

LEXINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION

January 26, 2023 - 5:00 P.M

Rockbridge County Administrative Offices – First Floor Meeting Room
150 South Main Street, Lexington, VA 24450

AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
Minutes from December 8, 2022*
Minutes from January 12, 2023*
4. **CITIZENS' COMMENTS ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA**
5. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. EC COA 2023-01: An application by Charles Potter for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for exterior improvements and new signage for the Cattlemen's Market location at 534 East Nelson Street (Tax Map #30-1-11), owned by Trunet LLC.
 - 1) Staff Report*
 - 2) Applicant Statement
 - 3) Public Comment
 - 4) Commission Discussion & Decision
 - B. SP 2023-01: An application by Charles Potter requesting approval of a site plan that includes an exterior, fenced-in area for a walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer, and a smoker for 534 East Nelson Street (Tax Map #30-1-11), owned by Trunet, LLC.
 - 1) Staff Report*
 - 2) Applicant Statement
 - 3) Public Comment
 - 4) Commission Discussion & Decision
 - C. EC COA 2023-02: An application by Red Dowdell for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for new signage for Rockbridge Barbell at 150 Walker Street (Tax Map #30-1-15).
 - 1) Staff Report*
 - 2) Applicant Statement
 - 3) Public Comment
 - 4) Commission Discussion & Decision

- D. ZOA 2023-01: Annual Zoning Ordinance Amendments. Accessory Dwelling Units (A.D.U).
 - 1) Staff Report*
 - 2) Public Comment
 - 3) Commission Discussion

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- A. Green Infrastructure Working Group Final Report & Briefing Note*
 - 1) Remarks from Planning Commission Liaison to the G.I. Working Group
 - 2) Planning Commission Discussion
- B. Zoning and Planning Report – If applicable
- C. Catalyst Project Updates – If applicable
 - 1) Bike/Ped Plan: Complete
 - 2) Increase Sidewalk Connectivity: Ongoing
 - 3) Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance: Ongoing
 - 4) Jordan’s Point Park Plan Implementation: Ongoing
 - 5) Reprogram Traffic Signals Downtown: Complete
 - 6) Assess Stormwater Fees: Tabled until next year
 - 7) Green Infrastructure Group: Ongoing
- D. Key Annual PC Milestones: Ongoing. Remaining items:
 - 1) Zoning Text Amendments: Ongoing. Remaining items:
 - a. Cottage Housing
 - b. What else, if any?
 - 2) Comp Plan Review: Ongoing

7. **CITY COUNCIL REPORT**

8. **ADJOURN**

*indicates attachment

MINUTES

**The Lexington Planning Commission
Thursday, December 8, 2022 – 5:00 p.m.
Rockbridge County Administrative Offices – First Floor Meeting Room
150 South Main Street, Lexington, VA 24450**

Planning Commission:

Presiding: Blake Shester, Chair
Present: Nicholas Betts, Vice-Chair
Pat Bradley
John Driscoll
Leslie Straughan, Council Liaison
Matt Tuchler

City Staff:

Arne Glaeser, Planning Director
Kate Beard, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Shester called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved as presented. (L. Straughan / N. Betts)

MINUTES

The minutes from the November 10, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved as presented. (J. Driscoll / P. Bradley)

CITIZENS' COMMENTS ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. CUP 2023-01: An application by Edwin Gaskin of Echelon Resources, Inc. for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow multifamily dwellings on the City owned parcel located on Spotswood Drive (Tax Map #29-1-31).

1) Staff Report –

This is a request to allow multi-family dwelling units on the subject parcel which is zoned R-LC. The proposal envisions a multifamily community of up to 62 apartments (1 & 2 bedroom units) with related amenities and at least 84 parking spaces. The structure's massing will be on the east side of the parcel, closer to the RARA building and farther from the single family parcels along Houston Street and Spotswood Drive. The structure will be 3 full stories in height with a basement story facing Spotswood Drive. Its maximum height will not exceed 45 feet. A. Glaeser pointed out the concept plan submitted with the application as well as the conditions offered by the applicant and noted the application contained more information than is typically submitted for a conditional use permit application. He led the Commission through the R-LC Intent and Purpose and noted the subject parcel's designation as a Mixed-Use Neighborhood and Opportunity Area in the Comprehensive Plan. He reported the proposed design met the 45' height limitation

provided in the zoning ordinance as well as the requirements for off-street parking. He pointed to the staff comments addressing each of the conditions for the issuance of a conditional use permit and asked that Commissioners keep the conditions in mind as they consider the subject application. He said that staff's recommendation to approve the application was mainly based on the observations made in response to those conditions. Addressing the lot requirements for multifamily use in the R-LC zoning district, he said the proposal met the lot area requirement but was deficient with respect to the lot width, but he argued that lot width is a very strange metric to use to determine density limits.

Responding to questions from multiple Commissioners, A. Glaeser reminded the Commission that a CUP is a legislative act and that governing bodies are afforded wide latitude for legislative acts. He addressed zoning issues considered when making a determination about a proposal's impact on public welfare. He noted a conditional use is presumed to have a greater impact on an area than a by-right use and that the Commission has the right to place conditions on an approval of a conditional use, but any condition should be reasonably related to and roughly proportional to the impacts believed to be occurring.

In response to questions from J. Driscoll, A. Glaeser confirmed the concept plan had been reviewed by the Fire Marshal and Public Works and received no comments requiring improvements, including traffic related improvements. He explained that the increase in traffic associated with the project would fall well below most localities' threshold to require a traffic impact analysis. He reminded the Commission that Public Works would review the site plan when it is submitted and would make recommendations if warranted.

2) Applicant Statement –

Edwin Gaskin of Echelon Resources gave a slide show presentation highlighting details of the proposal. He said he was proud to have engineered a plan for such a small, complicated site that was in compliance with all of Lexington's zoning requirements, including the set-back requirements that allow for the 45' building height. He remarked that a modern look was chosen for the project in order to differentiate it from historic Lexington and to play off of the hospital design both in terms of massing and style. He pointed out that the plan complied with all green space requirements and incorporated a 5' sidewalk for connectivity and public access across the site. He also addressed the consideration given to the public utilities located on the site, the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, and its impact on nearby traffic. He noted the adjustments to the initial proposal which were made in response to previously voiced community concerns. He said the project would be highly amenitized for its size and would address Lexington's shortage of available professional grade, transitional housing.

B. Shester asked if the presentation had been posted to the City's website and A. Glaeser pledged to do so.

Responding to questions from L. Straughan, Mr. Gaskin addressed the placement of the entrance drive, the amount of grading the site will require, the location of the facility's elevator, the availability of ADA accessible apartments, and the location and screening of the rooftop mechanical units. N. Betts asked for current market rates for units

of this type and Mr. Gaskin offered that current rates are \$1,200 - \$1,300/month for a 1 bedroom and \$1,500 - \$1,700/month for a 2 bedroom. B. Shester asked for clarification of the proposed grading for the site and Mr. Gaskin replied the grading would be sloped rather than terraced. Responding to a query from M Tuchler, A. Glaeser said the engineering of the site's storm water system would be based on site specific calculations and would require approval from the D.E.Q. as part of the building permit process. In response to a question from N. Betts, Mr. Gaskin said the typical tenants would likely be young professionals or families with a young child. Responding to questions from J. Driscoll, Mr. Gaskin said that Echelon would provide pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent medical offices if the adjacent property owner will grant them an easement, but that there would likely be no public trails across the site. J. Driscoll said he was encouraged by Echelon's commitment to work with the City Arborist on landscaping for the site and urged Mr. Gaskin to consider how the site and trees would appear in 10 years when developing the landscape plan.

3) Public Comment –

Margaret Robertson, 245 Denny Lane – argued that the application was deficient as it had materially modified previously approved conditions contained within the “Spotswood Drive Parcel Project Expectations” which was made a part of the sales agreement between the City and the applicant. She claimed modifications were made to the City and DEQ's oversight of the site's storm water management and to the maintenance of existing trees located in the site buffers. She asserted that the conditions of issuance for CUPs had not been met due to the lack of a traffic study, the modern architecture style proposed for the project, and the lack of proof that the City's water and sewer infrastructure can meet the demand of the project. She also argued the project did not meet the type of housing needed in Lexington.

Heidi Kellner, 105 Houston Street – remarked that the plan seemed overly large for such a small town and such a small site. She said there were six points in the Comprehensive Plan relevant to the proposal and the plan failed to meet any of them. She objected to the appearance of the building and voiced concern about possible noise and light pollution associated with the mechanical units to be housed on the building's roof.

Robert Zordani, 105 Houston Street – agreed with the previous speaker and complained that he found the proposed building to be ugly. He argued it was not historic and did not fit the neighborhood or Lexington.

Gary Butler, 106 Houston Street – remarked that the sewer line to his house travels through the field that will serve as the building site. He noted the neighborhood includes the hospital which will expand over time as well as the medical offices and expressed concern about the traffic impact along nearby streets.

Ben Grigsby, 111 Lee Avenue – objected to the project's scaling, saying it was inappropriate and would contravene the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. He reminded the Commission that he had been a member of a collaborative effort that worked on a development plan for the property which he believed was more suitably scaled to the subject site. He encouraged the Commission to consider not what is technically allowed

by City Code, but what is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the architectural heritage of Lexington.

Brenda Greever, 313 Miller Street – recounted her family’s long ties to the Houston Street neighborhood and her understanding of how and why the City came to own the parcel, which she alleged was intended to be used for the cemetery. She complained that the City has never cared about the eastern part of town and insinuated that the City has had a long history of duplicity in its development of the Spotswood Drive area, coupled with a lack of consideration of Lexington locals.

Connie Crittenden, 22 Whitmore Street – noting that the Planning Commission is responsible for preparing and maintaining the Comprehensive Plan, she read an excerpt from the Plan to which she responded by saying the proposal would not enhance quality of life for anyone in its proximity. She agreed with previous comments that the proposal was ugly and observed that the view from Spotswood would be of the back of the building.

Gladys Hopkins, 317 S. Main Street – stated she agreed with everything that had been said earlier and added that she believed the additional traffic, especially along Houston Street, would be detrimental to the safety and welfare of the area.

Maurya Schweizer, 1 Hill Circle – voiced concern about how traffic would be impacted along Houston and Preston Streets and Spotswood’s intersection with Nelson Streets. She observed that traffic is “bob and weave” along those streets under current conditions. She urged the City to require a traffic study be done before approving the project.

Kelly Peters, 410 Arpia Street – agreed that a traffic study should be done, but argued it should be done by the City rather than by the applicant, because a traffic study done at the applicant’s request would be biased. She reminded the Commission that there would be impacts to schools, roads, and health care, and she objected to waiving the water and sewer hookup fees for the proposal. She suggested the addition of a turn lane.

Robbin Youngblood, 104 Houston Street – expressed concerns about the sewer line capabilities on the site and potential flooding of her adjacent property should the development have inadequate storm water management. She advocated for conducting a traffic study during times that the food pantry is open and asked if prospective tenants of the development would be warned of helicopter noise pollution. She said she understood the need for more affordable housing in the area and suggested the City might build good will in the neighborhood by giving its residents driveways so they would not have to park on the street.

4) Commission Discussion & Decision –

With an assist from M. Tuchler, J. Driscoll clarified that the issues relevant to the Commission’s review were limited to the proposal’s dimensions; its adherence to the 4 zoning criteria for the issuance of a conditional use permit; its compliance with the Comprehensive Plan; and, perhaps, some of the technical issues around the utilities and infrastructure. He noted the Commission could not consider the aesthetics of the design or the business plan for the project.

At Chair Shester’s request, Council Liaison Straughan summarized how City Council decided to proceed with the model for the site proposed by the applicant. She emphasized the need in the city for more housing of all types, noted that “diversity of housing” is included in the vision statement of the Comprehensive Plan, and added that

Council members have heard from realtors and employers that there is a particular need for “transitional housing” of the type being proposed. She acknowledged the scale of the project would be a big change of a type that can be hard to envision, but that the Lexington House Apartments, which are right around the corner from the subject site, has a similar scale with over 70 units also on 2 acres. She added that the Planning Commission has been looking for ways to expand housing in Lexington.

N. Betts agreed and suggested the proposal would likely create an increase in available housing that would be more affordable to a larger group of people. He added that the community has a documented problem of lacking the housing necessary to expand the workforce or population.

J. Driscoll stated that his primary concern had to do with the lot width deficiency which he maintained would have resulted in a building containing one less story if it had been designed to code. P. Bradley said he shared a similar concern. Noting that he was not inclined to opine about the proposal’s aesthetics and that there are controls in place that should mitigate concerns about storm water management, he indicated the most pressing concern was the scale of the project and particularly its traffic impact. He observed that, for better or worse, the Zoning Ordinance provides two safeguards for regulating density and expressed disappointment that the proposal was allowed to get this far without determining whether it met the regulations. He pointed out that the Commission had recently voted against a proposal because it had not met the existing zoning definitions. L. Straughan said she believed the fact that the proposal meets the area requirements was sufficient. She viewed it as a compromise, not unlike the compromise recently reached with the property owner seeking a CUP for first story dwelling units on Randolph Street. She again pointed to the Lexington House Apartments as proof that a development of a similar scale can exist in the neighborhood without causing problems or even much notice.

Responding to a question from M. Tuchler concerning how the Commission should consider the proposed design’s historical character, A. Glaeser stated the parcel was not in a design district and would not be subject to the design review necessary in the historic districts or entrance corridors.

At M. Tuchler’s request, A. Glaeser provided his recommendation about how to consider the density requirements for the subject parcel. He suggested the Commission consider the conditions for issuing a CUP and ask how the fact that the parcel has slightly inadequate frontage than is envisioned in the zoning ordinance will adversely affect any of the conditions the Commission is charged to protect. N. Betts said he appreciated the suggested path forward but was uncomfortable with overstepping the code requirements. P. Bradley asked if the application could have also requested an amendment to the lot requirements in the zoning ordinance. A. Glaeser acknowledged that in hindsight a text amendment may have made the process cleaner, but stated he would have advised the applicant that such an amendment was unnecessary because he believes the Commission can recommend approval of a conditional use permit so long as a determination can be made that the conditions for issuing said permit have been met.

B. Shester said he had some concerns about the impact on traffic, particularly on Houston Street, but added that narrow streets are a hallmark of Lexington generally. He agreed with Commissioner Betts that housing should be a priority and that the proposal

would help to address that issue. He added that good practice in cities is to have more density and he was inclined to agree with the argument that the lot area is more important than where the parcel's width and length are located in terms of frontage. He acknowledged the width requirement as a technical criteria but said he could not see how the lack of approximately 230 feet of frontage would impact the safety and welfare of the public.

Following discussion of how to interpret the Code and how to proceed, P. Bradley suggested a motion be made and each Commissioner voice his or her thoughts about the project to get them on record for City Council. B. Shester asked to add, before the proposal went to a vote, that the project was intended for walkability and connectivity and urged the City to focus on prioritizing good bike and pedestrian access and safety in the area. He then asked Commissioner Driscoll if he felt green infrastructure goals were being met by the proposal or if he would suggest the Commission add additional conditions to address green infrastructure goals. J. Driscoll replied that he was not confident the Commission had the power to add those types of goals, but the conditions offered by the applicant showed acceptable intent.

L. Straughan moved to approve Conditional Use Permit number CUP 2023-01 to allow the construction of up to 62 multifamily units on the subject parcel and development must be in substantial compliance with the eleven conditions offered by the applicant in the Project Narrative and in substantial compliance with the *Concept Plan, Lexington Multifamily* dated October 21, 2022 as submitted. M. Tuchler provided the second. N. Betts said he felt more comfortable voting to approve the application knowing there was ambiguity in the code as it relates to density. He stated he believed the proposal would address the City's housing deficit. M. Tuchler agreed saying Commissioner Bett's argument that an increase in available housing could free up more affordable housing options swayed him most in his considerations. J. Driscoll agreed that the premise was correct but said he would not use the term affordable housing. B. Shester also agreed with Commissioner Betts that this addition to the available housing stock was likely to lead to a reshuffling that would amount to an increase in housing that is more affordable to a greater number of people. He reiterated his challenge to the City to invest in the area to make it more accessible and connected for pedestrians, bicyclists, and electric vehicles. P. Bradley whole heartedly agreed with the need for housing and the affect the proposal could have on the available housing stock in the City but reiterated his concern that the scale being proposed for the site was inappropriate and failed to comply with all relevant zoning criteria.

Chair Shester called for a roll call vote and the motion carried with the following vote:

Ayes: M. Tuchler, N. Betts, L. Straughan, and B. Shester

Nays: J. Driscoll and P. Bradley

B. ZOA 2023-01: Annual Zoning Ordinance Amendments: Accessory Dwelling Units

Given the time, Chair Shester suggested this agenda item postponed until the January 12, 2023 meeting and Director Glaeser agreed.

C. Election of Vice-Chairperson due to Commissioner Bett's election to City Council

- 1) Nominations – M. Tuchler was nominated to serve as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Tuchler confirmed he was willing to serve.
- 2) Motion & Vote - **J. Driscoll moved to elect Matt Tuchler as Vice-Chair. N. Betts seconded and the motion passed unanimously. (6-0)**

D. Review Planning Commission terms

L. Straughan reminded her colleagues that there were currently two positions to fill and urged them to help recruit. A. Glaeser pointed out there was no obligation to step down at the end of a term.

E. Green Infrastructure Group Update –

J. Driscoll reported the group will meet to discuss priorities, who will act as the backbone organization and what the criteria will be for that role. He has also been in touch with W&L and VMI to get a sense of where they would like to fit into the coalition. He encouraged Commissioners to forward any comments on the draft report.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Zoning and Planning Report – Director Glaeser reported the following:

- A Notice of Violation was issued for an unregistered short term rental.
- Three Notices of Violation were issued for unmaintained properties.
- A Notice of Violation was issued for unpermitted signs at Stop-In.
- The Local Board of Building Code Appeals met and upheld the Building Official's determination for the University Chapel.
- He attended trainings for floodplain ordinances, bike-ped designs, the Fall Housing Workshop, mixed-use on Main Street, and a Watershed Improvement Program held by the CSPDC.
- He appeared in court for a return date for the zoning violations at 711 Thornhill Road and the case was scheduled for January 12, 2023.

