on housing, the household is *severely cost-burdened*."²

The US Census Bureau estimated Vienna's household income during 2019-2023 at \$223,571. In the same period, the median value of an owner-occupied housing unit was \$961,100. Multiple sources, including Redfin and Zillow, have estimated median sales prices of homes in February 2025 at \$1.0 million – \$1.3 million. Based on these totals, the median income is approximately 20-25% of the cost of a median for-sale home in Vienna, which would be considered affordable to that household (though referencing Redfin and Zillow data does not constitute robust research in home prices).

It is important to understand, however, that the definition of "median income" means that 50% of households have incomes that are higher than the median, and 50% have incomes that are lower. Similarly, 50% of home sales were more expensive than the median sales price, and 50% were lower. A detailed analysis has not been conducted to understand how many households are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. This plan supports conducting such an analysis so that a more refined strategy may be developed to address affordability challenges.

Nonetheless, it is very likely that there are households and individuals who are unable to afford high-quality housing in Vienna. The US Census Bureau estimates the poverty rate to be 5.4% (in 2019-2023). Furthermore, for a variety of reasons, many households face challenges with housing costs even if they do not technically qualify as being in poverty according to federal standards.

² HB854 Statewide Housing Study, Virginia Housing and Virginia DHCD, January 2022, <https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/HB854/part-1-affordability.html#:~:text=1.1.&text=This%20is%20a%20simple%20ratio,or%20mortgage%20and%20basic%20utilities>.

In 2024, the Town Council adopted Housing Diversity as one of its priorities for discussion and action. After multiple work sessions to begin to characterize the challenges and goals, the Town Council worked with staff to develop and then adopt an ordinance that allows Accessory Living Units (ALUs) to be established on properties zoned for single-unit detached homes. This provision allows for a new lower-cost residential option in Vienna. The ordinance was adopted at the end of 2024, so the impact is not yet fully understood.

In the past three years, Vienna has also seen the completion of two new developments of duplexes, following the Town Council's approval of rezoning applications, as well as a new senior assisted living project. Developers are also considering other developments that would bring additional diversity and more affordability relative to current median home values.

In addition, zoning changes were made, during the Code Create Vienna process, which offer the possibility of making investment in mixed-use projects more practical. Two important changes included:

- Raising the maximum building height in the Avenue Center portion of the Maple Avenue corridor to 42 feet, making three-story mixed-use (residential over commercial) projects more viable,
- Removing the requirement that all projects with commercial and residential components would need to have more than 50% of the square footage as commercial space. As a result of the new added flexibility, developments with ground-floor commercial and one or two stories of residential above will be far more possible than was previously the case.

The result of both changes will potentially be additional housing diversity, almost certainly at prices lower than existing medians.

There is no easy solution to housing affordability. Vienna is a small community within a high-growth region where land prices and incomes are relatively high and there is relatively little unbuilt land. As such, the private development market is unlikely to produce new for-sale housing affordable to those whose incomes are lower than the median incomes of the Town, County, or region; and the amount of land available for developing lower-cost rental units is limited. Furthermore, the Town is small, making the establishment of affordable-housing programs institutionally difficult.

Additional housing challenges exist for seniors who wish to age in their communities and for those with disabilities. The development of the Sunrise Assisted Living facility addressed some of the need and is a welcome addition to Vienna. Nonetheless, the number of units does not address the entire community need and the product is not affordable to many who need such services.

Nonetheless, the Town has made progress on housing diversity and the policy of this plan is for the Town to continue to seek such opportunities. The Future Land Use Map identifies areas where density higher than single-family detached housing may be developed. Those areas offer the highest possibility of the development of new affordable housing. A key area of potential action is to partner with Fairfax County, which has a large suite of housing

programs designed to assist with affordability. Tools are also available through the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Manufactured Housing

The Code of Virginia (Sec. 15.2-2225) states that, during an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan after July 1, 2021, the "locality shall incorporate into its comprehensive plan strategies to promote manufactured housing as a source of affordable housing. The Commonwealth of Virginia also requires that each jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan address whether there are opportunities for the development of manufactured housing, as a means of providing affordable housing. There is nothing in the Vienna code or plan that prohibits the use of manufactured housing on the Town's residentially zoned properties, or within mixed-use areas. Manufactured housing usually refers to housing that is built off-site, either in its entirety or in parts, and then assembled on site. This approach is increasingly part of development of all kinds, as it may sometimes save costs and provide more consistency in product. In Vienna, as in all other localities, construction frequently includes components that are manufactured off site.

As a tool for affordability, the major advantage comes from the potentially lower construction costs. However, the Vienn's high cost of land is likely to be a significant obstacle to the economic viability of housing defined by the State and Federal governments as affordable, such housing in Vienna. As such, the Town has seen no instances and received no inquiries regarding this type of development in recent years. Since the advent of manufactured housing as ~~and~~ a product, it has usually been more relevant in areas there are relatively low land costs (e.g., rural areas) and where the combination of lower construction and lower land costs can combine to offer an affordable option.

Vienna remains open to the use of manufactured housing to provide affordable housing units, subject to each development meeting the Town's aesthetic criteria. The strategies would be similar to those listed in the section on Housing Affordability and Diversity, which are potentially to work with programs offered by Fairfax County and Commonwealth of Virginia.

Commented [LC15]: It might be worth running this past the Town Attorney to see if this is adequate. Also, we may want to integrate some of how Falls Church has addressed housing affordability in this section; I know they cited this state code in their affordable living chapter.

Commercial Office and Retail Uses

Vienna has over 4.4 million square feet of commercial and industrial/flex uses. Roughly 48% is used for professional/office space, and about 42% is used for retail sales. The remainder of the floor area is light industrial/flex. With the exception of the Corporate Park area, all office and retail spaces exist in a context where there is a mix of uses permitted and in existence.

Office buildings are located along and adjacent to the Maple Avenue corridor, with a greater concentration in Maple Avenue's western portion; in the Corporate Park zoning district along Follin Lane and Electric Avenue; on Dominion Road and Mill Street; and along Church Street in various locations. In the Corporate Park area are two large employers, which will be discussed below.

Retail uses in the Town are concentrated along the Maple Avenue corridor, a portion of Church Street, at Cedar Park Shopping Center, and in some buildings on Dominion Road and Mill Street NE. There is a wide variety of establishments, with restaurants, coffee shops, grocery stores, pharmacies, and retail goods. Large-scale retailers (other than grocery stores) are found in Tysons and other outside-Vienna shopping districts within short drives for Vienna residents.