CITY COUNCIL REPORT -

L. Straughan reported that City Council did approve the telecommunications ordinance regarding small cell facilities and received a report from a group of JMU students on their housing study which noted the City needs more housing and suggested the City review its ordinances with an eye to increasing housing availability and options.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm with unanimous approval. (B. Shester / P. Bradley)

B. Shester, Chair, Planning Commission

MINUTES

The Lexington Planning Commission
Thursday, January 12, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.
Rockbridge County Administrative Offices – First Floor Meeting Room
150 South Main Street, Lexington, VA 24450

Planning Commission:

Presiding: Blake Shester, Chair
 Present: John Driscoll
 Matt Tuchler

City Staff:

Arne Glaeser, Planning Director
 Kate Beard, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Pat Bradley
 Leslie Straughan, Council Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Shester called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved as presented. (J. Driscoll / M. Tuchler)

MINUTES

The minutes from the December 8, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved as presented. (J. Driscoll / M. Tuchler)

CITIZENS' COMMENTS ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. ZOA 2023-01: Annual Zoning Ordinance Amendments. Accessory Dwelling Units (A.D.U).

1) Background Materials –

Director Glaeser noted the wealth of ADU ordinances from Virginia localities to consider as examples and suggested the Commission begin its discussion by reviewing what the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance have to say about accessory dwelling units. He pointed out references to accessory dwelling units in the Comprehensive Plan and read a paragraph from the Housing Chapter into the record with the suggestion that the Commission think of it as its mission:

Accessory Dwellings

Accessory dwelling units are an increasingly common tool used to respond to housing demand in constrained markets. Where traditional zoning practices have limited single-family neighborhoods to one home per lot, accessory dwelling unit ordinances allow a second small dwelling to be constructed on the same grounds of a standard single-family home. In 2018, Lexington revised its zoning ordinance to allow the construction of accessory dwelling units in single family neighborhoods, provided they are attached to or located within the

existing dwelling unit. The City should also explore the modification of zoning policies to allow detached accessory dwelling units to further expand rental opportunities. As an added benefit, accessory dwelling units can provide supplemental income to cost burdened homeowners, helping increase housing affordability for renters and owners alike.

He then noted the current zoning ordinance contains a definition but no use and design standards for an *accessory apartment*, which is allowed as a by right use in each of the residential zoning districts as well as the C-1 zoning district. An *accessory apartment* is required to be within the main residence and is limited in size. He pointed out that detached *family health care structures, temporary* are also allowed in the residential districts, as is required by Virginia Code, and do have use and design standards. J. Driscoll suggested the Commission may want to consider developing expanded use and design standards for attached accessory dwelling units as it considers standards for detached units. B. Shester noted the packet contained examples from other localities that have made that distinction. A. Glaeser added that a number of details would need to be considered, such as how many accessories would be allowed on a parcel, how many would be allowed to be used as short term rentals, and how many accessories would be allowed on parcels with duplexes, in addition to the typical standards such as parking and setbacks.

Director Glaeser then led the Commissioners through three examples of properties where there has been a recent expressed interest in developing detached accessory dwellings, of which one envisioned a new build accessory structure and two envisioned converting existing accessory structures into residential units. He noted the Commission may need to consider how to address accessory structures with existing nonconformities.

2) Public Comment –

Mirabai McLeod, 451 Lime Kiln – Referring to a photograph of her property and renovation plan included in the examples presented by Director Glaeser, Ms. McLeod explained that she bought her home because she could convert the detached carport into a kitchen which she has used for her catering business for the past 11 years. She is now approaching retirement and would like to convert the structure into a small apartment for a source of supplemental income. She noted the structure has all necessary utility services, room for off-street parking and only lacks the shared wall required by current zoning regulations. She remarked that she has led an unusual lifestyle which will result in her receiving little income from social security, and that a supplemental rental income would allow her to retire and support herself.

3) Commission Discussion –

Noting the number of examples from other Virginia localities provided by staff, B. Shester expressed confidence that the Commission could craft an acceptable ordinance for Lexington by choosing from the examples rather than taking months to try to invent a policy. After some additional discussion, there was general agreement that Director Glaeser would prepare an outline for the structure of the ordinance for the next meeting, and that the focus of the next discussion would be on the Intent and Definitions sections. Responding to a request from M. Tuchler that the public be involved in determining the

ordinance's intent, A. Glaeser suggested the Commission seek public input after it has a rough draft. B. Shester asked that staff make all Commissioners aware of any "homework" ahead of the next discussion.

B. 2022 Planning Commission Annual Report

1) Commission Review and Comment -

Chair Shester asked that the Commission review the draft annual report provided by staff and suggest additions or changes so that it could be finalized for him to present to City Council on January 19th. A. Glaeser noted comments forwarded by P. Bradley recommending that the work of the Green Infrastructure Working Group be given more emphasis. B. Shester suggested adding language enumerating the number of meetings held by the group in 2022 and specifying that the members included 2 Planning Commissioners and 10 community partners who worked to create a report on green infrastructure. J. Driscoll suggested the addition of some language from the Executive Summary of the Green Infrastructure Group's report. M. Tuchler indicated that he would like some language suggesting that City Council reference and give weight to the report when considering future projects. B. Shester suggested that might be better dealt with in the next item of business which would address how the Commission moves the Green Infrastructure Group's report forward to City Council. J. Driscoll suggested that language be added to explain the intents of the new PD-MU ordinance and the proposed Cottage Housing zoning text amendment. B. Shester requested that Nicholas Betts be thanked in the final paragraph of the report.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Green Infrastructure Working Group Final Report

1) Remarks from Planning Commission Liaison to the G.I. Working Group

J. Driscoll reported that, following the presentation of the Report to the Planning Commission on October 27, 2022 and the Commission's request that the group provide guidance for moving the Report forward, the Working Group met in December and made recommendations on seven items: Priorities; the Collective Impact Model including potential partners; the formation of a Transition Group; Funding; Next Steps; a name for the initiative; and a suggested motion. He presented the Group's recommendations and said that if the Commission agreed with the recommendations as detailed in the memo included in the packet, they would be added to the final Report forwarded to City Council.

Responding to a question from M. Tuchler as to why the proposed City liaison was a Council Member rather than a Planning Commissioner, J. Driscoll responded that the Commission's goal was to take this effort on as a Catalyst Project, but the actual function, work stream and governance were within the purview of City Council. He explained the recommendation for a Transition Group was to guide the initiative as it moves from the Planning Commission to City Council. B. Shester agreed it was unsustainable for the Commission to continue to spearhead the initiative and that ultimately the mission and objectives would be the responsibility of the Collective Impact group.

2) Commission Discussion

B. Shester applauded the Working Group's efforts and those of Commissioners Driscoll and Bradley. He said he was happy with the Report and thought the seven recommendations were very helpful. His one suggestion had to do with branding. He made the point that *green infrastructure* as a concept is not intuitive and suggested that be considered when developing a name for the Collective Impact group. He said he believed the Report was ready to be forwarded to City Council where he hoped it would be well received. At J. Driscoll's request, Commissioners Shester and Tuchler and Director Glaeser offered suggestions for how to incorporate the January 12, 2023 memo into the final full Report. J. Driscoll said he would confer with Commissioner Bradley and return with a final recommendation at the Commission's next meeting.

B. Zoning Report

A. Glaeser reported he and the City Attorney had been in General District Court that afternoon for a Zoning violation having to do with noncompliance of a Home Occupation permit on Thornhill Road. He noted that though the Court found the property owner in violation of the Home Occupation standards and assessed a \$200.00 fine, the action had not yet resulted in compliance.

CITY COUNCIL REPORT -

Council Liaison Straughan was not present to give a full report. Director Glaser reported a subcommittee was appointed to work with the developer of the Spotswood parcel on design alternatives for the exterior of the building.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm with unanimous approval. (J. Driscoll / Matt Tuchler)

B. Shester, Chair, Planning Commission

Project Name	534 East Nelson Street Exterior Improvements and Signs
Property Location	534 East Nelson Street
Zoning	Entrance Corridor Overlay District (EC), C-2 (General Commerce) Commercial Zoning District
Owner/Applicant	Trunet LLC/Charles Potter

OVERVIEW OF REQUEST

This is a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of an exterior, fenced enclosure and new signs for the Cattlemen’s Market location at 534 E. Nelson Street. The parcel is located in the Commercial General Commerce (C-2) zoning district and in the Entrance Corridor Overlay District (EC).

The proposal is for a 28’-8” x 18’ raised concrete pad for a walk-in cooler, a walk-in freezer, and a smoker to be enclosed with a 12’ high, solid wood fence, painted to match the color of the building. The fenced enclosure will be located at the northeast end of the parking lot as shown in the aerial photo below. The applicant also proposes installing its existing ±36 sf painted wall sign above the awning on the Nelson Street façade, a painted sign above the window area on the east side of the building, and replacing the Check Into Cash monument sign panel with an existing Cattlemen’s monument sign panel. Photographs of the existing signs and their proposed locations are included with the application materials

Location map



534 East Nelson Street existing conditions



APPLICABLE ZONING DISTRICT SECTIONS

Section 420-3 of the zoning ordinance lists a small restaurant as a permitted use by-right in the C-2 zoning district.

APPLICABLE SIGNAGE REGULATIONS

Section 420-13.2 of the sign regulations requires a sign permit before a sign may be erected, constructed, posted, painted, altered, or relocated. The proposed alterations to the freestanding sign at the shopping center entrance, the new wall sign, and the new painted sign therefore require review and approval.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows a freestanding sign to be up to 25 square feet in size. Staff did not measure the existing freestanding, multi-tenant sign, and the applicant is requesting one of the panels on the existing freestanding sign be replaced with a sign panel for the Cattlemen's Market. The panels on the existing freestanding sign are 45.5 inches in width and 8.75 inches in height for a display area of 2.76 square feet. An existing sign panel for Virginia Catalogue Fulfillment will also be removed from the freestanding sign.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows any business located within a C-2 zoning district to display 1 wall sign per street frontage with an allowable area of 1 square foot per lineal foot of building frontage; with a 32 square feet minimum and 100 square feet maximum. The frontage of the Cattlemen's store is 36 feet in width and the proposed wall sign is 36 square feet in area.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows one painted sign on a side or rear wall that shall not exceed 15% of that wall area. The applicant proposes a painted sign 24 square feet in area (12 feet in length and 2 feet in height) which is significantly less than 15% of the wall area facing the Sheetz store. The commercial message on the painted sign will be the exact logo used on the Cattlemen's market existing free-standing sign panel (see application for photograph of existing free-standing sign panel).

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations limits any business to display no greater than 2 square feet of signage per foot of business frontage, and in no case shall any business display greater than 100 square feet of signage per building street frontage. With a frontage of 36 feet, the Cattlemen's Market is allowed up to 72 square feet total display area and the sum of the proposed signage is 62.76 square feet in display area (36 s.f. for the wall sign, 2.76 s.f. for the freestanding sign panel, and 24 s.f. for the painted sign).

Section 420-13.9 requires illuminated signs to be illuminated in such a way that light does not shine into on-coming traffic, affect highway safety, or shine directly into a residential dwelling unit zoned R-1, R-2, or R-M. The sign panel proposed for the freestanding, entrance sign will be backlit and this type of lighting is not typically bright enough to cause issues with traffic or create issues with adjacent residences.

APPLICABLE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR REGULATIONS

Section 420-6.6.A requires a Certificate of Appropriateness be approved by the Planning Commission prior to 1) building permit issuance for exterior building modifications, 2) site plan approval, and 3) exterior color changes to a building or to a sign.

Section 420-6.7.B allows the Planning Commission to consider any architectural feature which influences appearance, such as, but not limited to, motif and style, color, texture and materials, configuration, orientation, mass, shape, height and location of buildings, location and configuration of parking areas, landscaping and buffering.

Section 420-6.8 states all applications for entrance corridor certificates of appropriateness must satisfy the design standards for landscaping, signage, architecture, site planning, and lighting. Only the architecture and site planning design standards are applicable to this certificate of appropriateness request and the remaining standards are not applicable.

B. Signage.

1. Each parcel shall have an overall sign plan which reflects a consistent style and specifies the size and color scheme for proposed signage.
2. Materials used in signs and their support structures should reflect the building served by the sign.
3. Sign colors should be harmonious with the building which they serve.

C. Architecture.

1. Materials, colors and general style of buildings within a development should be coordinated.
2. Heating and air-conditioning units, ventilation units, and mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from public streets.
3. Loading docks, trash containers and mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from public streets.
4. The effective visual mass of large buildings should be reduced by variations in roofline, building angles, dimensional relief, color, architectural detailing and landscaping.
5. Architectural styles, building and roofing materials, and colors shall be reflective of the traditional architecture of Lexington. This may be accomplished through building scale, materials and forms, all of which may be embodied in architecture which is contemporary as well as traditional.
6. Trademark buildings and related features shall be modified to meet these design standards.

D. Site planning.

1. Parking lot layouts shall respond to the topographic characteristics of the site.
2. The number of access points to parking lots from a street will be minimized and shall relate to other existing curb cuts whenever possible.
3. Parking lots will be interconnected on adjacent parcels whenever possible.

4. Small, landscaped and interconnected parking lots, rather than large, central parking lots, shall be encouraged.
5. Parking lots shall not dominate the image of a site.
6. Pedestrian access from the sidewalk into individual project sites, as well as within sites and between sites, shall be provided.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds the proposed improvements meet the zoning criteria.

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move to approve/deny the Entrance Corridor Certificate of Appropriateness application EC 2023-01 for exterior improvements and signage at 534 East Nelson Street as proposed by the applicant.



www.lexingtonva.gov

Planning & Development Department
300 East Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS – ENTRANCE CORRIDOR OVERLAY DISTRICT

Applicant¹

Name: Charles A. Potter Phone: 540-463-2333
 Company: Cattlemen's Market Fax: _____
 Address: 139 E. Midland Street Lexington Email: _____
 Applicant's Signature: Charles A. Potter III Date: 11/11/23

Property Owner

Name: Jru Hut LLC. Phone: 540 463-5735
 Address: 905 Thornhill Rd Lexington Email: _____
 Owner's Signature: [Signature] Date: 11/11/23

Architect/Designer

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Company: _____ Fax: _____
 Address: _____ Email: _____

Administration

Application is hereby made to the Lexington Planning Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to make repairs, alterations, or improvements in the Entrance Corridor in accordance with Chapter 28, Article XV of the Lexington City Code.

This document shall constitute a valid COA upon its completion and execution by the Chairperson or Acting Chairperson of the Planning Commission. The recipient of a COA is responsible for obtaining any and all other certificates and permits required by the Code of the City of Lexington through the Office of the Planning and Development Administrator.

1. Prior to submitting an application, the applicant is required to meet with staff for a pre-application meeting.



Planning & Development Department
300 East Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

www.lexingtonva.gov

Proposal Information² (attach list of properties if request includes multiple properties)

Address (or location description): E. Nelson St Lexington

Tax Map: 30-1-11 Deed Book and Page #: _____

Acreage: .562 Zoning (attach any existing conditions or proffers): _____

Property Doing Business As: _____

2. Any application deemed incomplete by staff will not be accepted.

Alteration Description (complete a City Sign Permit Application for sign alterations)

I. Please check action(s) for which this COA is requested:

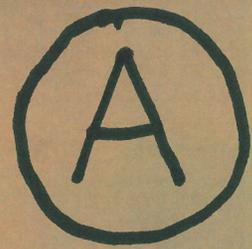
- Remodeling or renovation of the exterior of a building
- Total restoration of the exterior of a building
- Removal of any architectural element
- Painting of any building exterior
- Cleaning of wall surfaces or architectural elements
- Repair of all surfaces or architectural elements
- Any removal, alternation, repair, or construction of amenities such as fences or walls
- Demolition of part or all of an existing building
- Moving a building (complete Part III)
- Construction of a new building (complete Part III)
- Construction of any addition to an existing building (complete Part III)

II. For ALL projects, please attach the following:

- Photographs or drawings from the site showing adjoining structures, streets, and sidewalks
- Scale drawings of the improvements
- Detailed drawings of significant decorative or architectural elements
- Indication of exterior lighting adequate to determine its character and impact on the public and adjoining properties
- Samples of exterior materials and paint colors to be used
- Any other documentation or visual aid necessary to determine compliance with § 420-141 of the Lexington City Code

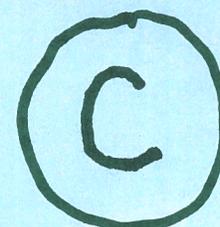
III. For NEW CONSTRUCTION, please provide the above attachments in addition to the following:

- Dimensions, orientation, and acreage of each lot or plot to be built upon
- Layout of the project and its relation to surrounding structures
- Location of points of entry and exit for motor vehicles and internal vehicular circulation pattern and parking facilities
- The size, shape, and location of existing and proposed construction on the parcel
- Location of walls, fences, and railings, and the indication of their height and the materials of their construction



(B)





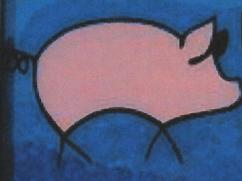
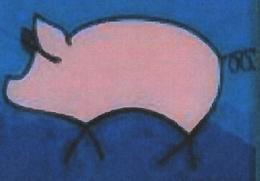
 **CHECK INTO CASH**
University
cleaners
Virginia
UNIVERSITY CLEANERS, INC.
CATALOG FULFILLMENT CENTER



MIDLAND PLAZA ²⁴

 **CATTLEMEN'S**
MARKET

FOOTHILL MOMMA'S

 **BBQ** 

L & A
Tobacco & Vape
SHOP, INC

LEXINGTON
DISCOUNT MUFFLER

Project Name	534 East Nelson Street Fenced Enclosure
Property Location	534 East Nelson Street
Zoning	C-2 (General Commerce) Commercial Zoning District
Owner/Applicant	Trunet LLC/Charles Potter

Background

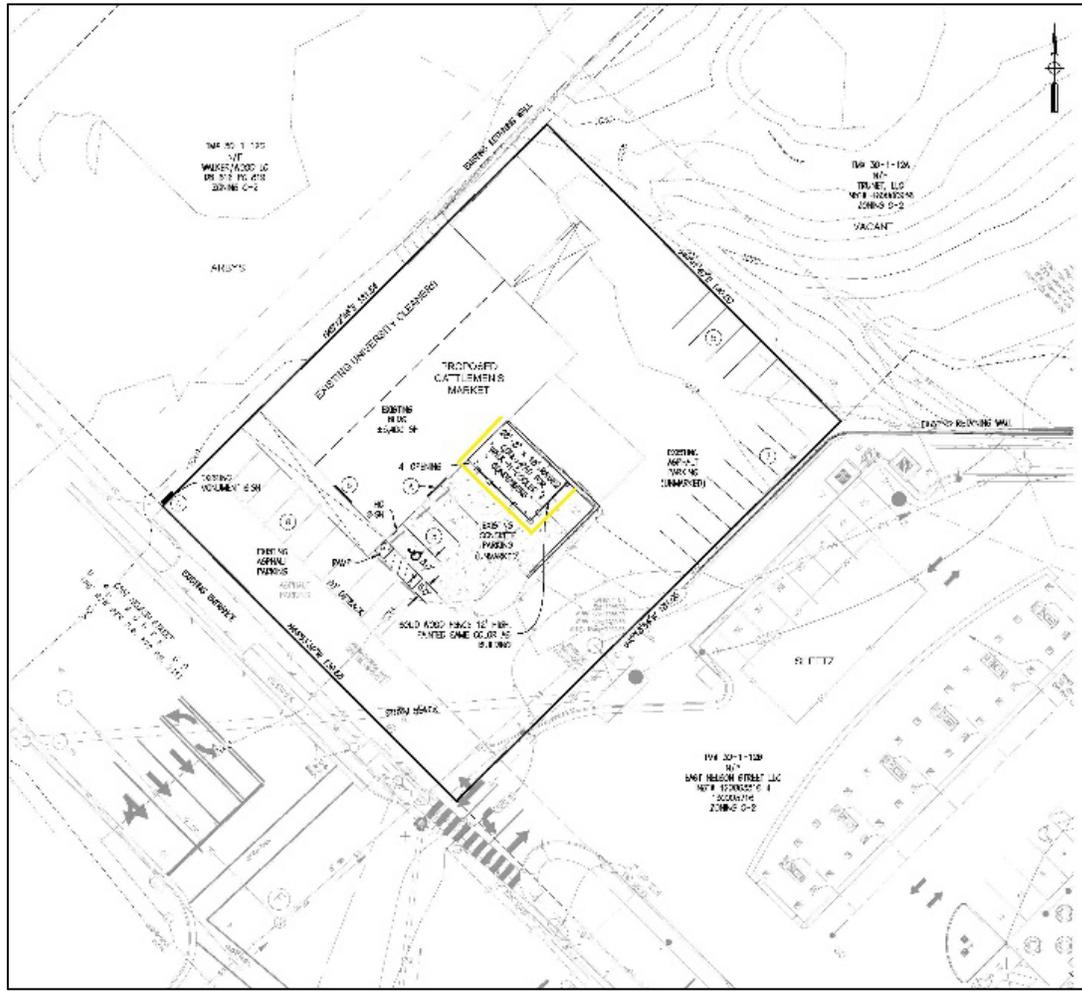
This is a request for approval of a site plan for 534 E. Nelson Street that includes an exterior, fenced-in area for a walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer, and a smoker. Site plan review and approval is required prior to the issuance of a building permit.

The proposal is for a 28'-8" x 18' raised concrete pad for a walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer, and a smoker to be enclosed with a 12' high, solid wood fence painted to match the color of the building. The fenced enclosure will be located at the northeast end of the upper parking lot as shown in the aerial photo below.

Location map



Proposed site plan



Zoning Authority and Requirements

The Planning Commission has the authority and responsibility to review all site plans required by the zoning ordinance. Site plans are required and shall be submitted for all new structures, all renovated structures and all additions to existing structures.

Yard Setbacks

The minimum front yard setback in the C-2 zoning district is 30 feet and the proposed enclosure is over 80 feet from the front property line. The minimum side yard and rear yard setbacks in the C-2 zoning district are 30 feet if the parcel abuts a residential zoning district. In this case there is no side or rear yard setback requirements because the subject parcel does not abut residential zoning. The proposed fenced in area therefore meets minimum yard setback requirements.

Parking

The proposed enclosed area is approximately 518 square feet in area and is primarily utilized for storage. Adding this storage area generates the need for only one additional parking space and a

calculation of the overall parking need on the property reveals the need for 23 parking spaces while 24 off-street parking spaces are provided. The minimum parking requirements are met.

Public Works

Public Works questioned how the condensate from the refrigeration units would be disposed as there is a prohibition of condensate to be discharged into a street, alley or other area so as to cause a nuisance. A solution can be proposed prior to the submittal of a building permit application.

Building Official

No comments.

Fire Protection

No comments.

Police

No comments.

Section 420-2.7.B of the Lexington Zoning Ordinance

The site plan shall be approved by the Planning Commission if it is found to be adequate with respect to:

- (1) Locations and design of vehicular entrances and exits in relation to streets giving access to the site and in relation to pedestrian traffic.
- (2) Locations and adequacy of automobile parking areas.
- (3) Adequate provision for traffic circulation and control within the site and provision for access to adjoining property.
- (4) Compliance with the requirements for setback and screening.
- (5) Adequacy of drainage, water supply, fire protection and sanitary sewer facilities.
- (6) Compliance with applicable established design criteria, construction standards and specifications for all improvements.
- (7) Approval by the City Health Officer or his agents if septic tank and other sewage disposal facilities other than sanitary sewers are involved.
- (8) Adequacy of proposed landscaping for softening the harsh visual effects of parking lots and for providing screening between the development and the street and surrounding lots.

Staff Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposed site plan complies with all zoning requirements pertaining to site design and use, and staff recommends approval of the site plan for the fenced-in enclosure at 534 East Nelson Street.

Suggested Motion

I move to approve/deny Site Plan number SP 2023-01 and find the submitted site plan to be in compliance with the zoning ordinance.



www.lexingtonva.gov

Planning & Development Department
300 East Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

SITE PLAN APPLICATION AND CHECKLIST

Applicant¹

Name: Charles A Potter Phone: 540-463-2333
 Company: Cattleman's Market Fax: _____
 Address: 139 E. Midland Trail Lexington Email: _____
 Applicant's Signature: Charles A Potter III Date: 1/11/23

Site Plan Preparer

Name: Russell A Orrison Phone: 540-464-9001
 Company: Perkins and Orrison Fax: _____
 Address: 17 W. Nelson St Lexington Email: rorrison@perkins-orrison.com

Property Owner

Name: Merlet LLC Phone: 540-463-5735
 Address: 905 Thornhill Road Lexington Email: _____
 Owner's Signature: [Signature] Date: 1/11/23

Proposal Information² (attach list of properties if request includes multiple properties)

Address (or location description): E Nelson St Lexington
 Tax Map: 30-1-11 Deed Book and Page #: 3 04000 2660
 Acreage: .562 Zoning (attach any existing zoning conditions or proffers): _____

1. Prior to submitting an application, the applicant is required to meet with staff for a pre-application meeting.
2. Any application deemed incomplete by staff will not be accepted.



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Notice to Adjacent Property Owners

Per § 420-222-B(1) of the Lexington City Code, the City shall give written notice to those persons who own property any portion of which abuts the subject property and all property which is across the street from any portion of the subject property as determined by the City's real property tax records. This notice shall give the date, time and place of the Planning Commission meeting at which the site plan is being reviewed, identify the property which is the subject of the application and give a brief description of the proposed action. This notice shall be mailed a minimum of 10 days prior to the date of the meeting of the Planning Commission at which the site plan is first considered.

Posting of the Property

Per § 420-222-B(2) of the Lexington City Code, the City will place a sign provided on the subject property which indicates that an action is pending. The sign will be located to be clearly visible from the street.

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF ONLY

Application Fee: \$350+\$25/acre Amount Paid: _____
Case Number: SP- _____

Date Received: _____ Received By: _____

Staff Review

Planning: _____ Public Works: _____
Police: _____ Fire/Rescue: _____

Approvals

Planning Commission

Administrator

Adj. Property Notifications: _____ Action: _____
Meeting Date: _____ Action Date: _____
Action: _____ Signature: _____



www.lexingtonva.gov

Planning & Development Department
 300 East Washington Street
 Lexington, Virginia 24450
 Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

Site Plan Checklist

Contents

Every site plan prepared and submitted in accordance with Article XXII of the Lexington City Code shall contain the following information:

- A boundary survey of the tract.
- A certificate, signed by the surveyor or engineer, setting forth the source of title of the owner of the tract and the place of record of the last instrument in the chain of title.
- All existing and proposed streets and easements, their names, numbers and widths, existing and proposed utilities, owners, zoning and present use of adjoining property.
- Location, type and size of vehicular entrances to the site.
- Locations, types, sizes and heights of fencing, retaining walls and screen planting where required.
- All off-street parking, loading spaces and walkways, indicating type of surfacing, size, angle of stalls, width of aisles and a specific schedule showing the number of parking spaces provided and the number required in accordance with Article XX.
- Number of floors, floor area, height and location of each building and proposed general use for each building. If a multifamily residential building, the number, size and type of dwelling units.
- All existing and proposed water and sanitary sewer facilities, indicating all pipe sizes, types and grades and where connection is to be made.
- Provisions for the adequate disposition of natural and storm water, indicating locations, sizes, types and grades of ditches, catch basins and pipes and connections to existing drainage system.
- Existing topography, with a maximum of two-foot contour intervals. Where existing ground is on a slope of less than 2%, either one-foot contours or spot elevations where necessary, but not more than 50 feet apart in both directions.
- Proposed finished grading by contours, supplemented where necessary by spot elevations.
- A landscape buffering and screening plan, if requested by the City Manager, his authorized agent or the Planning Commission.

Preparation and Submission

- Site plans, or any portion thereof, involving engineering, architecture, landscape architecture or land surveying shall be prepared and certified respectively by an engineer, architect, landscape architect or land surveyor duly authorized by the state to practice as such.
- Site plans shall be prepared on a scale of one inch equals 50 feet or larger.



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 300 East Washington Street
 Lexington, Virginia 24450
 Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

- A clear, legible, blue or black line copy of the site plan shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator. The Zoning Administrator shall be responsible for checking the site plan for general completeness and compliance with such administrative requirements as may be established prior to routing copies thereof for review.

Planning Commission Review

All site plans which are appropriately submitted and conform to the standards and requirements set forth in Article XXII of the Lexington City Code shall be forwarded to the Planning Commission for approval.

The site plan shall be approved by the Planning Commission if it is found to be adequate with respect to:

- Locations and design of vehicular entrances and exits in relation to streets giving access to the site and in relation to pedestrian traffic.
- Locations and adequacy of automobile parking areas.
- Adequate provision for traffic circulation and control within the site and provision for access to adjoining property.
- Compliance with the requirements for setback and screening.
- Adequacy of drainage, water supply, fire protection and sanitary sewer facilities.
- Compliance with applicable established design criteria, construction standards, and specifications for all improvements.
- Approval by the City Health Officer or his agents if septic tank and other sewage disposal facilities other than sanitary sewers are involved.
- Adequacy of proposed landscaping for softening the harsh visual effects of parking lots and for providing screening between the development and the street and surrounding lots.

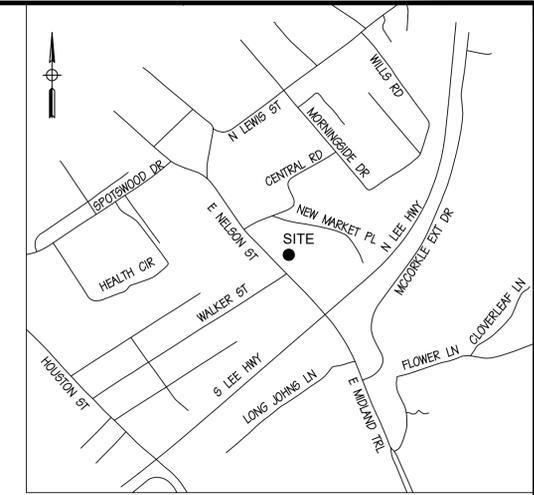
Required Improvements

- Screening, fences, walls, curbs and gutters as required.
- Easements of rights-of-way for all facilities to be publicly maintained. Such easements shall be clearly defined for the purpose intended.
- Curbs and gutters for travel lanes or driveways that provide vehicular travel to and from adjacent parking areas or adjacent property for the purpose of separating such areas or property from parking areas and walkways.
- Adequate "no parking" signs along such travel lanes or driveways to prohibit parking on such.
- An adequate drainage system for the disposition of storm and natural waters.
- Landscaping sufficient to soften the visual effects of parking lots and to provide screening between the development, the street and surrounding lots.

SITE INFORMATION:
 TAX MAP#: 30-1-11
 INST#: 040002660
 OWNER/DEVELOPER:
 TRUNET LLC
 534 E NELSON ST
 LEXINGTON, VA 24450
 ATTN: TOM BEEBE
 540-463-5735
 ZONING: C-2
 AREA: 0.562 ACRES

PARKING CALCULATIONS
 WAREHOUSE (INCL. ADDITION) 3480 SF @ 1/1250 SF = 2.78 SPACES
 STORE, GENERAL & OFFICE 3410 SF @ 1/250 SF = 13.6 SPACES
 RESTAURANT 956 SF (12 SEATS) @ 1/150 SF = 6.4 SPACES
 22.76 = 23 SPACES
 TOTAL 23 SPACES REQUIRED
 24 SPACES PROPOSED

NO ADDITIONAL SITE LIGHTING IS PROPOSED



VICINITY MAP
 NO SCALE

PERKINS & ORRISON
 ENGINEERS ▲ PLANNERS ▲ SURVEYORS
 317 BROOK PARK PL. FOREST, VIRGINIA 24551
 PHONE: 434-525-5985 FAX: 434-525-5986
 EMAIL: pro@perkins-orrison.com
 17 W. NELSON STREET LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450
 PHONE: 540-464-9001 FAX: 540-464-5009
 EMAIL: pro@perkins-orrison.com

CONSULTANTS

SEAL:



JOB:

CATTLEMEN'S MARKET AT
 TRUNET BUILDING
 CITY OF LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

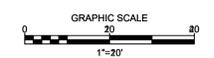
CLIENT:

TOM BEEBE

MARK	DATE	DESCRIPTION
ISSUE:	01/13/2023	
CONTOUR INTERVAL:	2'	
DESIGNED BY:	RHO	
DRAWN BY:	PWS	
CHECKED BY:	RHO	

SHEET TITLE

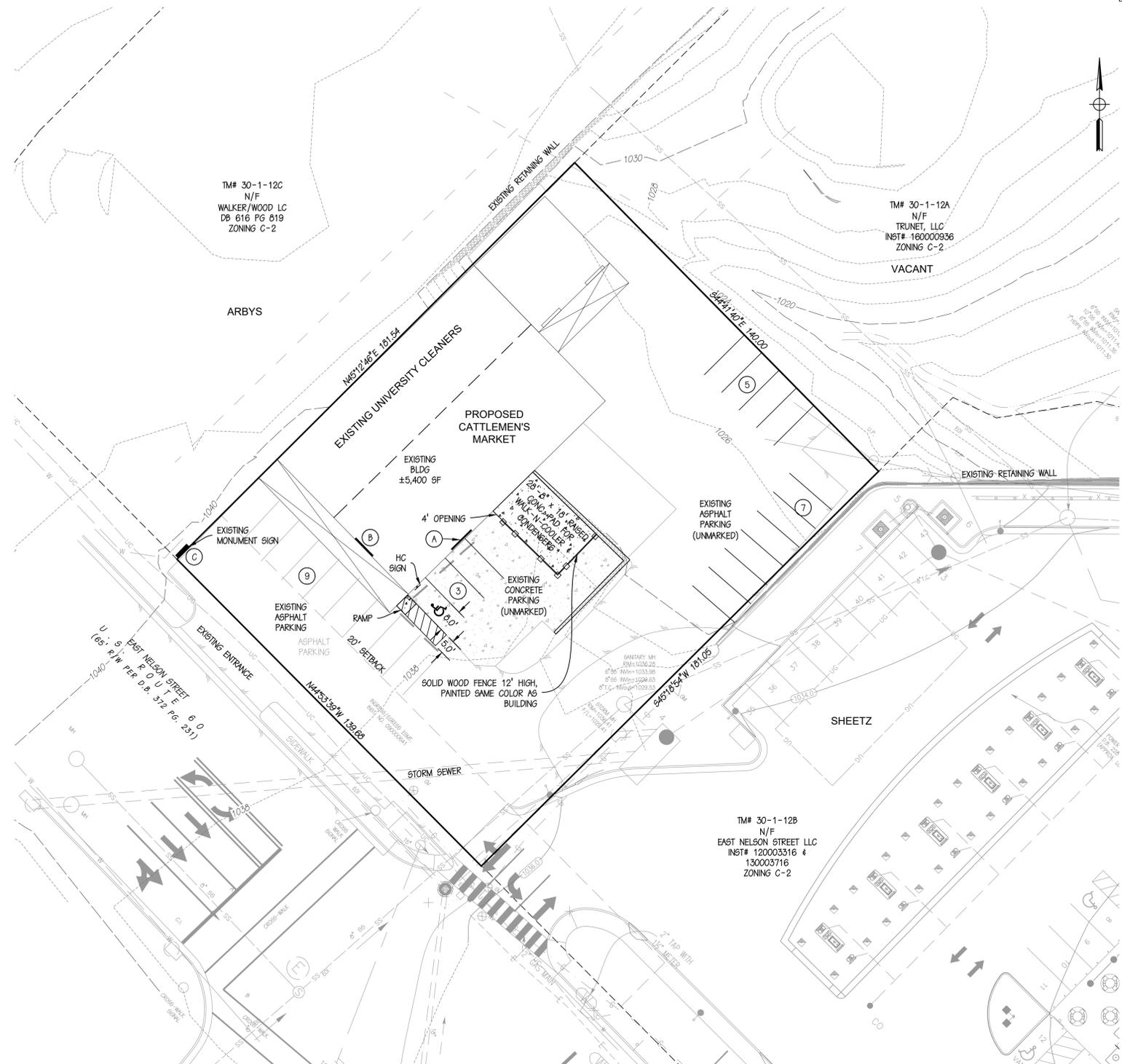
SITE PLAN



SHEET	C200	JURISDICTION PROJECT #	
JOB NO.	23015	SHEET NO.	1 of 1

SIGN INFORMATION

- (A) PROPOSED PAINTED SIGN NOT TO EXCEED 15% OF WALL AREA.
- (B) SIGN (SAME AS EXISTING SIGN, SEE PHOTO A, SCALED UP TO 40' SF MAX) LOCATION SAME AS REMOVED SIGN (SEE PHOTO OF REMOVED SIGN AREA).
- (C) EXISTING MONUMENT SIGN. CATTLEMEN'S MARKET IDENTIFYING SIGN (SEE PICTURES) TO REPLACE CHECK INTO CASH SIGN. (VIRGINIA CATALOGUE FULFILLMENT SIGN ALSO TO BE REMOVED)



Project Name	Rockbridge Barbell New Signage
Property Location	150 Walker Street
Zoning	Entrance Corridor Overlay District (EC), C-2 (General Commerce) Commercial Zoning District
Owner/Applicant	Summit Square Business Partners, LLC/Red Dowdell

OVERVIEW OF REQUEST

This is a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for previously installed signage for the new Rockbridge Barbell location at 150 Walker Street in the Summit Square Shopping Center. The parcel is located in the Commercial Shopping Centers (C-2) zoning district and in the Entrance Corridor Overlay District (EC). The request is for a wall sign, a door sign and a monument sign. The wall sign is 14.95 square feet (8.75 feet wide and 1.7 feet high) and is located above the windows to the left of the entry. It is made of white vinyl on a black painted plastic material and is not illuminated. The door sign is 6.14 square feet (29.5” x 30”) and made of white wooden sign board with black vinyl lettering and graphic. This sign is slightly larger than the 6 square feet allowed for window signs and must be reduced in size to meet code requirements. The monument sign panel is 4 square feet (4.75 feet wide and 0.83 feet tall), made of a white plastic material with black lettering, and is illuminated.