This plan supports regulations and initiatives that encourage the retention of existing and development of new office and retail space in Vienna. A significant portion of the existing office space in Town is small-scale, providing medical/health, financial, and other services. As a result, residents and Vienna employees can find many of the services they need and want without a long drive to locations out of Town.

The retail space includes the sales of goods (e.g., grocery stores, bicycles), restaurants, and services (e.g., hair salons, fitness studios). It provides vibrancy and opportunities for community gathering. These establishments foster the small-town spirit that Vienna wishes to preserve and encourage. The Maple Avenue and Church Street corridors are particularly important in that regard. Longer discussions of each of these are provided, below, under Goal 7.

An additional benefit to retaining commercial and retail uses, including the offices in the Corporate Park area, is that these uses provide diversification of revenue sources for the Town. To mitigate risk, it is to the Town's benefit that not all revenues come from the single source of residential property taxes. Furthermore, by Town budgeting tradition, Vienna's capital improvements program (CIP) is funded through the "meals tax." The meals tax funds roadway repairs, new facilities, Town vehicles, investments in parks, and much more. Retaining a strong restaurant presence in Town therefore supports a strong CIP.

Interactions with Neighboring Residences

Vienna's concentrations of commercial activity are all quite close to residences, including single-unit detached, single-unit attached, and condominium/apartment homes. Vienna policies must balance allowing businesses sufficient flexibility to be successful with preventing businesses from creating nuisances for residents. Particular attention should be focused on limiting noise, light, traffic, and parking within residential neighborhoods, to minimize disruption of the peacefulness that residents expect in their neighborhoods. Nonetheless, some impacts are inevitable for those who choose homes near commercial areas. The Town should remain vigilant in working on this balance.

Online Shopping and Virtual Office Work

Since the last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2016, the retail and office sectors have experienced short-term and long-term disruptions. The biggest short-term shock was an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically reduced in-person office work and in-person shopping during the most acute years of 2020 and 2021. This emergency accelerated a long-term trend that was already affecting how people shopped for goods, through the rise in online shopping in the 2010s.

The pandemic also jump-started the use of virtual service-sector work, as employers and employees learned how to hold virtual meetings, residents reconfigured their houses to be

able to work from home, and the technology for these activities was greatly improved. As the pandemic emergency ~~has~~ receded, more employees returned to in-person work and in-person shopping, but not fully to the levels that had existed previously.

The economy and society are in the process of sorting out which activities will be taking place in person and which will be online. Innovation is very active in this area and is expected to continue to evolve during the horizon of this plan. For this reason, the Town should keep track of these changes and be prepared to adjust zoning, other land use policies, and infrastructure investments to keep the Town's key corridors active and vibrant.

Employment Center Land Use

The Employment Center land use category covers the Corporate Park zone in the southeastern quadrant of Town. ~~The area was designated as the Vienna Technology Park in 1961 and was designated and zoned CMP Industrial Park at that time. The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2016 renamed this location Employment Center, and the zone was renamed Corporate Park in 2023, as part of the broad update to zoning regulations, but the design criteria and regulations remained mostly the same as before.~~ At present, this area encompasses large office buildings in a campus setting, ~~with one older warehouse building.~~

The largest employers in the Employment Center are Navy Federal Credit Union and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Threat Screening Center (TSC). Navy Federal has made recent major investments in its campus, indicating its intention to stay in Vienna; and the TSC, through the US General Services Administration, signed a long-term lease in 2022, also indicating its intention ~~also~~ to remain.

Two sites remained vacant for the majority of the time between 2016 and 2025. One of the sites has been occupied with a corporate tenant since late 2024, though this tenant does not have a large amount of employment.

The other site, 901 Follin Lane, contains a vacant office building (previously occupied by a federal agency) and a large parking lot. There have been two proposals, from two different developers, for townhome development since the last plan. The Town Council considered the proposals and elected not to move forward on either one, first in 2017 and then later in 2022. These decisions were consistent with the prior Comprehensive Plan, which did not support residential development in this portion of Town, or zoning. Both Town Councils chose not to make changes either to the plan or zoning to accommodate these proposals.

This plan supports reserving this portion of Vienna for corporate, governmental, and/or employment uses, rather than allowing a conversion to residential uses. Reasons for retaining this approach include: 1) introducing residents into this campus setting could, in the long run, result in key large employers leaving Vienna; 2) retaining large employers provides a diversity in sources of property-tax revenue, as compared to relying too much on residential property taxes; 3) the standards for noise and activity are more accommodating of the employers in this area of town and would likely create conflict with residents.

Nonetheless, the long-term vacancy at 901 Follin Lane is an example of a County-wide and nationwide migration of office uses away from locations that do not have nearby amenities. For that reason, the property owner ~~reports has~~ not ~~having~~ had success in attracting offices

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Commented [LC17]: Matt: Simplify this language.

users that are consistent with the intent of the zone, even after having invested resources in renovating the building.

This plan therefore endorses ~~reviewing~~ ~~exploring~~ the existing permitted and conditional uses, as well as other regulations, in the Corporate Park zone, with the goal of broadening the range of employment-oriented options for property owners.

Industrial/Flex Land Use

The Industrial/Flex category consists of light industrial uses that are not appropriate for the Town's main commercial corridors, and other activities. The light industrial uses sometimes are associated with a higher level of noise, parking of heavy vehicles/equipment, activities that start at earlier hours than other uses, and/or that deploy industrial materials. Non-industrial flex space houses a wide variety of uses, ~~including restaurants, retail, sports training, dance, storage, and other~~ activities where cheaper and non-traditional space can be advantageous.

None of these activities are classified as heavy industrial. As such, impacts on nearby residences must be limited, with noise and lighting as particular areas of concern.

Industrial/flex uses are limited in Vienna to the industrial corridor known and zoned as the Mill District. These properties are along Mill Street and Dominion Road in the northeast quadrant. The area continues to attract a wide variety of business establishments, including automotive repair, landscapers, professional office space, bicycles sales, storage facilities, lumber yards, ~~and restaurants, retail, sports training, dance, and storage.~~

The majority of the buildings in the corridor were built in the 1950s through 1970s. The newest building is for self-storage, which was completed in 2022. Some older buildings have seen both exterior and interior improvements to some of the tenant spaces or have been converted from light industrial or warehouse uses to retail, restaurants, exercise facilities, and other uses. On Dominion, some of these conversions have occurred closer to Church Street, with some uses being similar to those found on Church Street.

A key use at the far end of Mill Street is the Town of Vienna's Public Works Northside Property Yard, which houses staff, heavy vehicles, stored salt, and much more. This facility is crucial for Town operations and is discussed further in the Community Facilities chapter.

This district emerged as an adjunct of the original Washington & Old Dominion Railroad, which passed through Vienna as a passage between its route between Alexandria and points west. That railroad property is now the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park, with the W&OD Trail that passes between Mill and Dominion as part of its 45-mile path between Arlington's Shirlington neighborhood and the Town of Purcellville.

NOVA Parks is the owner of the park area. Part of their ownership includes parking spaces, some of which are used for trail access while others are leased to Vienna businesses on Dominion Road.

Commented [DL18]: This section attempts to project the policy as indicated by the Planning Commission in a 2024 work session on the Comp Plan. Staff welcomes a discussion of this topic to explore whether this language reflects the PC's position.

Commented [LC19R18]: Opportunity for a small area plan here? I think we need to consider that other uses may be more appropriate or successful here.

Challenges and Opportunities

The light industrial and flex uses in this area are very valuable to the community. They provide space for activities that otherwise may not be able to exist in Vienna and on which residents rely. However, not all spaces are fully used, some need rehabilitation or repair, and other sites are potential candidates for redevelopment. This plan seeks to retain areas for light industrial and flex uses, but also to take advantage of new opportunities.

Parking

Parking is a long-term issue in the Mill/Dominion corridor for which the Town continues to seek solutions. Prior efforts to establish a parking garage for public use, in or near the corridor, were not able to be fulfilled. Quite a few of the businesses rely on leased spaces from NOVA Parks property adjacent to the trail. A parking study commissioned by the Town in 2022-2023 identified some opportunities for private businesses to share parking, and this plan endorses the Town supporting any efforts of this nature. This topic is explored further in the Transportation Chapter.

NOVA Parks and the W&OD Trail

NOVA Parks and the Town of Vienna have established a partnership to explore the future of the W&OD Trail and adjacent land as it passes through Vienna. Some of the trail is within the Industrial/Flex area, but most of it is in other areas. More discussion is provided below, under Special Planning Areas.

Interactions with Neighboring Residences

The Mill/Dominion district has borders, on both sides, with residential areas. The nature of the uses in this area, particularly the light-industrial uses, can sometimes have impacts that adjacent neighbors would like to be mitigated. As with the discussion of Commercial areas, above, Vienna policies must balance allowing businesses sufficient flexibility to be successful with preventing businesses from creating nuisances for residents. Particular attention for this area of Town should be focused on limiting noise and light, especially during the early-morning or late-evening hours. Nonetheless, some impacts are inevitable for those who choose homes near this light-industrial area. The Town should remain vigilant in working on this balance.

Mobile/Cellular Coverage

~~Northern Virginia is a worldwide location of high technology, where there has been a tremendous amount of innovation related to the Internet and cellular coverage. It is perhaps ironic that residents and businesses within the Town of Vienna frequently report that cellular coverage is weaker than other nearby and further afield locations. A longer discussion of this challenge is provided in the Community Facilities chapter; however, this plan supports the Town's thinking creatively about what actions the Town can take to allow and encourage cellular providers to bring more comprehensive coverage to Vienna. Two possible areas of change could be to broaden the locations where antennae could potentially be permitted and increase the permitted heights of those antennae (depending on location).~~

Commented [LD20]: This section is covered under an expanded section in Community Facilities.

Parks, Governmental, and Institutional Land Uses

The Parks land use category consists of 332 acres of land devoted to parks and recreational use, comprising almost 14% of the Town's total land. This figure includes 155 acres of public facilities, which includes those owned by the Town, as well as parks owned and operated by Fairfax County and NOVA Parks. Governmental and institutional land use represents 5.8% of the land in the Town.

Vienna's green spaces, including active parks, passive open space, and natural conservation areas, are essential to the Town's character, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. In addition to recreation, these areas support stormwater management, protect the urban tree canopy, and contribute to community resilience in the face of climate change.

Parks Land Use

Major Town parks include Southside Park, Glyndon Park, and Northside Park. A more extensive description of public parks appears in the Parks and Recreation chapter of this Plan. There are two basic purposes of parks in Vienna (and elsewhere): 1) active use; and 2) conservation. The Town distinguishes between these types of parks through zoning and how the Town invests its park development and maintenance resources. This plan endorses both a continuation of this distinction and a plan for each park to ensure that these purposes are achieved.

An additional public park is the Vienna portion of the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad Regional Park, which is owned by NOVA Parks. The main feature of this park is the W&OD Trail, a pedestrian/bicyclist trail that runs through the center of Vienna as part of its 45-mile length.

In addition to publicly owned facilities, there are 177 acres of private facilities, most of which are associated with Westwood Country Club in northeast Vienna (157 acres). Other private recreational facilities, located in the southwestern quadrant of Town, include the George C. Yeonas Park (1319 Ross Drive SW), which is owned and operated by the Vienna Little League; the Vienna Aquatic Club (625 Marshall Road SW); and the Vienna Woods Swim and Tennis Club (129 Harmony Drive SW).

Park Zoning

Except for Northside Park and Salsbury Spring (a small passive park located on Windover Avenue NW, near Lawyers Road NW), all Town-owned land dedicated to recreational use is zoned PR Park and Recreational. The Town invests resources in these parks for playing fields and other activities.

Several major recreational facilities in Vienna are owned by Fairfax County's School Board and Park Authority. Examples include Cunningham Park, Waters Field, and Caffi Field, all of which are zoned PR. While school playgrounds are often used like parks, they are typically located in residential zones that are permitted through a conditional use permit rather than being zoned PR. The W&OD Trail, owned and maintained by NOVA Parks, currently has multiple zoning districts, reflecting its passage through different sections of the Town and the history of how the railroad right-of-way was assembled.

Commented [DP21]: Needs to be reviewed for accuracy.

Commented [DL22R21]: Will be updated for the Public Hearing draft.