Location map



534 East Nelson Street existing conditions



APPLICABLE ZONING DISTRICT SECTIONS

Section 420-3 of the zoning ordinance lists personal improvement services as a permitted use by-right in the C-2 zoning district.

APPLICABLE SIGNAGE REGULATIONS

Section 420-13.2 of the sign regulations requires a sign permit before a sign may be erected, constructed, posted, painted, altered, or relocated. The proposed alterations to the freestanding sign at the shopping center entrance, the window sign on the door, and the modified wall sign therefore require review and approval.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows any business located within a C-2 zoning district to display 1 wall sign per street frontage with an allowable area of 1 square foot per lineal foot of building frontage; with a 32 square feet minimum and 100 square feet maximum. The proposed wall sign is 14.95 square feet in area which is less than the minimum 32 square feet allowed.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows a freestanding sign to be up to 25 square feet in size. Staff did not measure the existing freestanding, multi-tenant sign, and the applicant is requesting one of the panels on the existing freestanding sign be replaced with a sign panel for the Rockbridge Barbell business. The panels on the existing freestanding sign are 4 square feet (4.75 feet wide and 0.83 feet tall) and the proposed replacement of one of the sign panels does not violate sign regulations.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations allows window signs to be the lesser of 20% of the window area or 6 square feet in size. The window area is sufficient to allow a 6 square foot window sign, but the proposed window sign is 6.14 square feet in size and must be reduced in order to meet the sign regulations for window signs.

Section 420-13.6 of the sign regulations limits any business to display no greater than 2 square feet of signage per foot of business frontage, and in no case shall any business display greater than 100 square feet of signage per building street frontage. With a frontage of 40 feet, the Rockbridge Barbell business is allowed up to 80 square feet total display area and the sum of the proposed signs is only 25.09 square feet.

Section 420-13.9 requires illuminated signs to be illuminated in such a way that light does not shine into on-coming traffic, affect highway safety, or shine directly into a residential dwelling unit zoned R-1, R-2, or R-M. The sign panel proposed for the freestanding, entrance sign will be backlit and this type of lighting is not typically bright enough to cause issues with traffic or create issues with adjacent residences.

APPLICABLE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR REGULATIONS

Section 420-6.6.A requires a Certificate of Appropriateness be approved by the Planning Commission prior to 1) building permit issuance for exterior building modifications, 2) site plan approval, and 3) exterior color changes to a building or to a sign.

Section 420-6.7.B allows the Planning Commission to consider any architectural feature which influences appearance, such as, but not limited to, motif and style, color, texture and materials, configuration, orientation, mass, shape, height and location of buildings, location and configuration of parking areas, landscaping and buffering.

Section 420-6.8 states all applications for entrance corridor certificates of appropriateness must satisfy the design standards for landscaping, signage, architecture, site planning, and lighting. Only the architecture and site planning design standards are applicable to this certificate of appropriateness request and the remaining standards are not applicable.

A. Signage.

1. Each parcel shall have an overall sign plan which reflects a consistent style and specifies the size and color scheme for proposed signage.
2. Materials used in signs and their support structures should reflect the building served by the sign.

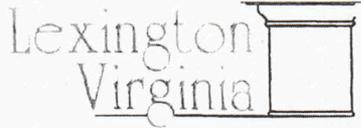
3. Sign colors should be harmonious with the building which they serve.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

With the exception of the proposed window sign, staff finds the proposed improvements meet the zoning criteria.

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move to approve/deny the Entrance Corridor Certificate of Appropriateness application EC 2023-02 for new signage at 150 Walker Street as proposed by the applicant.



Planning & Development Department
300 East Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

www.lexingtonva.gov

SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION

Applicant¹

Name: Red Dowdell Phone: 703-346-0980
Company: Rockbridge Barbell Fax: _____
Address: 150 Walker Street Email: rockbridgebarbell@gmail.com
Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: 1/12/23

Property Owner

Name: Summit Square Business Partners Phone: 540-460-2881
(Susan Amonette - Property Manager)
Address: _____ Email: susanamonette@gmail.com
Owner's Signature: Susan Amonette Date: 01/13/23

Sign Contractor

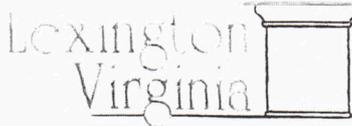
Name: ~~_____~~ Ruthie Lawhorne Phone: 540-784-3529
Company: Vinyl Cuts Fax: _____
Address: 2077 Magnolia Ave, Buena Vista, VA Email: vinylcutsbv@gmail.com

Proposal Information²

Address (or location description): 150 Walker Street, Lexington, VA 24450
Tax Map: 30-1-15 Deed Book and Page #: _____
Acreage: 5.087 Zoning (attach any existing conditions or proffers): Commercial (General Commrc)
Property Doing Business As: Summit Square Business Partners
Overlay District:

- Historic (requires Architectural Review Board review and approval)
 - Entrance Corridor (requires Planning Commission review and approval)
 - None (requires Planning and Development Department review and approval only)
1. Prior to submitting an application, the applicant is required to meet with staff for a pre-application meeting.
2. Any application deemed incomplete by staff will not be accepted.

NON REFUNDABLE



Planning & Development Department
300 East Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
Phone: (540) 462-3704 Fax: (540) 463-5310

www.lexingtonva.gov

Sign Information

Table with 4 columns: Sign Type, Square Feet, Width, Height. Contains handwritten entries for Sign 1 (Over Business, 14.95 sq ft, 8.75 ft, 1.70 ft), Sign 2 (On Sign Board @ entrance, 4 sq ft, 4.75 ft, 0.83 ft), and Sign 3.

Street Frontage (width) of business space in feet ~40 ft

Street Frontage (width) of building in feet ~240 ft

Are other signs currently displayed on the same building? [X] Yes [] No

If "Yes", please provide the size of each existing building sign that is to remain.

Width ~7.5 ft Height ~2 ft (Creative Cuts)

Width ~5 ft Height ~3 ft (Restore)

If a projecting sign, clearance from sidewalk: 8.83 feet

What materials will be used? Film and Paint

Will the sign be illuminated? [X] Yes [] No

Please attach a sketch of sign(s) and samples showing the following:

- Dimensions of sign
• Lettering style and size
• How colors will be used
• Photo showing building and adjoining structures
• Exact wording layout of sign
• Paint samples
• Style of bracket, stand, and/or awning

ROCKBRIDGE BARBELL

150

We're Moving

Come and visit our new
location opening
January 2023

172 W Millard Trail, Lexington





SUMMIT SQUARE

Rockbridge Area Habitat



Habitat Resale Store

ROCKBRIDGE BARBELL

City

NATIONAL BANK

THE STUDIO

for Dance & the Arts

Town-N-Country Cleaners

Dry-cleaning, Laundry and Alterations

ENVIA-CLEAN

Rug, Carpet, Upholstery and Janitorial Cleaning

Journey Outdoors



Furr

INSURANCE AGENCY



Blue Ridge

Urological, PC

L LINCARE

A Linde company

Space Available
540-460-2881

Wash Matic

Creative Cuts Hair Salon



Draft amendments for Accessory Dwelling Units

Proposed Amendments to the Zoning Chapter (*Chapter 420*)

The Lexington Planning Commission is considering a zoning text amendment to potentially allow accessory dwelling units in accessory structures in accordance with strategy HO 1.2 from the Comprehensive Plan. That strategy directs us to review regulations allowing accessory dwelling units in separate structures in appropriate residential areas. Currently, Accessory Apartments are defined in the Zoning Ordinance as a residential use having the external appearance of a single-family residence in which there is located a second dwelling unit that comprises no more than 25% of the gross floor area of the building nor more than a total of 750 square feet. The current definition does not allow accessory dwelling units to be located in accessory structures that are detached from the main dwelling unit. The purpose of this zoning text amendment is to explore whether accessory dwelling units can be allowed in accessory structures while not creating negative impacts to our neighborhoods.

In this report, staff is proposing a draft outline for the accessory dwelling unit zoning text amendment in an effort to guide the discussion. The following outline is pulled primarily from the *AARP ADU Model State Act and Local Ordinance* and is modified to fit the format of the existing Lexington Zoning Ordinance.

For the Planning Commission discussion on January 26, 2023, staff recommends the Planning Commission a) review the proposed outline, and b) review and develop a draft purpose statement. Subsequent meetings will generally follow the proposed outline and staff intends to provide examples from other ADU ordinances for each item in the outline.

Article XI. Use and Design Standards.

The following additional regulations apply to specific uses as set forth below. These regulations are intended to serve as the minimum standards for these uses, and are not intended to be in substitution for other provisions of this ordinance that may apply.

§420-11.1. Residential Uses.

1. Accessory Dwelling Units.

- A. Purpose
- B. Definitions
- C. Authorization of ADUs by zoning district
- D. Number of ADUs allowed per lot in Single-Family Zones
- E. General Standards
 - 1. Minimum Lot Size in Single-Family zones
 - 2. Types of Structures
 - 3. Size of ADUs
 - 4. Lot Coverage Limits
 - 5. ADU Setbacks
 - 6. Floor Area Ratios
 - 7. ADU Height Limit
 - 8. Architectural Consistency and Design Review
 - 9. Orientation of Entrance
 - 10. ADU Screening, Landscaping and Orientation
 - 11. Parking Requirements
 - 12. Short-Term Rentals
 - 13. Separate Sale of ADUs
 - 14. Owner Occupancy (Residency) Standards
 - 15. Other Common Standards Not Recommended for Application to ADUs
- F. Utility Connections and Building Codes
 - 1. Utility Connections
 - 2. Local Building Codes
- G. ADU Application and Review Procedures
 - 1. Application Process
 - 2. Clear and Objective Versus Discretionary Standards
 - 3. Review Procedures
 - 4. Appeals of ADU Decisions
- H. Fees
- I. Legalizing ADUs

A. Purpose

Sample from Bedford County

Accessory apartments afford an opportunity for the development of small rental units designed to meet the special housing needs of single persons, persons with fixed or limited income, and relatives of families who live or desire to live in the county. Accessory apartments provide a degree of flexibility for homeowners with changing economic conditions and/or family structure, while providing a reasonable degree of protection for existing property values. In addition, these provisions are provided to recognize formally previously established apartments and provide for improved safety and physical appearance.

Sample from Town of Strasburg

Accessory dwelling units may be allowed in certain situations to provide a mix of housing that responds to changing family needs and smaller households and provide a means for residents, particularly seniors, single parents and families with grown children, to remain in their homes, and obtain security, companionship and services.

Sample from Waynesboro

Accessory apartments are intended to provide additional housing options for the benefit and convenience of families and households; e.g., housing for the elderly, handicapped, “boomerang” adult children, care providers and personal guests of households. It is anticipated that each approved apartment will serve a variety of the above purposes as necessary over time and by doing so enhance the sense of community and social responsibility which all citizens share.

Sample from Anacortes, WA

The purpose of an accessory dwelling unit is to:

1. Add affordable units to existing housing and make housing units available to moderate-income people who might otherwise have difficulty finding homes within the city.
2. Promote the development of additional housing options in residential neighborhoods that are appropriate for people at a variety of stages of their lives.
3. Provide homeowners with a means of obtaining, through tenants in either the accessory dwelling unit or the principal residence, rental income, companionship, or security.
4. Protect neighborhood stability, property values, and the character of the neighborhood.

Green Infrastructure Working Group Briefing Note

January 15, 2023

Introduction

At the October 27, 2022, Planning Commission meeting to discuss the Draft Green Infrastructure Working Group Report, Commission members voiced their support for the recommendations in the Report and requested that the working group elaborate on the next steps, implementation, and how to move the Report forward. The Working Group met on December 15, 2022, to discuss the following seven items: Priorities; the Collective Impact (CI) Model including potential partners; the formation of a Transition Group; funding; next steps; a name for the initiative; and a suggested motion. For reference, Annex 1 includes the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of October 27, 2022.

The working group's recommendations outlined below were presented and discussed at the Planning Commission meeting on January 12, 2023. Commission members concurred with the recommendations and the suggested motion. They proposed that the Report and this accompanying briefing note are forwarded to the City Council at the next Planning Commission meeting on January 26, 2023.

1. Priorities

The Planning Commission asked the working group to suggest priorities in the next draft of the Report.

The Green Infrastructure Working Group recommends focusing initial priorities on **Promoting Healthy and Sustainable Neighborhoods**. The following suggestions are offered to initiate a discussion.

- **Active Citizens.** Complement Live Healthy Rockbridge programs that encourage exercise and well-being by prioritizing infrastructure improvements related to walking and biking between Lexington's neighborhoods and major destinations through annual enhancements based on existing plans. Include areas where significant infrastructure investments offer opportunities to upgrade sidewalks after construction. Continue annual incremental improvements to Jordan's Point based on the Jordan's Point master plan and improve and maintain other recreational areas and open spaces.
- **Tree Canopy/Planting.** Expand the City's tree canopy program managed through the Tree Board, Public Works, and the City Arborist. Assess and summarize the findings of the 2022 Urban Tree Canopy Report and recommend a program for tree planting and management in public spaces, including school grounds. Consider directing street tree planting to neighborhoods to provide shade and green corridors where biking and walking are encouraged. Consider similar support programs to promote tree planting in private and institutional settings. Review existing ordinances to encourage tree planting in parking areas and develop an educational program to preserve existing mature trees with the support of organizations such as Master Gardeners.
- **Stormwater management best practices.** Protect and improve our waterways' water quality by assessing the functioning of previously installed stormwater management best practices and locations for new installations. Review the study on impervious surfaces to recommend higher-priority improvements and build a public awareness campaign on the merits of a dedicated fund to improve

stormwater management. Suggest revisions to our zoning code for land-use regulations that limit runoff.

- **Sustainability and Renewable energy**
 - Encourage Lexington Mayor and City Council to **join the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#)**. (Charlottesville, Roanoke, and Blacksburg are members.)
 - Tap the staff, faculty, and students at W&L and VMI to assist in developing a **baseline inventory of municipal energy use and costs**, including estimates of carbon footprint and greenhouse gases produced. Recommend specific improvements, cost savings, and potential financial resources for selected City buildings such as City Hall.
 - **Convene a working group** to explore a program to **increase sustainability and resiliency** in cooperation with Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, and non-profit community groups and educational institutions.
 - **Waste reduction**, support and expand existing initiatives to reduce waste going to the landfill, preserve natural resources and save money.
- **Wildlife**. Support urban wildlife and biodiversity initiatives such as "[Monarch Butterfly City](#)" or "[Bee City](#)" designations. Establish **use classifications for greenspaces** to allow different planting, maintenance, and mowing protocols.

2. Collective Impact Model

The Planning Commission requested that the working group elaborate on the structure of the collective impact model.

As noted in both the Report and Commission presentation, we are fortunate to have three examples of the collective impact model in Lexington/Rockbridge:

- **Live Healthy Rockbridge (LHR)** is a coalition whose mission is *working together for community wellbeing*. The backbone organization for LHR is Carilion Clinic, which provides a full-time employee to coordinate meetings, maintain minutes, and provide leadership for the coalition.
- **Rockbridge Outdoors** has a part-time support person who coordinates meetings and prepares minutes through a grant from the Central Shenandoah Planning District. Leadership is provided from within the members, with rotating officers. While the list of objectives the coalition would like to accomplish is long, they agree upon a small number of initiatives each year to focus their energies and resources.
- **Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable** brings together local organizations working on waste reduction. Using the Collective Impact model, with Boxerwood as the backbone entity and a staff member as a facilitator, members organize their efforts by disseminating information among the coalition. Members work on a common interest, with each member bringing their own strengths to the table. Regular communication has created a synergy in which new opportunities become apparent.

Green Infrastructure Working Group members' comments on the above-referenced collective impact coalitions outlined key considerations when developing the collective impact model.

- Think of the model as a Venn diagram where the collective impact members work together where their interests and activities overlap and link to the resources of their extended networks. In effect, the model works as a network of networks.
- The goal of the adopted structure should be to build in and maintain enough flexibility to shift and adapt depending on what City Council and other community partners are willing to focus on at any given time.
- Bylaws or a general agreement among the partners can outline the governance structure.
- Ensure avenues for public feedback through City Council reporting and outreach and education efforts by involved partners.

A potential structure that is emerging regarding the Green Infrastructure initiative could be as follows:

- **Collective Impact Partners** supported by **their affiliated organizations and networks**.
- A **Steering Committee**, made up of representatives of partner organizations, to provide strategic direction, develop the shared agenda, seek funding opportunities, and monitor milestones.
- A **Project Coordinator** that can facilitate dialog and coordination among the partners and support the Steering Group;
- A **Fiduciary Organization** responsible for grant management; and
- **Working Groups** to progress agreed-upon projects and initiatives.

Potential Partners. We suggest beginning with a smaller group, with additional members joining as the initiative gains direction and experience. In this scenario of partners outlined below, there would at first be eight members of the Steering Committee. Current activities and/or indicative focus areas for participation are noted in parentheses; these suggestions will need further confirmation based on more detailed discussions among the partners.

1. Boxerwood

- a. Projects: Community/School Tree Planting and Native Tree Nursery; CORE Works offset and funding; Backyard composting and food waste reduction at schools; Green and Sustainable School Yards;
- b. Grant research and writing; Public Communications and Education; and Partnership Creation and school and multi-project coordination

2. City Councilor (Council liaison)

3. City of Lexington

- a. Tree Board and City Arborist (Tree Canopy and Open Space)
- b. Planning (Bike-Ped, zoning amendments)
- c. Public Works (Stormwater management)

4. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists (Education)

5. RACC

- a. Projects: Waste Prevention; Energy and Climate; Watershed; Land Conservation; Trails and Owned Land
- b. Education and Outreach; Fiduciary role (for example, Friends of Brushy Hills)

6. Live Healthy Rockbridge (Active Citizens)

7. Washington and Lee (Climate Resiliency)

8. Virginia Military Institute (Water Modeling, Stormwater Best practices)

The Venn diagram structure with overlapping primary and secondary networks is helpful when considering how other organizations can be involved depending on the shared agenda and annual work program. For example:

- The Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District can contribute to stormwater mitigation for homeowners.
- The Ministerial Alliance can assist in mobilizing its network for information dissemination and volunteers.
- The NAACP can support outreach efforts to identify needs and promote inclusive neighborhood initiatives.
- Friends of Brushy Hills can support trail maintenance and good forest preservation practices.

3. Transition Group.

With the completion of the Report, we recommend a transition group drawing on working group members to help guide the initiative from the Planning Commission to the City Council and support the initial efforts to organize the collective impact model.

4. Funding

Adopting a Collective Impact model for advancing Green Infrastructure will enable the City to achieve more than it can on its own. While still giving the City full say in the implementation and timing of any project, the CI brings additional resources to the table in terms of expertise and funding. In this model, CI organizations (both public and private) work together to identify attainable goals, sharing resources for those ends. These resources may include in-kind and cash matches and designated project funding secured by CI partners from grants, donations, etc. The Report lists a sampler of such potential resources.

As conceived, this CI model recognizes the City as a partner of special standing. While the approach to planning and implementation is collaborative, the City will always have first and final say in deliberations. CI partners must mutually agree on projects and associated financial commitments and contributions as a key step in developing their shared agenda and action plan(s). During this process, all partners will have the opportunity to note their priorities, willingness, and capacity to participate in any potential initiatives. Most significantly, through their participation in the collaborative, the City Council and the City Manager will have ample opportunities to convey City priorities and potential commitments for any CI-generated plan. In other words, action occurs at the intersection of partner and City interests and capabilities.

Funding for CI projects will come from two sources. First, existing resources from the CI partners themselves, who may already be engaged in one or more of the targeted implementations with their own dedicated funds. Second, new external funding secured by the CI Steering Committee (or its partners) that either supports the coordinating work of the CI model itself, and/or provides dedicated funding for agreed-upon projects such as green street initiatives, BMP stormwater practices, etc. These funds can include federal grants that will be flowing down to the States for environmental and sustainability initiatives. While such funds are competitive, it's worth noting that applying as a multi-partnered coalition with a shared agenda is highly favored by grantors and thus itself, a strategy for success.

5. Next steps

Activity	Outcome
Planning Commission Meeting of January 12 & 26, 2023	Review and forward the Green Infrastructure Working Group's Report for Council's consideration and a joint work session.
Joint Council and Commission work session [Date TBD].	Review and discuss the report, its recommendations, and public comments. Finalize the Report based on City Council recommendations.
Form Steering Committee	With support from the Transition Group, form a Steering Committee, draft a governance structure, develop a shared agenda and initial priorities, and explore funding possibilities.
Identify potential grant sources and seek funding.	Identify funding sources for projects and a part-time position. (Note that the CI model can begin w/o funds for the coordinator).
Launch!!!!!!!	Let the CI model and green infrastructure initiatives begin!

6. We need a name!

This initiative will need a name that conveys its mission and activities.

7. Motion

The Planning Commission will pass a motion when forwarding the Report to the City Council; below is the suggested text for a motion.

To achieve the goal, objectives, and strategies established in the Green Infrastructure Chapter of the 2040 Lexington Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission endorses the Green Infrastructure Working Group Report, *Getting Greener in Lexington – Moving the Conversation Forward*. The Commission concurs with the Report's proposal to consider the Collective Impact Model approach, and we encourage the city staff to review the Report to identify opportunities to integrate green infrastructure initiatives into ongoing work plans.

Annex 1-October 27, 2022 Minutes on the Green Infrastructure Report discussion.

A. Green Infrastructure Working Group Final Report

1) Introductory Remarks from Planning Commission Liaison –

Commissioner Driscoll reminded the Commission that the Green Infrastructure Working Group (Working Group) was charged with recommending how the City can achieve the goals, objectives and strategies in the Green Infrastructure chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and said the Report represents the recommendations, suggestions and collective wisdom of an engaged and thoughtful group that knows Lexington well. He suggested the goal for this meeting was to familiarize the Planning Commission with the Report and the recommended Collective Impact model approach to implementation.

He explained that the Working Group organized itself around the six initiatives that are a focus of the Report and learned from one another what various local organizations are already doing – pointing out the multi-disciplinary nature of green infrastructure. He offered that the initiatives were synthesized from the strategies in the Green Infrastructure chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and form the basis of an integrated approach. He noted the Report also provides potential partners; a suggested model for project implementation and potential funding sources. He emphasized that the Report is not a statutory document, but should be used as a road map to continue the conversation and to develop a strategy for implementation using the varied resources available within the City.

Commissioner Driscoll explained that the Collective Impact model is a means of bringing together and harnessing the efforts of existing organizations rather than creating a new institution. He noted it is becoming the preferred adaptive management technique for addressing complex sustainability challenges, is favored by funders, and is a model already used by other local groups. The Working Group has recommended the model as the most economical way to accomplish the strategies in the Comprehensive Plan as it provides flexibility with a low budget start up. He asked that the Planning Commission explore and validate the model as a viable approach, and participate in and support the development of the model as a means of accomplishing many of the Green Infrastructure initiatives. He reported the next steps would be to finalize the Report after discussion with the Commission, presenting the Report to City Council, developing consensus about who would act as the backbone of the organization(s), supporting that person in communicating with interested parties, and supporting them in seeking funding.

Commissioner Tuchler expressed enthusiasm for the report and gratitude for the work involved and asked how the Commission could see that it becomes an action item. A. Glaeser noted that the Commission could make a recommendation endorsing the plan, but implementation would be up to City Council. J. Driscoll emphasized that the priority for the Planning Commission should be the validation of the Collective Impact model as an implementation tool, rather than suggesting actionable individual projects.

Before opening the hearing to public comment, Chair Shester, on behalf of the Planning Commission, thanked the members of the Green Infrastructure Group for their diligent work over the past year and the impressive results.

2) Public Comment –

Holly Ostby, 16 Edmondson Ave – stated she is a member of the Working Group and works for the hospital where she leads a coalition that uses the Collective Impact model. She suggested the model would allow the City to coordinate with other local organizations to better prioritize and to best utilize resources. She said the model is similar to a regular coalition with the difference that with Collective Impact there is a framework. The collective approach brings more resources to bear with greater impact, but in order for it to work there must be a backbone entity and a point person to stay in touch with all parties and facilitate communication. She suggested the model could involve one, over-arching “Green Infrastructure” group with various committees for specific topics. She said she envisioned the point person as acting as extra staff for the Planning Director to keep the City abreast of projects in the area and inform the projects the City decides to allocate resources to. She stressed that the point person need not be a City employee and could perhaps be housed in a local non-profit serving as the backbone entity. L. Straughan remarked that she thought that was a realistic model and encouraged an approach that was not City led but included a City staff or Council liaison.

Charles Aligood, 506 Cavalry Rd. – expressed support and approval of the Report and extolled the Working Group’s efforts in developing it and in influencing the

Comprehensive Plan and Catalyst Projects. He recognized the work of Commissioner Driscoll as well as that of former Planning Commission Chair, Jamie Goodin, and praised the entire group’s benefit to the City. He agreed that a liaison should be identified and pledged to lend his support here and in City Council.

Arthur Bartenstein, 614 Stonewall St. – remarked that Lexington is appreciated for its historic character and that he sees green infrastructure as not only relevant to recreation, the environment, and health, but also to Lexington’s historic identity. He noted the strong, local preservation community and suggested they would be an interested party. He observed that many cities have a dedicated Parks Department and said it was a concern of his that Lexington has no staff who is specifically concerned with the City’s open spaces

Lee Merrill, 2 S. Randolph St. – stated that, as a member of the Working Group, he was very encouraged by the Commissioners supportive reaction to the report. He voiced support for the Collective Impact model as a means of implementation and indicated there was potential for big impacts within the next several years. He remarked on the community’s wealth of resources and argued a backbone entity would be necessary to make this work.

Responding to questions from various Commissioners about practical organization and procedure, Ms. Ostby recommended the adoption of loose bylaws or a general agreement among the partners, but noted bylaws are not necessary. She indicated the goal should be on building in and maintaining enough flexibility to be able to shift and adapt depending on what City Council and other community partners are willing to focus on at any given time. She added the coalition partners would decide and agree together on a shared metric to measure progress and provided a brief explanation of how her coalition functions while stressing that other Collective Impact coalitions function differently.

Elise Sheffield, 1 South River Rd. – explained she, through her affiliation with Boxerwood, is part of a Collective Impact model, the Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable, and offered a description of how it functions as a way of assisting the Commissioners in understanding how this type of model works. She encouraged the Commissioners to think of the model as a Venn diagram and explained that Boxerwood, in its work with schools and waste reduction, found that it and other local organizations also working on waste reduction were stepping on each other's toes. Using the Collective Impact model, with Boxerwood as the backbone entity and Ms. Sheffield as the facilitator, they were able to organize their efforts simply by disseminating information among the coalition members. She said it allows the members to work on a common interest with each member bringing their own strengths to the table, and she has found having the various entities in communication has created a synergy in which new opportunities become apparent.

- 3) Commission Discussion – Chair Shester suggested the Commission discuss next steps, implementation and how to move the Report forward. M. Tuchler requested that emphasis be placed on moving the report on effectively so that it is well used and referenced in the future. L. Straughan agreed and said she would encourage the idea of an outside entity acting as the backbone entity and housing the coordinator. She suggested the details be better fleshed out before being presented to City Council so as to be better received and more quickly acted upon. Following additional discussion of how and when to make a recommendation to City Council, J. Driscoll suggested the Green Infrastructure Group would tighten up the implementation priorities, provide potential funding sources and identify outside organizations to act as the backbone entity. It was determined that the Commission would consider the Working Group's more specific practical language at its December 8th meeting. There appeared to be a general understanding that the Commission would make its formal recommendation at its joint meeting with City Council to be scheduled in early 2023.

Responding to a question from L. Straughan about an item that came to her attention with the recognition of the City's Arbor Day, Betty Besal of the Tree Board provided a brief explanation of an effort to expand protection of private trees by adding the designations *memorial heritage specimen* and *street trees* to the Tree Ordinance.

Green Infrastructure Working Group

Getting Greener in Lexington – Moving the Conversation Forward

Making it easier to walk or ride your bike to your friend's house, the library, or the store; plant a tree; or walk along a shaded sidewalk or path.

January 20, 2023

Protect, preserve, and promote Lexington's natural ecosystems and green infrastructure as a cornerstone of sustainable development and social, environmental, and economic well-being.

-- Lexington 2020 Comprehensive Plan

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Part I – Executive Summary and Introduction

Executive Summary

The [2040 Lexington Comprehensive Plan](#) adopted by Planning Commission and City Council in 2020 was well received; the proof of its value is how City Council, City Administration, various commissions, community partners, and the public use the Plan. With the Plan's adoption, City Council and Planning Commission introduced an innovation in planning practice by nominating catalyst projects that begin implementing different aspects of the Plan. **One such catalyzing project was reconvening the Green Infrastructure Working Group. Its new charge was to recommend to Council and Planning Commission how Lexington can achieve the goal, objectives and strategies established in the Green Infrastructure Chapter.**

In addition to laying out green goals, the Green Infrastructure Chapter highlighted the value of partnerships among residents, businesses, local nonprofit organizations, major institutions, agencies, and City Hall to create a greener, more sustainable Lexington. Past City Council initiatives demonstrate how City Council and Lexington residents value our natural resources and open spaces. Examples include funding the City Arborist, the Tree Board, the Tree Canopy study, the Woods Creek and Trail restoration, stormwater retention projects, and recycling programs. The Lexington News-Gazette editorial of December 14, 2022 highlighted these past accomplishments as examples of what can happen to create a greener, more sustainable Lexington (see Annex 8)

There are other examples of how the Lexington community and the Council have come together to address both opportunities and challenges facing our City. For example, in 1966, the Historic Lexington Foundation was founded when many of Lexington's buildings were threatened with demolition by neglect, and in 2013 Main Street Lexington was established as a volunteer committee to create a prosperous and welcoming downtown. Since their founding, both organizations have significantly contributed to Lexington, raised external financial resources, and mobilized community support.

The working group reflected on the multi-disciplinary nature of advancing green infrastructure and identified numerous organizations, agencies, and institutions already engaged in these beneficial initiatives. A stroll down Main Street during the Rockbridge Community Festival illustrates the contributions of many organizations that make Lexington an engaged community. The City can harness this resource to advance green infrastructure.

We recommend using the Collective Impact (CI) model (described later in this Report, p. 28) to leverage a public/private partnership network for further advancing the green infrastructure initiatives for the City of Lexington. This collaborative approach is becoming the preferred model among funders, and three local organizations/coalitions have successfully adopted CI to achieve noteworthy outcomes: Boxerwood, Live Healthy Rockbridge, and Rockbridge Outdoors.

The Report organizes the suggested strategies in the Green Infrastructure Chapter around six initiatives that form the basis of an integrated approach, much of which can be advanced by a well-coordinated community effort. Tapping the expertise of our major institutions, community partners, and talented individuals can significantly move these initiatives forward for all Lexington neighborhoods and residents.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Health and Recreation ✓ Urban Green Space ✓ Waterways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bicycle-Pedestrian Network ✓ Land Use Development ✓ Climate Change, Resilience, and Sustainability
--	---

What is Green Infrastructure?

The Comprehensive Plan includes a description of Green Infrastructure that addresses different concerns and opportunities within the natural and built environment. These include urban open space, the natural environment, natural corridors, and the places where the built and natural environment overlap. As noted in the Green Infrastructure chapter:

- Green infrastructure includes natural and nature-based systems and corridors that sustain clean air, water, wildlife, and biodiversity while enriching the quality of life for communities and residents.
- Green infrastructure includes planned and unplanned networks of natural areas and open spaces at the regional scale, including parks, nature reserves, river corridors, trails, forests, and wetlands.
- At the local scale, green infrastructure can be parks and open spaces associated with schools, universities, major institutions, cemeteries, rain gardens, bioswales, green walls and roofs, and tree canopy.

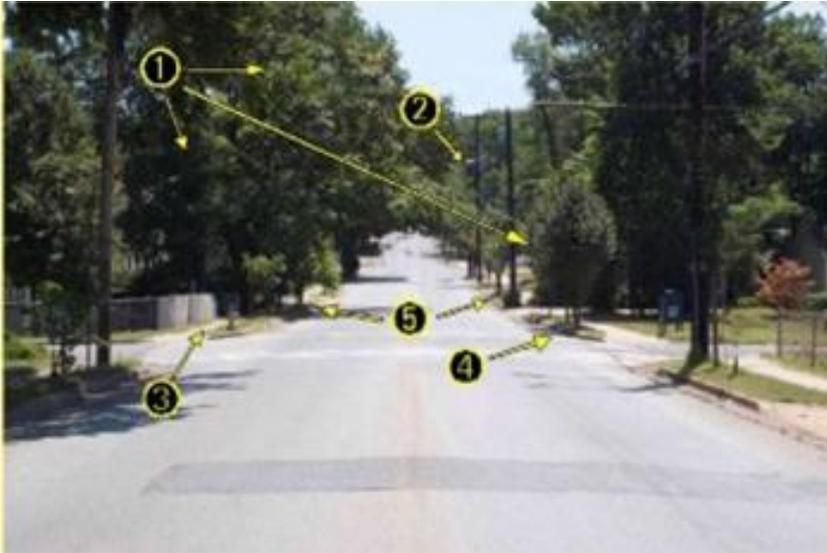
Co-Benefits

Figure 1, the Greening of Decatur Street, gives a vivid example of **the co-benefits of green infrastructure**: the tree canopy provides shade, sidewalks promote wellness, walking, and accessibility; bike lanes promote safety and encourage ridership, stormwater management using bioretention filters pollutants, curb bump-outs slow traffic, and L.E.D lights reduce energy consumption. Other examples of co-benefits are the Maury River and the parallel Chessie Trail; we benefit from access to nature, and wildlife benefits from a protected green corridor that preserves biodiversity.