In 2009, the Town created a new zoning district for parks for which the goal is conservation rather than activation: the PC Park and Conservation Area zoning district. The 26-acre Northside Park was the first and, to date, is the only park zoned as PC. Development and uses are much more restricted in the PC zone than parks zoned PR. The intent of the PC category is that any such property be maintained in, or returned to, its natural, undeveloped state as much as possible. In keeping with this objective, new buildings and clearing are not far more restricted than in the PR zone.

To ensure long-term protection and clarity in zoning, this Plan supports rezoning Salsbury Spring Park to either PR (Park and Recreational) or PC (Park and Conservation Area), consistent with its current use and passive character. Similarly, the Town should evaluate the feasibility of rezoning the W&OD Trail corridor to PR, in coordination with NOVA Parks, to reflect its long-term recreational role and ensure consistent treatment under zoning.

Land use planning should prioritize preserving publicly accessible green space and align with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Town should also avoid land use decisions that would reduce existing open space unless an equivalent or greater public benefit can be demonstrated.

Government Land Use

Government non-park uses include such Town-owned properties as Town Hall, ~~the Community Center~~, the police station, water towers, and the property yards at Nutley Street NW and at Mill Street NE (the "Northside" yard). The five Fairfax County public schools located within the Town limits are also included in this category of land use, as is Fairfax County's public library site. A more extensive description of public facilities appears in the Community Facilities and Infrastructure chapter.

Most government properties including schools are zoned residential, reflecting their location within residential neighborhoods and are permitted through approved conditional use permits (CUPs). ~~The Community Center is zoned PR Parks and Recreational, while the Northside Property Yard located at the end of Mill Street NE is split zoned M Mill District and RS-12.5 reflecting the neighborhood surrounding it to the north.~~ This zoning context illustrates the Town's need to balance essential public services with neighborhood compatibility and long-term land use policy.

Private Institutional Land Use

Institutional land uses include places of worship, buildings used to house social and cultural institutions, private schools, and cemeteries. Many properties where these uses take place are in residential zones but are allowed through conditional use permits rather than by-right zoning.

Schools and places of worship are integral and core parts of communities and neighborhoods, and this plan welcomes a thriving community of such institutions. They are attended by community members, whether within Vienna or nearby, and contribute to the small-town feel of Vienna.

The intensity of these uses, however, can and sometimes does cause friction with residents of the neighborhoods where they operate. Common concerns include traffic congestion, overflow parking (especially during events), noise, and other event-related disruptions.

Commented [LD23]: The Community Center is not a "non-park use" and so is deleted from this section.

The Town's zoning regulations determine which institutional uses are eligible for conditional approval in each zoning district. When evaluating new applications or proposed expansions of these uses, the Town should determine whether the use, in general, would fit within the neighborhood/district where it could be approved and what conditions should be applied during any approval.

In reviewing proposals, the Town should consider, at minimum, the following criteria:

- Can the proposed use be fully accommodated on the site without overreliance on adjacent properties or public rights-of-way?
- Are there enforceable plans for managing periodic high-traffic events or overflow conditions?
- What are the likely impacts on nearby residential properties, and are those impacts reasonable and manageable?
- Can specific, enforceable conditions be applied to ensure the long-term compatibility of the use?

Communities benefit from a vibrant network of institutions. The key for Vienna is to support these valued uses while maintaining the character and livability of surrounding neighborhoods.

Special Planning Areas

Overview

Certain portions of Town merit special focus, based on history and/or unique design or experiential goals. Those areas are discussed in this section, in addition to the discussions above.

Maple Avenue

For as long as the Town of Vienna has existed as a settlement, the area ~~now~~ known ~~now~~ as Maple Avenue has been a transportation corridor and a focus of activity. The corridor continues to be the central spine for Vienna, containing the majority of the Town's consumer-serving commercial activity. As part of Virginia State Route 123, it plays a dual role: connecting Vienna internally and linking it to the broader region. As such, Maple Avenue commercial establishments benefit from a greater amount of customers than just the Vienna community. However, this visibility and accessibility also bring challenges, particularly high traffic volumes and development pressures.

The corridor has also been the topic of intense planning conversations over the past few decades, including in the 2010s and 2020s. The adoption and subsequent repeal of the Maple Avenue Corridor overlay zoning district ("the MAC") is presented in summary here, as ~~its repeal~~ represents the largest change in land use policy since the 2016 adoption of the last Comprehensive Plan.

Vienna adopted the MAC in 2013. Its purpose was to encourage mixed-use development along Maple Avenue, where there had been little new development in previous years. The MAC was ~~also~~ part of the Town's goal to create a more walkable environment and bring more diversity of housing to Vienna.

Commented [DL24]: Add map

The MAC was an optional zoning overlay that offered developers the opportunity to propose projects with building heights above the standard 35-foot maximum if they adhered to specific standards for design and provided new public benefits standards. Four mixed-use MAC projects were approved between 2013 and 2018. By 2018, community resistance had emerged to the higher density and height, and the Town Council responded by adopting a moratorium on such projects. In 2020, the MAC zoning overlay was repealed, though the four approved projects remained approved.

Three of the four projects were constructed (though one of those three was not 100% completed as of this writing). The project that remains unbuilt is the largest, on the 400 block of Maple Avenue West. If built as approved, it would bring 151 multi-family residential units and approximately 20,000 square feet of commercial/retail space in a four-story building with structured parking.

With the 2023 approval of an updated set of zoning and subdivision regulations through the Code Create Vienna process, the Town Council adopted a higher building maximum (42 feet) for the center part of the Maple Avenue corridor, with the purpose of making 3-story mixed-use development more possible than with a 35-foot building maximum. The east and west parts of the corridor remain at 35 feet. An additional zoning change was made that offers the possibility of making mixed-use projects more practical, as discussed above in the Housing Affordability and Diversity section. These changes were made without an accompanying vision and related goals for the Maple Avenue corridor, but with an implicit desire to accommodate a modest amount of additional housing diversity.

The Town should continue to evaluate the evolution of the corridor in terms of whether it is meeting the Town's goals for pedestrian access, accommodation of bicycles, accommodation of transit, architectural design, landscaping, signage, utilities, open space, and how it interacts with the W&OD Trail and the Town Green, consider conducting an area plan for the corridor, which would describe, in one document, the Town's vision and policies for the Maple Avenue corridor with respect to land use, zoning, sidewalk widths, transit, bicycles, streetscape/landscape features, environmental features on private property, signage utilities, open space, interactions with the W&OD Trail and Town Green, and more. The Town may find it advantageous to develop a single planning document that provides. Having a clear vision and set of goals for the corridor that will help orient the key implementation tools of regulations and capital improvements.