Report Highlights

- *Health and Recreation.* The co-benefits of green infrastructure and health and recreation are numerous and highlighted in the Report, as well as ensuring equity in access to open spaces, parks, tree canopy, safe pedestrian and bicycle routes, and shopping and services.
- *Waterways.* To maintain and improve the quality of our waterways, we can review city codes and development standards that impact water quality and implement stormwater best practices that filter pollutants before they enter our waterways.
- *Urban green spaces.* An updated Urban Tree Canopy report will direct tree plantings to neighborhoods that need shade and to green corridors where biking and walking are encouraged.
- *Bicycle-Pedestrian Network.* We are fortunate to have a Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan whose implementation can be expedited by a three-year work plan with an initial focus on upgrading crosswalks and ensuring a safe walking and riding environment for children and residents with disabilities around schools and frequently visited destinations.
- *Land-Use.* Our land use practices can further support biodiversity and environmentally sensitive site design by reviewing our codes and joining other cities to promote monarch butterflies and bees.
- *Sustainability.* We have two major educational institutions and two community-based nonprofits actively engaged in sustainability initiatives. Tapping their expertise can move Lexington forward to improve our resilience.

Figure 1—The Greening of Decatur Street

Before	After
	
<p>1. Tree Canopy. Non-native and low-growth trees reduce habitat and contribute to the urban heat island effect.</p>	<p>1. Tree Canopy. Native large canopy trees increase habitat, clean air, and cool street, sidewalks, and homes.</p>
<p>2. Street Lighting. Sodium and mercury vapor streetlights are inefficient; lights above the trees result in less light reaching the sidewalk.</p>	<p>2. Street Lighting. L.E.D streetlights are extremely efficient and closer to the street to enhance public safety.</p>
<p>3. Walkability and Accessibility. Broken and narrow sidewalks limit access for disabled persons and strollers.</p>	<p>3. Walkability and Accessibility. ADA-compliant sidewalks (36 inches wide) promote wellness, walking, and community.</p>
<p>4. Bike Access. The wide street promotes speeding, making it less safe for bikes and pedestrians. In addition, the lack of dedicated bike lanes discourages bike use.</p>	<p>4. Bike Access. Clearly marked bike lanes promote safety and are an alternative to cars.</p>
<p>5. Storm Water. The storm water drains debris and pollutants directly into local rivers.</p>	<p>5. Storm Water. Bioretention gardens and tree boxes filter pollutants and debris.</p>
<p>6. Traffic. No bump out</p>	<p>6. Traffic. The bump out produces a 'wiggle' in the street, slowing traffic.</p>

Source: [Greening of Decatur Street](#), Edmonston, Maryland, population 1617 (2020 census)

Introduction

Scope

The Green Infrastructure Working Group is organized through the Planning Commission as a catalyst project under the Comprehensive Plan. The scope of the Group's work was two-fold:

- Provide advice and practical recommendations during the development by consultants of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan under the broader aim of enhancing connectivity.
- Review the Green Infrastructure Chapter and recommend to City Council, Staff, and Planning Commission how the strategies in the Chapter can be implemented over time by working with local public/private/nonprofit organizations.

Membership

The Green Infrastructure Working Group was initially formed in 2019 to advise the Planning Commission while drafting the Comprehensive Plan. In 2021, Planning Commission reconvened the working group with former and new members that include:

Sam Allen - Resident, **Arthur Bartenstein** - ABL Landscape Architecture, **Betty Besal** - Tree Board, **Pat Bradley** - Planning Commission, **Dale Brown** - VMI (retired), **John Driscoll** - Planning Commission, **Hugh Latimer** - W&L, **Lee Merrill** - RACC, **Jess Reid** - Lexington Running Store, **Holly Ostby** - Carilion Clinic, **Elise Sheffield** - Boxerwood, **Alexia Smith** - Friends of Brushy Hills, **Barbara Walsh** - RACC, **Dave Walsh** - Red Newt Bike Shop, **Chris Wise** - Friends of the Chessie Trail. The City is fortunate to have such depth and breadth of expertise and interest.

Process

The Group held ten Zoom meetings from October 2021 to December 2022. Two of these meetings focused on the Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan to provide feedback to the consultants, Michael Baker International. The remainder of the meetings reviewed the different aspects of the Green Infrastructure Chapter, including its goals and strategies. We also benefited from presentations by members of the Working Group. Annex 1 includes a listing of the meetings and presentations.

On October 27, 2022, the Planning Commission reviewed a Draft Report, voiced their support for the recommendations, and requested that the Working Group provide additional information on the next steps, implementation, and how to move the Report forward. As a result, the Working Group prepared a Briefing Note outlining seven items: priorities; the Collective Impact (CI) Model including potential partners; the formation of a transition group; funding; next steps; a name for the initiative; and a suggested motion. At their January 12, 2023 meeting, Commission members concurred with these recommendations and proposed forwarding the Report and the Briefing Note to Council after a final review at the next Planning Commission meeting on January 26, 2023.

"Our parks, our creeks, and all those connections between them are equal in value and services to the roads that carry us to various places."

Green Infrastructure Working Group



Green Time on the Chessie Trail—The Chessie Trail Marathon

"Green Time" promotes physical activity and makes Lexington a more attractive City to work, study, and live by connecting the population to the natural world and each other. Green time is contingent upon green infrastructure for destinations and corridors for play and exercise, reducing stress and improving mood, encouraging social interaction and community building, and fostering an appreciation of nature.

(Lexington Comprehensive Plan 2040)

Part 2- Initiatives

The Green Infrastructure chapter describes the ecosystem of a healthy and vibrant community, with the six initiatives in the Report reflecting Lexington's places, climate, and topography. For each initiative, the Report highlights its value and provides a description, notes the relevant strategies within the Green Infrastructure Chapter, and suggests recommendations on implementation. Potential partners, many of whom are already engaged in these initiatives, are suggested or noted. For example, Live Healthy Rockbridge, a collective impact coalition, actively engages with health and recreation-related initiatives. Some initiatives, such as the Bicycle-Pedestrian Network, are well advanced in planning, with the focus now shifting to implementation. Finally, in selected initiatives, the working Group included an implementation matrix. Educational resources used in drafting the Report are listed in Annex 6.

- **Health and Recreation**
- **Urban Green Space**
- **Waterways**
- **Bicycle-Pedestrian Network**
- **Land Use Development**
- **Climate Change, Resilience, and Sustainability**

The Timeframes noted throughout the document are from the Comprehensive Plan:

- **The Short-term** (1-5 years) can be completed within five years of the Plan's adoption;
- **The Long-term** (5+ years) may be initiated within five years but will be completed beyond the first five years of the Plan's adoption; and
- **Ongoing actions** which will continue for the life of the Plan.

While the Comprehensive Plan is a statutory document required by Virginia, this Green Infrastructure Report is non-statutory. Instead, it's a roadmap to implement the Comprehensive Plan's Green Infrastructure and Natural Resources chapter using resources within the city administration, community organizations, major institutions, and Lexington's residents and businesses. The recommendations and suggested actions range from low-hanging fruit to longer-term projects that different interested parties can undertake.

Health and Recreation

Value and Description

Increasingly, cities and towns are realizing the health benefits of green infrastructure investments. These investments include practical measures such as street trees and increasing urban forest coverage to improve air and water quality, reduce heat island effects, and support walkable communities. A healthy population is the foundation of a community's economic vitality, civic engagement, and social fabric. Additionally, studies demonstrate how lower-income communities do not have the same access to parks, trees, and garden areas as their more affluent neighbors. Lastly, research shows the connection between access to nature and mental health benefits.

The 2021 [Rockbridge Area Community Health Assessment](#), developed over a year-long process, provides an in-depth look at the area's health and resulted in a Community-wide Strategic Plan supported through the activities of the Live Healthy Rockbridge coalition. Numerous topics emerge from the coalitions' assessment and activities that closely link to the Green Infrastructure Chapter. This includes connectivity and ensuring access from neighborhoods to destinations such as health care services, grocery stores, bus stops, and recreation sites. Ensuring equity in access underpins the approach. The following summarizes key points from the health assessment and the links to green infrastructure.

Health Behaviors - In a city as small as Lexington, how can we make it easier for residents to choose healthy options such as walking and biking to engage in everyday activities like going to work, accessing health care, grocery shopping, visiting the library, or going to city hall.

Socioeconomic factors - We must make sure the bike/pedestrian improvements address connectivity and improve infrastructure quality in and around lower-income neighborhoods. For many lower-income households, access to transportation is seriously limited, so walking or biking are often the only means of accessing essential services like health care or groceries.

COVID-19 - While many of the restrictions regarding the pandemic have eased, the fact remains that Covid is still here. Anything we can do to promote outdoor activities and provide safe places for people to congregate outdoors helps mitigate the impacts of Covid. This means ensuring that we have outdoor spaces that are consistently accessible to the most vulnerable in our community.

Mental health concerns are consistently identified as a top need in the community since the early community health assessments, and the 2021 assessment are no different. Studies have shown how outdoor activity helps ease stress and improve overall mental health.

***"Anything we can do to make it easier/more convenient to choose the healthy option is worth doing."
--Green Infrastructure Working Group***

Regarding recreational facilities, Lexington owns and operates a swimming pool, two City school athletic fields, and seven park facilities: three large parks, three neighborhood parks, and an athletic field complex (see map in Annex 4). The Comprehensive Plan also identifies two projects to improve trail connectivity and river access – the Brushy Hills Connector Trail and the Chessie Nature Trail expansions. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan notes the importance of continued investments to ensure ample access to parks, recreation facilities, and trails. These investments should include ADA improvements to green spaces and facilities to support the City's aging and disabled populations.

Comprehensive Plan

While numerous strategies in the Comprehensive Plan intersect with Health and Recreation, five focus on the relationship between health and access to services and green infrastructure.

- In the Transportation Chapter--TR 4.1 *Ensure fairness, equity, and community engagement in the transportation planning process and its nexus with housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.*
- In the Community Facilities Chapter--CF 5.9 *Work with the health system and other health providers to implement the Rockbridge Area Community Health Assessment, where possible.*
- In the Green Infrastructure Chapter-- GI 5.1 – *Identify and collaborate with local organizations to promote the development and use of green infrastructure sites, linkages, and waterways within the City and the larger region, including sports organizations, the Rockbridge Area Outdoor Partnership, Carilion Rockbridge Community Hospital and retail businesses selling outdoor equipment.*
- In the Green Infrastructure Chapter-- GI 1.4 – *Plan for access to healthy, affordable, locally-grown goods for all neighborhoods by supporting sustainable food initiatives, such as urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and composting.*

Recommendations

- ✓ **Work with Live Healthy Rockbridge** to coordinate planned improvements with programming provided by local organizations.
- ✓ Prioritize infrastructure improvements related to walking and biking to **improve connectivity** between low-income neighborhoods, essential services such as healthcare, groceries (including the Lexington Farmers' Market), and social/support service organizations.
- ✓ Improve **ADA compliance for existing sidewalks** and identify trail sections that can be made **accessible**, such as portions of Woods Creek.
- ✓ Continue to maintain **improvements to local parks** made during 2020 and 2021 (more seating/tables) to facilitate and encourage outdoor socializing. Introduce picnic tables that are wheelchair friendly.

Urban Green Space

Value and Description

Urban green spaces offer both significant environmental and quality of life benefits. Studies have shown that a broad array of health benefits are associated with the availability of urban green space and physical activity. For example, greenways such as the Chessie Trail and Woods Creek offer all ages greater opportunities for active biking or walking for commutes, exercise, and errands. A significant proportion of vigorous physical activity in early childhood also takes place in urban parks and playgrounds. In addition, it is well documented that outdoor activity helps ease stress and improve overall mental health. Finally, outdoor civic spaces promote social interactions, a sense of belonging, cultural identity, and personal connection to our community.

Well-located and well-managed urban green spaces within the City increase property values and attract homebuyers and new residents. Cities and towns also recognize the importance of public spaces in building the local economy by providing places that combine socializing, working, and learning. Lexington's Courtyard Square and installing the picnic tables and canopy next to the library offer local examples. In addition, Lexington's link to regional green areas and trails, such as the Chessie Trail, Brushy Hills, and other trails, bring additional economic benefits through increased tourism.

Urban green space broadly includes publicly accessible parks, recreational fields, walking trails, and the tree canopy throughout the City. Examples in Lexington include Hopkins Green, Jordans Point Park, the Woods Creek Trail, and Brewbaker Field, among others. In addition, privately owned properties' landscape elements also significantly contribute to the community's green infrastructure fabric. While the public cannot access private property, owners have substantial opportunities to contribute to the health of Lexington's green infrastructure resources.

Green Infrastructure Chapter

Given the value of urban green space within Lexington, how can we increase, improve, and protect it for the future? Five strategies within the Green Infrastructure Chapter address Urban Green Space:

- *GI 1.1 Explore opportunities to improve or add public access sites and linkages and increase public access to waterways.*
- *GI 1.3 Undertake a city-wide green infrastructure assessment and develop a plan to create a continuous publicly accessible green infrastructure network that connects neighborhoods, destinations within the City, waterways, and regional assets.*
- *GI 3.2 Grow and maintain the City's tree canopy coverage through the existing tree planting program and other grants as may be available.*
- *GI 3.1 Develop Jordan's Point Park in accordance with the 2020 Park Master Plan.*
- *GI 3.3 Continue strengthening zoning and development regulations that address landscaping, tree preservation, and native plants. Consider incentives to promote tree planting and preservation beyond minimum requirements.*

Recommendations

The following recommendations are actions that will ensure that future Lexington citizens continue to have access to quality urban green spaces.

Trees

- ✓ Continue to **monitor the urban tree canopy** (UTC) and set goals and deadlines to increase UTC with each subsequent study.
- ✓ Extend **protection to private trees** by adding the designations of "memorial," "heritage," "specimen," and "street trees" to the Tree Ordinance.
- ✓ Update the City's Comprehensive **Tree Management Plan**.
- ✓ Focus tree planting in "**green corridors**" where biking and walking are encouraged.
- ✓ Focus tree planting in **neighborhoods with low canopy coverage**.
- ✓ Favor use of **native species for city plantings** wherever feasible.

Greenspace

- ✓ Develop a map of public, private, and institutional greenspace, and establish connecting biking and pedestrian corridors among them.
- ✓ Establish **use classifications for greenspaces** to allow different planting, maintenance, and mowing protocols.
- ✓ Establish **permanent protection and public access for existing parks and trails**, particularly in institutional overlay areas like college campuses.
- ✓ Establish **permanent protection for the Brushy Hills Preserve** in recognition of its sizeable value for "green time," habitat conservation, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services.
- ✓ Maximize **community value at Jordans Point Park** by increasing riverside access for fishing, swimming, boating, and other active and passive recreational uses.
- ✓ Work with DEQ, Virginia Department of Forestry, and other agencies to **stabilize streambanks and increase tree canopy at Jordans Point**.

Foundational Framework

- ✓ Foster "Friends of _____" and other groups to **encourage citizen involvement** in green infrastructure protection and care.
- ✓ Review existing City codes to ensure adequate **promotion and protection of trees and green space**.
- ✓ Encourage communication and **synergy among various City boards and commissions** (e.g., Tree Board, Architectural Review Board, Cemetery Advisory Board, Planning Commission) to ensure the establishment and protection of green infrastructure.

Urban Green Space Matrix - Key to Symbols					
City Council	CC	Master Gardeners	MG	Rockbridge County	RC
City Administration	CA	Tree Board	TB	Architectural Review Board	ARB
Public Works	PW	RACC (Land use Committee)	RACC	Cemetery Advisory Board	CAB
Planning Commission	PC	Friends of Brushy Hills	BH		

Urban Green Space Matrix		
	Potential Partners	Timeframe
GI 1.1 Explore opportunities to improve or add public access sites and linkages and increase public access to waterways.		
Increase River access for fishing, swimming, and boating at Jordans Point Park	CA, PC, CC, PW	ongoing
GI 1.3 Undertake a city-wide green infrastructure assessment and develop a plan to create a continuous publicly accessible green infrastructure network that connects neighborhoods, destinations within the City, waterways, and regional assets		
Develop a map of public, private, and institutional greenspaces and establish connecting bike and pedestrian corridors among them.	CA., PC, CC, TB, RACC	long
Focus tree planting in "green corridors" where biking and walking are encouraged.	CA, PC, CC, TB, RACC	long
Focus on tree planting in neighborhoods that have low canopy coverage.	CA, PC, CC, TB, RACC, PW	long
Establish use classifications for greenspaces to allow different planting, maintenance, and mowing protocols.	CA, PC, CC, TB, RACC, PW	long
Establish permanent protection and public access for existing parks and trails, particularly in institutional overlay areas like our college campuses.	CA, PA, CC, TB, RACC	long

Urban Green Space Matrix		
	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Establish permanent protection for the Brushy Hills Preserve, recognizing its sizable value for green time, habitat conservation, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services.	CC, PC, CC, BH., RACC, RC	long
GI 3.1 Develop Jordan's Point Park following the 2020 Master Plan.		
- Work with the DEQ and other agencies to stabilize streambanks - Increase tree canopy at Jordans Point Park.	DEQ, CA, PC, CC, TB, RACC, PW	medium
GI 3.2 Grow and maintain the City's tree canopy coverage through the existing tree planting program and other grants as may be available.		
Continue to monitor the urban tree canopy (UTC) and set goals and deadlines to increase UTC with each subsequent study.	TB, PC, CC, PW	ongoing
Update the City's Comprehensive Tree Management Plan.	TB, PC, CC, PW	short
Use native species for City plantings wherever possible.	TB, PW	long
GI 3.3 Continue strengthening zoning and development regulations that address landscaping, tree preservation, and native plants. Consider incentives to promote tree planting and preservation beyond minimum requirements.		
Extend protection to private trees by adding the designations "memorial," "heritage," "specimen," and "street trees" to the Tree Ordinance.	TB, PC, CC	short
Review City codes to ensure adequate promotion and protection of green infrastructure.	TB, CA, PC, CC	short
Encourage communication and synergy among various City Boards and Commissions (e.g., Tree Board, Architectural Review Board, Cemetery Advisory Board, Planning Commission) to ensure the establishment and protection of green infrastructure.	TB, ARB, CAB, PC	short
Foster "Friends of the ____" and other groups to encourage citizen involvement in green infrastructure protection and care.	CC, PC, CC, BH., RACC, RC	short

Waterways

Description and relevance



Elevation Study of Lexington showing waterways. Source: Arthur Bartenstein

Brushy Hills, located outside the city limits, were once a water source for Lexington and are protected by a 560-acre forest and watershed tract that is a hiking destination with 14 miles of trails. Moores Creek Dam, another historical source of city water (dating back to 1910), retains what is described as a 22-acre pristine lake of exceptionally clean water. According to DEQ investigations, water from Moores Creek still enters Woods Creek via pipeline, thus serving, especially in the summer, as a significant and valued "diluter" of urban creek pollutants. Moores Creek remains a potential emergency water source for the City if the old connection and water treatment requirements are addressed. Lexington also has smaller waterways, such as Sarah's Run, which feeds into Wood Creek, and Town Branch on the eastern side of Lexington. Unfortunately, Town Branch is barely visible after being covered over by development.

VA DEQ-instigated water quality studies undertaken in 2015/16 for Woods Creek recommended improvement measures, including locating pet waste containers and digesters along the trail. Previously, Lexington had obtained state grants for implementing stormwater best practices along Woods Creek. VMI's stormwater projects have focused on a combination of retention and removing contaminants from stormwater before it flows into Woods Creek and Town Branch. In addition, Lexington and Rockbridge are fortunate to have an active RACC Watershed Committee whose activities include water monitoring of local waterways.

Our natural waterways have influenced how Lexington developed since its founding and continue to be an essential part of our daily lives. We draw our drinking water from the Maury and enjoy walking along its riverbank on the Chessie Trail and kayaking, fishing, and swimming in its waters. The [Maury River](#) portion that borders Lexington begins around Jordan's Point and ends at Andy McThenia's property. At one end, city residents can access the Maury at Jordan's Point Park; at the other, the Uncas Trail leads to the river.

As of July 2022, the entire 42 miles length of the Maury, which begins and ends in Rockbridge County, is recognized as a [Virginia Scenic River](#).ⁱ The Virginia Scenic Rivers program recognizes and provides a level of protectionⁱⁱ to rivers with significant scenic, historic, recreational, and natural values. The Maury also acts as an important green corridor for wildlife and is listed in good condition by the [EPA](#) 'How's My Waterway' website.

The Maury is a tributary of the James, and thus of the Chesapeake Bay, whose poor health is the focus of significant watershed concern and activity by well-resourced federal, state, and private entities.

Woods Creek, flowing along the west side of Lexington, offers daily enjoyment to adults and children who walk and run along a maintained path connecting city neighborhoods to the city center and Washington and Lee and Virginia Military Institute. Unfortunately, Woods Creek has a Virginia DEQ status of 'impaired recreation and aquatic life.'¹ The springs at

Green Infrastructure Chapter reference or strategy

- *GI 3.4 Promote the installation of stormwater best management practices such as bioswales, pervious surfaces, and rain gardens, including on City property and parking lots.*
- *GI 3.5 Enhance the protection of streams and natural wetlands by updating development standards and incentives to protect and restore buffer areas and discourage underground piping of streams.*
- *GI 3.6 Limit the extent of impervious surfaces that degrade water quality by considering reductions to minimum parking requirements and encouraging the use of pervious surfaces in development projects.*

Recommendations.

- ✓ Review **city codes and development standards that impact the water quality** of our natural streams and wetlands.
- ✓ Develop an integrated approach to **improve and maintain water quality along Woods Creek** among the City of Lexington, W&L and VMI.
- ✓ Engage the VMI academic community and cadets to **assess previous stormwater best management practices** by private land owners, developers, and the City of Lexington dating back to the 1980s; the research can inform future programs.
- ✓ Explore the potential for **the City of Lexington to adapt VMI stormwater management best practices**.
- ✓ Incorporate green infrastructure principles, including stormwater drainage best practices, **to improve retention and filtration possibilities as part of the VDOT bike path** and road improvements along North Main Street.
- ✓ Review and **secure potential grants to promote and protect water quality** via public and private programs.
 - ✓ The City of Lexington: Review grant funding opportunities for public projects eligible under the [Stormwater Local Assistance Fund](#) (SLAF). The program provides matching grants to local governments for best management practices (BMPs).
 - ✓ Private Residential landowners: Continue working with Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District on voluntary programs and grants for residential landowners to reduce bacteria from pet waste, nutrients from lawn fertilizers, and various stormwater run-off pollutants from impervious surfaces. Most of the practices are eligible for a 75% cost-share, and some provide a flat incentive payment up to the installation cost; see <http://vaswcd.org/vcap>.

The recommendations above and the Matrix below focus on three activities: (1) using best practices in stormwater management to reduce the flow of contaminants to streams and Maury River, (2) updating zoning and development standards, and (3) pursuing education programs.

Waterways Matrix – Key to Symbols					
City Council	CC	Master Gardeners	MG.	Rockbridge County	RC.
City Administration	CA	Tree Board	TB.	Architectural Review Board	ARB
Public Works	PW	RACC (Land use Committee)	RACC	Cemetery Advisory Board	CAB
Planning Commission	PC.	Friends of Brushy Hills	BH.	NB Soil & Water Conservation District	SWCD
Carilion	CAR	Boxerwood	BX		

Waterways - Matrix	Potential Partners	Timeframe
GI 3.4 Promote the installation of stormwater best practices such as bioswales, pervious surfaces and rain gardens, including on City property and parking lots.		
For public property, incorporate design/construction standards into City ordinances and identify potential funding under the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund.	CA, PC, CC	Short-term
Coordinate with private development to promote stormwater best practices and identify adaptable best practices from major institutions such as VMI and W&L.	CA, RACC	Ongoing
Partner with environmental design firms to promote measures that can be incorporated into smaller-scale developments.	CA,	Ongoing
Partner with Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District to facilitate access to voluntary programs and grants for residential landowners to reduce bacteria from pet waste, nutrients from lawn fertilizers, and new impervious surfaces.	SWCD, CA, MC, RACC, BX	Ongoing
Review city codes and development standards that impact the water quality of our natural streams, river, and wetlands and recommend priorities for code improvements.	PC, CC	Short-term
GI 3.5 Enhance the protection of streams and natural wetlands by updating the development standards and incentives to protect and restore buffer areas and discourage underground piping of streams.		
Identify and implement riparian mitigation efforts, including the removal of invasive plant species, reintroduction of native plant species, and stabilization and restoration of eroding creekbanks.	MC, TB, SWCD, BX	Ongoing
Implement stormwater management systems and procedures that meet or exceed State standards and regulations and involve on-site mitigation measures where possible.	CA, CC	Long-term

Waterways - Matrix	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Develop an integrated approach to improving and maintaining water quality along Woods Creek among the City of Lexington, Washington and Lee, and VMI.	CA, CC, SWCD, RACC	Long-term
GI 3.6 Limit the extent of impervious surfaces that degrade water quality by considering reductions to minimum parking requirements and encouraging the use of pervious surfaces in development projects.		
Evaluate existing parking requirements in each zoning category, including mixed-use developments- recommend reductions where feasible.	PC, CA, CC	Short-term
Determine a strategy to reward developers, builders, and property owners who install pervious paving systems in driveways, parking lots, and related areas.	PC, CA, CC	Short-term
Evaluate tax credits or, conversely, tax surcharges for impervious pavement.	CA, CC	Short-term



The Woods Creek Restoration Project (2002-2004) exemplifies how the City of Lexington, residents, community partners, Washington and Lee, and Virginia Military Institute can work together to improve Lexington's Green Infrastructure.

Bicycle-Pedestrian Network

Value and Description

In surveys undertaken during the Comprehensive Plan, pedestrian and bike infrastructure ranked among the top priorities for the community. The May 2022 [Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#), financed by VDOT, recommends bicycle and pedestrian routes that "*access desired destinations and increase the scope and pedestrian networks while working within the limited street width and available right-of-way found throughout Lexington.*" Elements of the recommended network include sidewalks, crosswalks, slow streets, bike lanes, sharrows, and shared-use paths. The Green Infrastructure Working Group met with the consultants and provided extensive written feedback on the initial draft shared with Planning Commission.

Within Lexington's Comprehensive Plan, there are numerous references to the importance of "building an interconnected and attractive transportation network that provides all residents with safe and efficient mobility choices --- including automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian travel" (p102). In addition, the Transportation and Green Infrastructure Chapters include the following strategies.

Transportation Chapter

- *TR 3.4 Create an interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to link neighborhoods to downtown, parks, and other historic and green infrastructure amenities. Target bicycle and pedestrian connection and corridor improvements along Neighborhood and Civic Corridors.*

Green Infrastructure Chapter

- *GI 1.3 Undertake a city-wide green infrastructure assessment and develop a plan to create a continuous publicly accessible green infrastructure network that connects neighborhoods, destinations within the City, waterways, and regional assets.*
- *GI 1.5 Encourage access to energy-efficient transportation options by supporting the siting of e-vehicle charging stations and facilities for bicycles and other micro-mobility devices.*

The Plan presents a proposed network map (see Figure 2) that picks up on long-considered circular and cross-connect networks. Given the street width and relatively flat topography, the Plan shows a spine along Main Street and an overall loop consisting of Woods Creek on the west and Taylor/Spotswood/Lewis streets on the east. In addition, the Plan highlights five priority projects and includes a prioritization matrix. The Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan is available on the City's website [here](#).

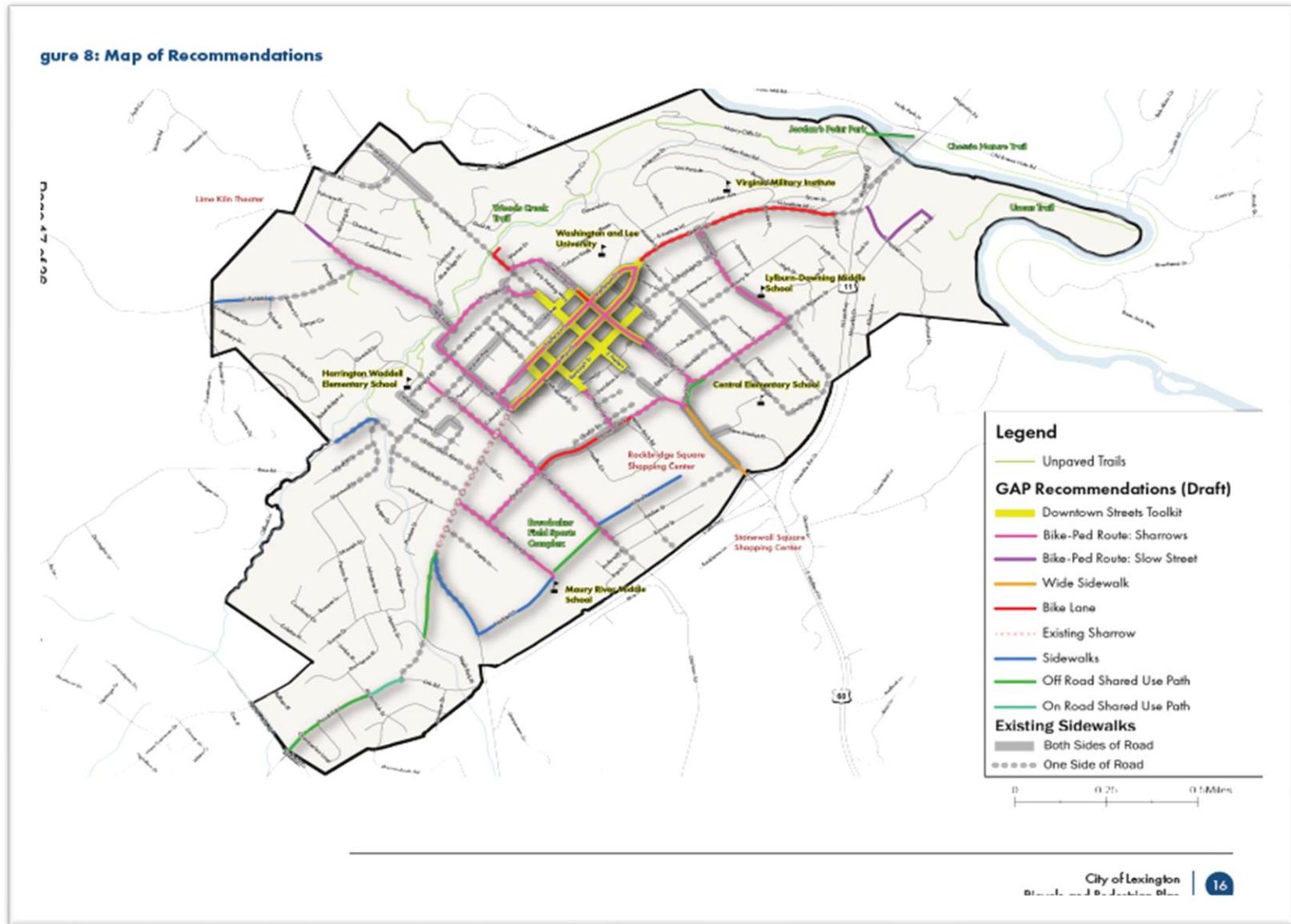


Figure 2. Map of Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network, 2022

Recommendations

Priorities

- ✓ Prioritize a **safe walking and riding environment for children and residents with disabilities** around and leading to schools and frequently visited destinations, including adding and upgrading crosswalks identified in the Plan.
- ✓ **Plant trees along the main spines/routes** while we wait for infrastructure funding. Work with the Tree Board to identify appropriate trees to provide shade on sidewalks, including high-priority pedestrian corridors.
- ✓ Begin planning for the proposed **connection to the Brewbaker Field Sports and swimming complex**.

Planning and Management

- ✓ **Develop a rolling three-year work plan and timeframe for implementing the Plan.** Review recommendations for the Plan annually, and distinguish among potential projects that require capital funds, are eligible for grants, and can be done through maintenance and operations funding and volunteer engagement. **Develop a stakeholder group** to advise staff and City Council on bicycle-pedestrian improvements.
- ✓ Develop and **adopt implementation metrics** among City of Lexington Staff and Departments regarding the implementation of the Plan, for example:
 - Improve X linear feet of sidewalks within three years and upgrade Y number of crosswalks annually.
 - Develop typology and design guidelines for a safe street in Lexington, particularly for 'slow streets' tied to street repaving, sidewalk improvements, tree planting, and other utility improvements. See the example from Edmondson, Md. (p.3).
- ✓ Consider a **U.S. Department of Transportation grant** to develop or update a comprehensive safety action plan.
- ✓ **Map bicycle and pedestrian routes**, including on W&L campus and VMI post, and make these maps available to the public.

GAPs

- ✓ Address Gaps in the Plan, including:
 - Lack of bicycle parking at key destinations.
 - Continued cooperation with Rockbridge County to **link City-County trails and bike networks**.
 - Planning for increasing future **use of personal electric vehicles**, from electric scooters to e-bikes to electric golf carts.
 - **Bike and pedestrian paths on Thornhill Rd.** from the intersection of South Main to route 251.
 - Review of options for a **safe crossing of the Route 11 by-pass** connecting the isolated McCorkle/Campbell neighborhoods to the LDM School/Richardson Park; see Annex 2 for proposed elevated and grade crossing locations. ⁱⁱⁱ

Land Use and Development

Value and Description

How and where we build can have intended and unintended impacts on the quality of our neighborhoods, downtown, and commercial areas. A priority outlined in [Evaluating and Conserving Green Infrastructure Across the Landscape: a Practitioners Guide](#) is to 'protect natural assets and minimize land disturbance while keeping the landscape connected.' We are fortunate in Lexington and Rockbridge County that we have connected natural landscapes that can be conserved for future generations. However, additional research is required to identify practical steps to integrate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions into our land-use policies and infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure Chapter

1. *GI 1.6 Support urban wildlife and biodiversity initiatives such as "[Monarch Butterfly City](#)" or "[Bee City](#)" designations and citizen-led efforts to install birdhouses and bat houses.*
2. *GI 3.3 Continue strengthening zoning and development regulations that address landscaping, tree preservation, and native plants. Consider incentives to promote tree planting and preservation beyond minimum requirements.*
3. *GI 4.1 Educate and encourage landowners to install green infrastructure best practices, plant native trees and vegetation, and reduce fertilizer and pesticide use.*

Recommendations

- ✓ Support urban wildlife and biodiversity initiatives, e.g., **apply for Monarch Butterfly City and Bee City status.**
- ✓ Review zoning and development regulations to **incorporate environmentally sensitive site designs.**
- ✓ Identify partners for scaling up **educational efforts on green infrastructure best practices.**
- ✓ Review recently passed Virginia legislation for the [opt-in program](#) that allows localities to draft a local ordinance requiring developers to **plant new or preserve existing trees when they build.**^{iv}
- ✓ Incorporate **green infrastructure elements into City GIS** to support Green Infrastructure conservation and restoration; see Annex 3.