Church Street Vision

The Church Street corridor in Vienna runs parallel to Maple Avenue for much of the length of the Town. A portion of that corridor has, since 1999, been considered the Church Street Vision area. Its regulatory implementation comes through an incentive-based zoning option, for properties between Lawyers Road NW and Mill Street NE, including properties on all four corners of Mill Street NE. It also comes through the Town's investment in pedestrian infrastructure and beautification.

The goal of the Church Street Vision has been, and remains, to encourage development and public investments that will bring about a traditional small-town main street that is reminiscent of the late 19th century. The overlay zone contains guidelines for architecture, signage, frontage improvements, and more that help to bring about the vision.

Commented [LC25]: Doug: Keep evaluating Maple Avenue, but maybe not a plan?

Commented [DL26]: Add map

Five Church Street Vision projects have been approved to date, with four of them having been completed. Of that total, three were approved before 2005 and one was approved in 2014. The fifth project was approved in 2022, but the developer has since informed the Town that the project is not economically feasible. The result of these projects, and uses in other buildings, is a series of specialty shops, restaurants, upper-story services, and some residences. Church Street has advanced greatly in the direction of becoming what the vision anticipated and sought. Nonetheless, no Church Street Vision projects have been approved, and then constructed, since 2014, though sites remain available.

The Town continues to support the goal of the Church Street Vision area. This plan encourages a review and updating of the zoning overlay requirements and guidelines, which are now more than 25 years old. The goals of the update should be to 1) continue the design vision, 2) adjust regulations to attract feasible development in accordance with the design vision; and 3) ensure that the infrastructure vision (e.g., streetscape, sidewalks) reflect current updated approaches since 1999. Such a process should be conducted in coordination with property owners and businesses, to ensure that the regulations and guidelines are economically feasible, be supportive of the business environment, and will continue to serve the design goals. The plan endorses such modifications.

NOVA Parks and the W&OD Trail

In 2025, the Town and NOVA Parks entered into a joint option agreement to purchase two properties located adjacent to the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail at its intersection with Church Street NE. This agreement gives both entities the right to purchase two properties from the owner within two years.

NOVA Parks has identified one of the parcels, a vacant property with a vacant building between Maple Avenue East and Church Street NE, as a strong candidate for a future W&OD Trail Visitor Center. As part of the partnership, the Town would have the opportunity to purchase an old building that is not well maintained on the corner of Dominion Road NE and Church Street NE.

This plan supports conducting a community planning process to determine the long-term vision for these two key sites, in the context of the broader area. Such a process should address:

- The potential role of the two properties in placemaking and economic development;
- Opportunities to alleviate parking challenges in the adjacent commercial areas; and
- Broader strategies for enhancing the character and function of properties along the trail, including the two specified above.

Contingent upon a planning process that yields a community-supported vision, this Plan supports the eventual acquisition of these sites by NOVA Parks and the Town.

In parallel, NOVA Parks plans to implement a split-use trail design within Vienna, consistent with its safety policies that have already been implemented in Herndon and Falls Church along the trail. This approach separates pedestrian and bicycle traffic along a widened paved surface, improving safety and usability in high-traffic areas. Planning for the Vienna

segment is expected to begin in the near future. Coordination between NOVA Parks, the Town, and nearby businesses will be essential to ensure that the project enhances both public safety and the economic vitality of this portion of the trail corridor.

Windover Heights

In March 1979, the Town created the Windover Heights Historic District to preserve the history, character, open space, and appearance of one of Vienna's oldest residential neighborhoods. Creation of a historic district was made possible by 1974 legislation of the Virginia General Assembly, which gave Vienna the authority to amend its charter to create one or more historic districts. The framework and requirements for historic districts within the Town are set forth in the Town Code, in Chapter 18.

To implement these requirements, the Town established the Windover Heights Board of Review (WHBR), which has the task of reviewing applications for exterior modifications for consistency with the vision for the district.

This plan endorses continuation of this structure. However, the plan also endorses the Town's working with the community and the WHBR to resolve some outstanding planning challenges. Of particular importance is how to manage the sometimes-competing desires for retaining the historic integrity of the area while at the same time accommodating a safe pedestrian environment, vehicular traffic, and managing the flow of rainwater. The WHBR has also communicated its desire for a clearer statement regarding the future of the District and to maintain a high level of communication with the Windover Heights community on public works and planning/zoning matters.

Other Potential Special Planning Areas

Vienna's character is an important element of its community identity. This plan supports the community in any efforts to identify other parts of the Town that may emerge as special planning areas.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map of the Town of Vienna is shown on Page _____. This map illustrates the Town's policy for the intended use of each property but does not reflect either the nuance discussed in this chapter and plan and the potential deviations that may be made legitimately, through such processes as conditional use permits or rezonings.

To get a full understanding of the intent for each site and area, the Future Land Use Map must be read in conjunction with relevant vision, goals, policies, and strategies of this plan. Together, these elements form the foundation for the Town's zoning regulations. Zoning implements the land use policies from the Comprehensive Plan and should therefore be in conformance with those policies.

~~One update~~ from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan ~~include~~:

- ~~is the re~~Renaming ~~of~~ the Mill/Dominion area. Previously called "Industrial", it now is being called "Industrial/Flex", in recognition that ~~which some of the uses are light~~

Commented [DL27]: Add map

Commented [LC28]: Will be updated upon completion.

Commented [LD29]: A complete list of changes is provided as an accompaniment to the draft Future Land Use Map, which reflects the 6/11/25 Planning Commission work session.

~~industrial~~, many of the ~~activities uses~~ are not industrial ~~in nature~~ but are, instead, a wide variety of ~~other~~ uses.

- ~~Elimination of the "Office" category, which previously included only a few small parcels. Those parcels have been recategorized as Mixed Use.~~
- ~~Creating a new category entitled Mixed Use with Ground Floor Residential. The purpose of this category is to define areas in the Maple Avenue corridor where residential development would potentially be permitted on the ground floor. This topic is discussed under Housing in Commercial Areas.~~
- ~~Changes made to reflect the Town's purchase of individual properties.~~
- ~~Changes made to individual sites that reflect changes in use since 2016. Examples include rezonings; the expiration of conditional use permits and the resulting changes in use; and corrections of prior errors.~~

To aid in interpretation, the following are brief definitions of the land use categories shown on the map:

Low Density Residential

Areas ~~primarily~~ designated ~~as primarily~~ for single-family detached homes on individual lots, with zoning that limits density to preserve neighborhood character and a suburban development pattern.

Moderate Density Residential

Areas intended for a mix of residential housing types, ~~which include such as~~ townhouses, duplexes, and low-rise multifamily buildings, ~~allowing for greater housing diversity while maintaining neighborhood compatibility.~~

Mixed-Use

Areas where ~~a combination of residential, commercial, and/or office~~ ~~and/or residential uses are is encouraged, including in mixed-use developments. In this Land Use category, residential uses are not allowed on the ground floor, typically featuring ground floor commercial or office space with residential units above or behind.~~ These areas are intended to be walkable and support a mix of activities.

Mixed Use with Ground Floor Residential

~~Areas where commercial, office and/or residential uses are encouraged, including in mixed-use developments. In this Land Use category, residential uses may be allowed on the ground floor. (Note: for properties that are part Mixed Use and part Mixed Use with Ground Floor Residential, the location of the dividing line between the two is not precise. The crucial goal is that no ground-floor residential may be built in a manner that precludes the entire Maple Avenue frontage from having commercial ground-floor residential uses).~~

Office

~~Areas designated for professional, administrative, and medical office uses. These sites are typically low- to mid-rise buildings and may include support services or small-scale retail amenities.~~

Industrial/Flex

Areas intended for light industrial activity and flexible commercial uses. Examples include, including repair services, small-scale production, storage, contractor yards, creative workspaces, and other businesses that do not fit typical retail or office formats. These uses are generally more service-oriented and may require outdoor storage or unique operating hours.

Employment Center

Campus-like areas that accommodate larger-scale employers in office or research settings. These areas are intended to support high-value employment uses such as corporate headquarters, technology firms, and government facilities.

Governmental

Properties used for ~~Town~~ government services and operations, such as Town Hall, public works yards, ~~and the police station~~, ~~as well as~~ Fairfax County schools, and the public library.

Institutional

Properties used for community-serving institutions including private schools, places of worship, and cultural facilities.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Public and private lands set aside for recreation, conservation, and open space. This includes active park facilities, passive green spaces, school fields, and environmentally sensitive areas intended for preservation.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Goal 1. Maintain Vienna's core single-family residential neighborhoods, while allowing for other neighborhood-compatible uses that enhance community life.

Policy 1.1: Maintain single-unit detached zoning patterns in the established neighborhoods to preserve Vienna's traditional character.

Strategy 1.1.1: Monitor development activity to ensure neighborhood integrity is maintained and that rezoning proposals are consistent with adopted land use policies.

Strategy 1.1.2: Review zoning code language periodically to ensure that allowed accessory uses remain compatible with the primary residential function.

Policy 1.2: Support small-scale minimally impactful home-based businesses within residences that do not disrupt neighborhood character.

Strategy 1.2.1: Permit by-right home-based businesses that generate no visible impacts (e.g., signage, parking, deliveries, or customer traffic).

Strategy 1.2.2: Allow conditional approval of slightly more active in-home businesses if impacts are minor and can be effectively mitigated (e.g., hours, parking limits, number of visitors).

Strategy 1.2.3: Provide educational materials and clear permitting pathways for residents interested in starting home-based businesses.

Policy 1.3: Support the continued implementation of Accessory Living Units (ALUs) in single-unit residential zones, with ongoing monitoring to ensure compatibility with neighborhood character and community needs.

Strategy 1.3.1: Conduct regular evaluations, at least every two years, of ALU activity, focusing on permitting trends, code compliance, and community feedback.

~~**Strategy 1.3.2:** If evaluations demonstrate minimal negative impacts, explore opportunities to expand eligibility criteria or reduce barriers to creating ALUs (e.g., parking, lot size, design flexibility).~~

Strategy 1.3.23: Provide clear guidance for property owners on how to develop and maintain ALUs in compliance with Town regulations.

Policy 1.4: Retain and strengthen the Windover Heights Historic District as a unique residential area with historic character and tailored design guidance.

Strategy 1.4.1: Continue the role of the Windover Heights Board of Review as a mechanism to uphold the aesthetic goals of the neighborhood.

Strategy 1.4.2: Develop a community infrastructure plan that is consistent with the aesthetic goals of the community but also ensures safe pedestrian and vehicular movement, and management of rain/floodwaters.

Strategy 1.4.3: Prepare a community-driven small-area plan that includes a vision statement for the community and policy statements regarding architecture, character, and aesthetics. This plan could be combined with the infrastructure plan.

Policy 1.5: Support any emergent historic and neighborhood preservation efforts.

Strategy 1.5.1: Create criteria for evaluating neighborhood preservation requests, including historical, architectural, and cultural significance.

Goal 2. Provide opportunities for diverse housing options for the full range of residents.

Policy 2.1: Allow multi-unit residential development on upper stories along the Maple Avenue corridor, on Church Street, and in the Gateway South area.

Strategy 2.1.1: Identify and prioritize opportunity sites through a corridor planning process for Maple Avenue and Church Street.

Strategy 2.1.2: Develop architectural and massing guidelines to ensure upper-story residential uses integrate with surrounding development.

Commented [LC30]: Jessica: Doesn't love the commitment of reducing barriers.

Commented [DL31]: Does the PC want this line? It is similar to one from the last plan.

Strategy 2.1.3: Create a development FAQ or illustrated guide to encourage property owners to explore vertical mixed-use development.

Policy 2.2: Allow residential development on the ground floor along the Maple Avenue corridor, either as a conditional use or through a rezoning process, on the rear portions of lots where the residences would abut existing residential development and would not preclude commercial development on the entire frontage of Maple Avenue.

Strategy 2.2.1: Establish design and screening standards for ground-floor residential units abutting commercial corridors.

Strategy 2.2.2: Create zoning criteria that define when ground-floor residential may be appropriate on the rear of commercial lots.

Policy 2.3: Evaluate proposals for rezoning that would result in multi-unit residential development in appropriate transitional areas.

Strategy 2.3.1: Consider properties located between, or on the edges of, Maple Avenue and adjacent single-use residential neighborhoods.

Strategy 2.3.2: Consider Town-owned properties of sufficient size to support context-sensitive, larger-scale residential development.

Policy 2.4: Use the following criteria when evaluating proposed rezonings for residential use:

- 1) Appropriateness of the proposed zone versus the current zone;
- 2) The potential impacts of the new zone on the adjacent and nearby residential, commercial, and institutional uses;
- 3) The anticipated impacts of the specific development proposed; and
- 4) Alignment with adopted policies of the Town of Vienna.

Policy 2.5: Rezoning to the Neighborhood Mixed Use zone should be approved only in exceptional cases. Proposals must demonstrate that:

- 1) Impacts on the surrounding neighbors would be negligible; and
- 2) All components of the project (e.g., parking) can be fully accommodated on site.

Policy 2.6: Encourage proposals for housing that serves older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Strategy 2.6.1: Identify zoning code barriers that may discourage accessible or senior housing types.

Strategy 2.6.2: Explore incentives such as reduced parking requirements or expedited review for developments including accessible or senior units.

Strategy 2.6.3: Partner with nonprofit or regional providers to identify unmet needs for aging in place or transitional housing in Vienna.

Commented [DL32]: Does the PC want a policy of this nature in the plan?

Commented [DL33]: Does the PC want a policy of this nature in the plan?

Policy 2.7: Seek opportunities for development of housing units that are more affordable than the private market will produce on its own, to serve the full range of the community.

Strategy 2.7.1: Conduct a housing needs assessment to identify current and projected affordability gaps.

Strategy 2.7.2: Explore partnerships with Fairfax County and other entities to leverage housing programs, resources, and funding opportunities.

Goal 3. Promote and strengthen Vienna's commercial and corporate areas so that they continue to provide goods, services, and employment opportunities.

Policy 3.1: Preserve ground-floor commercial activity in key areas to support vibrant and economically active corridors.

Strategy 3.1.1: Retain zoning that prohibits residences on the ground floor facing Maple Avenue, in the Church Street historic overlay area, and in Gateway South area.

Strategy 3.1.2: Evaluate zoning enforcement mechanisms to ensure ongoing compliance with commercial activity requirements on key frontages.

Strategy 3.1.3: Explore incentives or flexibility (e.g., façade improvements, business incubation) to help activate vacant or underused ground-floor spaces.

Policy 3.2: Partner with the Department of Economic Development, to attract and retain businesses in Vienna.

Strategy 3.2.1: Maintain openness to adjusting zoning and other regulations as necessary to accommodate changing business needs.

Strategy 3.2.2: Coordinate regularly with the Economic Development Department to identify barriers to business success and explore responsive solutions through zoning or permitting reforms.

Policy 3.3: Adapt land use policies and public investments in response to evolving shopping and service patterns.

Strategy 3.4.1: Monitor local and regional trends in retail, remote work, and service delivery to inform updates to commercial zoning districts.

Strategy 3.4.2: Consider zoning amendments or new districts that allow for flexible commercial formats, such as hybrid retail-office spaces or co-working environments.

Strategy 3.4.3: Align public infrastructure investments—such as sidewalk improvements, signage, and lighting—with areas of shifting commercial demand to maintain corridor vitality.

Policy 3.4: Preserve the Corporate Park zone for corporate, governmental and/or employment uses.

Strategy 3.4.1: Review and update list of permitted and conditional uses in the Corporate Park zone to accommodate a wider range of innovative and desirable employment types.

Strategy 3.4.2: Update use standards in the zoning code for the Corporate Park zone to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses and modern operational needs.

Strategy 3.4.3: Evaluate and streamline the approval process for modifications to properties in the Corporate Park zone to encourage reinvestment while maintaining appropriate review standards.

Goal 4. Retain and support industrial/flex spaces that meet the diverse needs of Vienna's residents.

Policy 4.1: Preserve zoning in the Mill/Dominion corridor that accommodates both light-industrial and community-serving flex uses.

Strategy 4.1.1: Retain zoning that permits light-industrial activity, such as repair services, storage, small-scale production, and other service-oriented uses.

Strategy 4.1.2: Ensure continued allowance for community-serving non-industrial flex uses, such as gyms, maker spaces, art studios, and similar uses that are compatible with the corridor's character.

Strategy 4.1.3: Periodically review the Industrial/Flex zoning to ensure it supports viable business models while minimizing conflicts with adjacent uses.

Policy 4.2: Coordinate with NOVA Parks on land use and trail improvements affecting the Mill District and surrounding areas.

Strategy 4.2.1: Jointly conduct a community planning process with NOVA Parks that defines the future of two sites for potential public purchase.

Strategy 4.2.2: Identify appropriate land use transitions between Church Street and the light-industrial character of the Mill District to ensure compatibility and walkability.

Strategy 4.2.3: Coordinate with NOVA Parks on the design and implementation of the proposed split-mode (pedestrians and bicyclists) path to ensure that access and operations of nearby businesses are not negatively impacted.

Policy 4.3: Address infrastructure challenges that affect the functionality and viability of the Mill District.

Strategy 4.3.1: Seek solutions to ongoing parking limitations in the Mill/Dominion corridor, including shared parking, structured parking, or creative lot arrangements.

Strategy 4.3.2: Evaluate streetscape and access improvements that balance truck/service vehicle needs with pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Goal 5. Ensure that governmental and institutional uses, including educational facilities, have places in Vienna to serve the community.

Policy 5.1: Allow and encourage key governmental and institutional uses to operate in Vienna.

Strategy 5.1.1: Permit governmental and institutional uses as conditional uses in most zoning districts, rather than by-right, to allow for case-by-case evaluation of impacts and compatibility.

Strategy 5.1.2: Clearly define in the zoning ordinance the criteria for approval of conditional use permits for institutional and governmental uses in each zoning category.

Strategy 5.1.3: Ensure that all conditions placed on institutional uses (e.g., parking, event management, lighting, hours of operation) are specific, measurable, and enforceable.

Strategy 5.1.4: Identify and preserve suitable locations throughout Town for future community-serving uses, such as schools, libraries, civic buildings, and religious institutions, as part of long-range land use planning.

Policy 5.2: Ensure ongoing compliance and accountability for institutional and governmental uses.

Strategy 5.2.1: Regularly monitor compliance with zoning conditions for approved institutional uses, especially those located in residential neighborhoods.

Strategy 5.2.2: Develop a public-facing summary of major CUP conditions for high-impact uses to help residents understand expectations and report concerns.

Strategy 5.2.3: Coordinate enforcement efforts across departments (e.g., Zoning, Police, Public Works) to address recurring issues such as traffic, parking overflow, or event-related disturbances.

Policy 5.3: Collaborate with Fairfax County and other regional partners to ensure institutional uses in Vienna continue to meet long-term community needs.

Strategy 5.3.1: Coordinate with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) on facility planning, enrollment trends, and site needs within Town boundaries.

Strategy 5.3.2: Explore joint-use opportunities with regional partners (e.g., shared parking, emergency preparedness, stormwater infrastructure) that serve institutional sites in Vienna.

Strategy 5.3.3: Participate in countywide and regional planning initiatives that may affect the location or function of institutional uses within or adjacent to the Town.

Goal 6. Protect and preserve Vienna's green space and the natural resources land that supports environmental sustainability and resilience.

Policy 6.1: Preserve and enhance public and private green spaces through land use planning and zoning decisions.

Strategy 6.1.1: Rezone Salisbury Spring Park to PR (Park and Recreational) or PC (Park and Conservation Area), consistent with its use and character.

Strategy 6.1.2: Evaluate rezoning the W&OD Trail corridor to PR (Park and Recreational), in coordination with NOVA Parks, to reflect its current and long-term recreational use.

Strategy 6.1.3: Coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure zoning decisions align with the Town's adopted Parks Master Plan.

Strategy 6.1.4: Avoid land use changes that would reduce publicly accessible open space unless equivalent community benefit or replacement open space is provided.

Policy 6.2: Encourage the conservation of natural features and tree canopy on private property.

Strategy 6.2.1: Coordinate with the Environment and Sustainability chapter to cross-reference tree canopy goals and update relevant zoning standards accordingly.

Goal 7. Promote key locations in Vienna as special planning areas, deploying tools and policies from all portions of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 7.1: Monitor the evolution of the Maple Avenue corridor, with the potential to develop and implement a unified vision for the Maple Avenue corridor.

Strategy 7.1.1: If deemed necessary, conduct a small area or corridor plan to articulate goals for land use, zoning, building form, pedestrian and bicycle access, accommodation for transit, streetscape design, and stormwater infrastructure.

Strategy 7.1.2: Engage the community and business owners in shaping priorities for redevelopment, design character, and accessibility along the corridor.

Strategy 7.1.3: Identify and prioritize infrastructure investments (e.g., sidewalk widening, underground utilities, wayfinding) to support placemaking goals.

Policy 7.2: Update the Church Street Vision zoning overlay to support continued reinvestment and historic small-town character.

Strategy 7.2.1: Review the existing overlay guidelines and revise them to reflect current best practices in historic design and economic feasibility.

Strategy 7.2.2: Coordinate updates with local businesses and property owners to ensure alignment with both aesthetic and commercial viability goals.

Strategy 7.2.3: Explore grants or incentives to support preservation-compatible façade improvements and outdoor public amenities.

Policy 7.3: Support the continued integrity and evolution of the Windover Heights Historic District.

Strategy 7.3.1: Collaborate with the Windover Heights Board of Review and neighborhood residents to prepare a planning framework that balances historic preservation with modern infrastructure needs.

Strategy 7.3.2: Develop a clearly articulated purpose statement and goals for the Windover Heights Historic District that guide future decision-making.

Strategy 7.3.3: Evaluate opportunities to improve pedestrian safety, traffic circulation, and stormwater management without compromising the district's historic character.

Policy 7.4: Enhance placemaking opportunities along the W&OD Trail, Town Green, and adjacent sites to create a vibrant, accessible, and community-oriented public space.

Strategy 7.4.1: Support the joint planning process between the Town and NOVA Parks to determine the future use of the two properties at the intersection of Church Street and the W&OD Trail, including the potential development of a visitor center.

Strategy 7.4.2: Develop a vision for the W&OD Trail frontage in Vienna, incorporating trail access, adjacent land use transitions, signage, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, public art, and small-scale event space.

Strategy 7.4.3: Coordinate placemaking improvements with nearby commercial areas to reinforce synergies between trail users, local businesses, and community gathering spaces.

Strategy 7.4.4: Explore partnerships and funding sources (e.g., NOVA Parks, VDOT, grant programs) to implement streetscape and trail-edge improvements that benefit both recreational and economic goals.

Goal 8. Enforce and regularly adopt updates to zoning and other regulations to align with community goals and evolving needs.

Policy 8.1: Provide education to residents, property owners, and business owners regarding keeping their properties in compliance with the zoning code.

Strategy 8.1.1: Create and maintain user-friendly educational materials, such as zoning guides and FAQs, on the Town's website.

Strategy 8.1.2: Host annual or semi-annual workshops or webinars to explain zoning requirements and common issues.

Strategy 8.1.3: Include zoning and code compliance reminders in regular Town newsletters and permit-related correspondence.

Policy 8.2: Regularly review zoning and other land use regulations to ensure alignment with the Comprehensive Plan and other policies adopted by the Town Council.

Strategy 8.2.1: Upon adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, conduct a focused review of zoning regulations to identify needed updates.

Strategy 8.2.2: When the Town Council adopts updates to other plans (e.g., for roads, sidewalks, parks), assess and update zoning as needed to support implementation.

Strategy 8.2.3: Establish a five-year zoning code audit cycle to assess the performance and relevance of existing regulations.

Strategy 8.2.4: Monitor changes in state law and update Town regulations accordingly to ensure legal compliance and local applicability.

Policy 8.3: Maintain and improve property maintenance, public realm standards, and enforcement practices.

Strategy 8.3.1: Review and update standards for property maintenance, signage, and cleanliness in residential and commercial areas.

Strategy 8.3.2: Evaluate and refine enforcement practices to respond quickly and consistently to code violations.

Strategy 8.3.3: Strengthen communication and coordination between zoning staff and other departments responsible for enforcement.

Policy 8.4: Balance the protection of residential neighborhoods with support for successful commercial and light-industrial activity.

Strategy 8.4.1: Maintain zoning standards that minimize negative impacts—such as lighting, noise, traffic, and parking—on residential areas.

Strategy 8.4.2: Provide guidance and design expectations for buffering, screening, and transitions between land uses.

Policy 8.5: Ensure consistent enforcement of all land use approvals and conditions.

Strategy 8.5.1: Track and enforce compliance with all conditions associated with Conditional Use Permits, rezonings, Board of Architectural Review decisions, and variances.

Strategy 8.5.2: Develop a compliance checklist or digital system to monitor enforcement of discretionary approvals.