Land Use and Development Matrix - Key to Symbols					
City Council	CC	Master Gardeners	MG	Rockbridge County & Lex Schools	RCLEX, Box
City Administration	CA	Tree Board	TB.	Architectural Review Board	ARB
Public Works	PW	RACC (Land use Committee)	RACC	Cemetery Advisory Board	CAB
Planning Commission	PC.	Friends of Brushy Hills	BH	NB Soil & Water Conservation District	SWCD
Carilion	CAR	Boxerwood	BX		

Land Use and Development Matrix	Potential Partners	Timeframe
GI 1.6 Support urban wildlife and biodiversity initiatives.		
Apply for Monarch Butterfly City and Bee City designations.	CA, MG	Short-term
Purchase and install informational signs to publicize the programs.	CA, MG	Short-term
Explore whether other, similar initiatives can be undertaken.	CA, MG, BX	Ongoing
GI 3.3 Continue strengthening zoning and development regulations that address landscaping, tree preservation, and native plants. Consider initiatives to promote tree planting and preservation beyond minimum requirements.		
Consider adding provisions for new development that specify minimum tree and landscape planting requirements per zoning classification.	CA, PC, CC,	Ongoing
Review zoning and development regulations to incorporate environmentally sensitive site designs.	CA, PC, CC	Ongoing
Incorporate green infrastructure elements into Lexington GIS system	CA	Ongoing
GI 4.1 Educate and encourage landowners to install green infrastructure best practices, plant trees and native vegetation, and reduce fertilizer and pesticide use.		
Coordinate with nurseries, garden centers, arborists, and other entities to help to publicize and educate the public about this initiative.	RACC, MG, BX	Ongoing
Coordinate with educational programs within area schools.	RCLEX, BX	Ongoing

Climate Change, Resilience, and Sustainability

Value and Description

Climate change is occurring and intensifying as a result of human activity. According to NASA, "multiple studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals show that 97% or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree: Climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities" (<https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>). Furthermore, a 2021 [EPA analysis](#) shows that the most severe harms from climate change fall disproportionately upon underserved communities who are least able to prepare for and recover from heat waves, poor air quality, flooding, and other impacts.

The impacts of climate change are becoming more local. For Lexington and Rockbridge County, this can mean rising temperatures, including an increase in the frequency of 90-degree plus days that stress residents, infrastructure, agriculture, and plants and animals. And we are experiencing more frequent extreme weather, from heavy rain and frequent flooding to extended drought periods.

Introducing an ecosystem approach to providing city services can help plan for more livable, healthy, and resilient cities. A 2015 study on the benefits of restoring ecosystem services in 25 urban areas concluded that investing in ecological infrastructure and rehabilitating ecosystems such as rivers, lakes, and woodlands are often economically advantageous, even based on the most traditional economic approaches. ^v

Currently, the City of Lexington and neighboring jurisdictions do not have a plan to systematically address climate-related issues, increase our resilience to potential climate-related impacts, or measure our progress toward eliminating local contributions to climate change. Washington and Lee University (W&L), Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Boxerwood Education Association (Boxerwood), and the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (Rockbridge Conservation or RACC) have led local efforts to increase resiliency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

- **W&L has expanded the activities of its Office of Sustainability and is on 'an emissions mission to be a carbon-neutral campus by 2050.'** The university recently agreed to purchase energy equivalent to 100% of campus electricity from an offsite solar farm. Previously, from 2010 to 2019, the campus reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 42% and saved over 8 million dollars in utility costs. In addition, the Sustainability Office recently initiated a Community Connections program to better align campus and community initiatives.
- **At VMI, seven buildings are either constructed or under development to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).** Additionally, after an energy audit, a new Post-wide building-automation system resulted in electrical use reduction of 9%, natural gas use remained the same despite increased square footage, and domestic water use was reduced by 6%. The Post also developed an extensive stormwater management program that includes above- and below-grade retention and reuse. The retention sites have reduced flooding and improved the quality of water released to Woods Creek and Town Branch.
- **Boxerwood, in cooperation with Lexington and the other two local school systems, provides a longstanding environmental education program for 2,000+ local students yearly, creating opportunities for students to become actively involved in sustainability initiatives and field-based conservation action.** This work includes working with school partners on school-based sustainability issues such as food waste, recycling, and habitat restoration. Boxerwood also facilitates the annual Backyard Composting Challenge with the City of

Lexington and Rockbridge County, increasing the number of composting households. In 2021 it also launched COREworks(Community Offsets for a Regenerative Economy). COREworks is a community-based voluntary carbon offset marketplace that funds local projects in Solar and Energy Efficiency, Tree Planting, Food Waste Diversion, and Regenerative Agriculture.

- **Rockbridge Conservation (RACC) members have monitored and improved the water quality of our streams; promoted land and wildlife conversation, regenerative agriculture, green schools, and planning for Green Infrastructure, Smarter Growth, and Low Impact Development;** sponsored two solar co-ops to help residents and businesses reduce energy consumption; acquired and managed trails; initiated community recycling and local foods programs; sponsored the annual community cleanup; and hosted numerous forums, seminars, and research initiatives to provide science-based information on community issues to residents and decision-makers since 1976. Additional ongoing initiatives related to climate change, resilience, and sustainability are co-sponsoring the Ready, Set, Solar residential and commercial solar program, facilitating solar for Habitat houses and E-vehicle education and recharging stations, running the community composting program in Lexington, encouraging the reduction of single-use plastics, researching landfill methane-emissions control, and actively contributing to Lexington's Green Infrastructure Plan.
- In January 2022, **Carilion Rockbridge Community Hospital was recognized by the EPA, earning "[ENERGY STAR certification](#) for superior energy performance.** Several initiatives, including capital investments in plant operations and preventative maintenance program for equipment, contributed to this recognition."

There are regional examples, often led by larger municipalities, where other City Councils have endorsed an Energy and Climate Action Plan (ECAP or CAP). For example, Charlottesville's current effort, [Charlottesville Acting on Climate Change](#), uses workshops, surveys, and cataloging of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions. In April 2022, Charlottesville City Council reviewed the [Preliminary Content for the Climate Action Plan](#) that will be the basis for a community town hall workshop. In September 2020, Blacksburg published a [Climate Action Plan](#) that focuses on mitigation and establishes a set of strategies to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions.

A possible scenario for our region is to develop a climate action plan for Rockbridge County and the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista. Tapping the expertise, student and faculty research, and possible resources of our four educational institutions (W&L, VMI, SUV, and MGCC), together with community partners such as Boxerwood and RACC, can offer an opportunity to develop a climate action plan matched to community needs.



Boxerwood Solar Collector funded through CORE works.



RACC GO Solar and Electric Vehicle public information event.

Some ideas on high-impact and easily achievable actions

Energy Efficiency/Clean Energy

- Transition traffic lights and streetlights to LED as part of upgrades & maintenance.
- Install programmable thermostats in city facilities.
- Transition to motion-triggered and LED lighting in city facilities.
- Phase in electric vehicles and equipment as equipment is replaced, or sooner if grants become available.
- Develop a policy for new public building construction or renovation to meet LEED/energy efficiency/LID/carbon neutral standards.
- Solarize schools and other public buildings as feasible.
- Install charging stations for EV

Carbon Sequestration/GHG Reductions

- Implement a shade tree planting program with a completion date to mitigate increasing temperatures in all neighborhoods and business districts.
- Implement all tree-related initiatives proposed in section in the Greenspace section (see p. 10)
- Identify carbon credit options for Brushy Hills.
- Support installation of methane controls at the Rockbridge Regional landfill.

Reduce Waste

- To advance the City's Zero Waste Resolution, adopt ordinances (e.g., plastic bag tax) and implement programs (e.g., expanded recycling, community-scale composting, and yard waste mulching, Caught Green Handed, state Styrofoam ban, etc.).

Green Infrastructure Chapter

The Green Infrastructure Chapter highlights two objectives related to climate change, resilience, and sustainability: (1) promote energy sustainability and environmental resilience; and (2) support partnerships that improve green infrastructure and protect natural resources.

Strategies:

- *GI 1.4: Plan for access to healthy, affordable, locally grown foods for all neighborhoods by supporting sustainable food initiatives such as urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and composting.*
- *GI 2.1: Encourage green building and green infrastructure in development proposals to increase property values and reduce infrastructure costs.*
- *GI 2.2: Improve the energy efficiency of City buildings and operations and assess the feasibility of installing solar panels on Waddell Elementary School.*
- *GI 4.2 Identify and collaborate with local organizations to educate landowners on installing solar panels.*
- *GI 5.3: Work with regional stakeholders to develop a comprehensive regional Energy and Climate Action Plan that identifies common issues, agreed-upon approaches and principles, joint action, and individual contributions by each partner locality and the major institutions of higher learning.*

Recommendations

Climate Plan & Actions

- ✓ Encourage Lexington Mayor and City Council to **join the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#)**. (Charlottesville, Roanoke, and Blacksburg are members.)
- ✓ Engage with W&L and VMI to assist Lexington in conducting a **baseline inventory of municipal energy use and costs**, including estimates of carbon footprint and greenhouse gases produced.
- ✓ Convene energy and climate action working group with representatives of the City (City Council, Planning Commission, Public Works), W&L, VMI, residents, businesses, Boxerwood, RACC, and others to identify possible **actions to reduce Lexington's carbon footprint and increase sustainability and resiliency**. Identify other key players to include and invite speakers from neighboring municipalities to learn about their approaches. Develop carbon reduction goals, strategies, and timelines.
- ✓ Promote a **regional climate change action plan** by partnering with Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, and educational institutions. Develop a regional vision of sustainability and adopt a joint plan of action complete with metrics and milestones.

Community Sustainability

- ✓ Partner with and support efforts of our nonprofit community to **promote energy sustainability and environmental resilience among Lexington households**, including current initiatives led by Boxerwood and RACC.
- ✓ Collaborate with the Threshold Commission and Habitat for Humanity to **identify opportunities for energy efficiency and solar improvements and retrofits for lower-income households**.
- ✓ Recognize the desirability and responsibility to **facilitate development of appropriately-sited solar panel power generation** on building rooftops in Lexington (as feasible) and devise promotion incentives.
- ✓ Continue to **promote waste reduction strategies**, including composting, with local partners and the regional landfill.

"Green infrastructure is the interconnected natural systems and ecological processes that provide clean water, healthy air quality, and natural habitat for humans and wildlife."

--Green Infrastructure Working Group

Part 3 Making it Happen

Who is involved in Green Infrastructure?

The Green Infrastructure Chapter emphasized the importance of engaging citizens in efforts to create a greener, more sustainable Lexington and supporting partnerships to protect natural resources. As noted in other sections of this Report, nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions are already contributing to the planning and implementation of green infrastructure initiatives. This last section of the Report suggests how we can engage, leverage, and align our community resources and initiatives with residents, businesses, city government, and nonprofits. Table 1 highlights the number of organizations and boards whose activities intersect with green infrastructure activities.

Table 1-Who is involved in Green Infrastructure?	
<p>Lexington City</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lexington City Council • City Administration • Planning Commission • Lexington Public Works • Tree Board • Architectural Review Board • Lexington Public Schools • Cemetery Advisory Board • Lexington City Public Schools 	<p>Rockbridge County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockbridge County Supervisors • County Administration • Rockbridge County Public Schools <p>Buena Vista</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Buena Vista
<p>Not-for-Profit Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boxerwood • Rockbridge Conservation (RACC) (Land use Committee) • Master Gardeners • Friends of Brushy Hills • Friends of the Chessie Trail • Main Street Lexington • Historic Lexington Foundation 	<p>Major Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carilion Rockbridge Community Hospital • Washington and Lee University • Virginia Military Institute • Sigma Nu
<p>NB Soil & Water Conservation District</p>	<p>Coalitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Healthy Rockbridge • Rockbridge Outdoors • Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids • Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable

What is the Collective Impact model?

Implementing a City-wide green infrastructure plan is challenging because it is a complex multi-disciplinary topic with various needs and implementation scales. To address ever-evolving complex environmental projects, the [Virginia Environmental Endowment](#) (VEE) recommends adopting a collaborative approach nationally articulated as the [Collective Impact](#) model. According to VEE, Collective Impact is becoming a preferred adaptive management technique for addressing complex sustainability challenges. The Collective Impact approach features multiple organizations contributing their expertise and resources to tackle a central problem or concern. The well-researched model has five core characteristics: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization (see Annex 5).

Local organizations in the area are already implementing the CI model for several community-wide concerns. Organizations and coalitions familiar with this model include Boxerwood (Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable), Carilion Clinic (Live Healthy Rockbridge), and Lexington & Rockbridge Area Tourism (Rockbridge Outdoors). To illustrate how the model works, descriptions of Live Health Rockbridge and Rockbridge Outdoors follow.

Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable. Boxerwood, in its work with schools and waste reduction, found that it and other local organizations also working on waste reduction were stepping on each other's toes. Using the Collective Impact model, with Boxerwood as the backbone entity and a staff member as a facilitator, were able to organize area waste reduction efforts simply by disseminating information among the coalition members. Members work on a common interest, with each member bringing their own strengths to the table. Regular communication creates a synergy in which new opportunities become apparent.

Live Healthy Rockbridge (LHR) is a coalition whose mission is *working together for community wellbeing*. The backbone organization for LHR is Carilion Clinic, which provides a full-time employee to coordinate meetings, maintain minutes, and provide leadership for the coalition. This Group helps identify the most pressing needs impacting the Rockbridge area's health and develops a community-wide strategic plan to address the identified needs. Three committees function as smaller groups within the coalition to focus on specific health and wellness issues. *Continuous communication through emails and regular meetings allows community partners to identify collaborative opportunities to ensure the most efficient use of the collective resources throughout the coalition.*

Rockbridge Outdoors has a slightly different framework. A part-time support person coordinates meetings and prepares minutes through a grant from the Central Shenandoah Planning District. Leadership is provided from within the members, with rotating officers. While the list of objectives the coalition would like to accomplish is long, they agree upon a small number of initiatives each year to focus their energies and resources. This framework also uses committees for smaller groups within the coalition to focus on specific issues. The committees regularly report to the entire coalition, to allow for regular communication and continued opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. Member organizations apply for grants, with other member

organizations *closely involved with particular projects serving as co-applicants*. The collaborative nature of these applications is looked upon favorably by local, state, and federal funders.

The above descriptions give examples of successful local use of the collective impact model, but they are not the only options for implementing it. Each CI coalition has its own culture and practices based on interests, needs, and personalities. The Collective Impact model provides a strong framework while allowing for this flexibility. The key takeaway is that these organizations find common ground in tackling a pressing issue whose solution is greater than any one organization on its own can achieve. In the CI model, organizations, including local governments and agencies, come together to mobilize their strengths synergistically for the benefit of the whole (in this case, the City of Lexington and its wellbeing).

This Report has many recommendations ranging from relatively small projects to more significant systemic changes requiring buy-in and support from local institutions, nonprofits, and neighboring municipalities to succeed. No one entity will be able to accomplish everything. The Collective Impact model offers small, under-resourced communities like ours a well-documented way forward for achieving the outcomes we need and desire. However, the model cannot advance without the support and collaboration of a key player: the City of Lexington itself.

The Working Group recommends that the City Council adopt a Collective Impact model for realizing a greater number of Green Infrastructure goals highlighted in this Report. Further, given competing demands for limited city resources and staff, we suggest that the City support a multi-year grant application with a City-selected local nonprofit organization able to hire or assign a CI coordinator for this role.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies

The goal and strategies in the Comprehensive Plan focus on plans, policies, and programs that support environmental stewardship, eco-friendly development, and equitable access to green infrastructure. Recognizing that ecological impacts extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries, extensive cooperation and coordination are encouraged to ensure that Lexington continues its longstanding stewardship of the environment.

- *GI 4.3 Continue to engage the support of local students, volunteers, and nonprofit organizations to help the City achieve its environmental and green infrastructure goals.*
- *GI 5.1 Identify and collaborate with local organizations to promote the development and use of green infrastructure sites, linkages, and waterways within the City and the larger region, including sports organizations. The Rockbridge Area Outdoor Partnership [now Rockbridge Outdoors], Carilion Hospital, and retail businesses selling outdoor equipment.*
- *GI 5.2 Collaborate with regional organizations, such as the Central Shenandoah Planning District Committee and the Natural Bridge Soil & Water Conservation District, to seek funding and resources to implement green infrastructure best management practices to improve local and regional water quality.*
- *GI 5.3 Work with regional stakeholders to develop a comprehensive regional Energy and Climate Action Plan that identifies common issues, agreed-upon approaches and principles, joint actions, and individual contributions by each participating locality and the major institutions of higher learning.*

Recommendations

- ✓ Adopt a suitable **Collective Impact model for Lexington to collaboratively advance green infrastructure** strategies and programs highlighted in this Report and in the Green Infrastructure Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Seek funding for a **Lex Green Infrastructure coordinator** based on the adopted Collective Impact model.
- ✓ Implement **pilot projects to demonstrate Green Infrastructure** initiatives, for example, a bike and pedestrian path integrating tree planting.
- ✓ **Maintain this Report as a "Living Document,"** with updates, timelines, and an annual review.
- ✓ Solicit an annual **CI report card to measure progress** on implementing green infrastructure strategies.
- ✓ Foster "Friends of _____" and other groups to **encourage citizen involvement** in green space protection and care.

Next Steps

- ✓ Solicit endorsement and support from City Council and consider a work session with City Council to co-develop the final Report.

The residents of Lexington, Buena Vista & Rockbridge all benefit from our wealth of natural resources and scenic beauty. Many community partners and individuals are interested in making our community a better place for all to live. While we have limited governmental resources to further green infrastructure projects, we can accomplish a lot with the assistance of these partners, local educational institutions, and intergovernmental coordination: let's get started!

--Green Infrastructure Working Group

Funding Opportunities

One member of the Green Infrastructure Group noted that projects listed without costs is like restaurant menus without prices. The working group acknowledged that we did not have the resources to develop cost estimates, especially for capital costs. Yet we could begin to identify potential funding for organizations and public authorities, including the collective impact model, Table 2 outlines some of these funding sources. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation quarterly newsletter, [Greenways and Trails E-News](#), includes updated grant information on numerous programs.

We also discussed the potential of leveraging volunteer or pro bono efforts through the organizations involved in green infrastructure-related activities. Annex 7 outlines a framework for considering projects where monetary and non-monetary costs are reduced with community input and volunteer efforts, for example, tree planting.

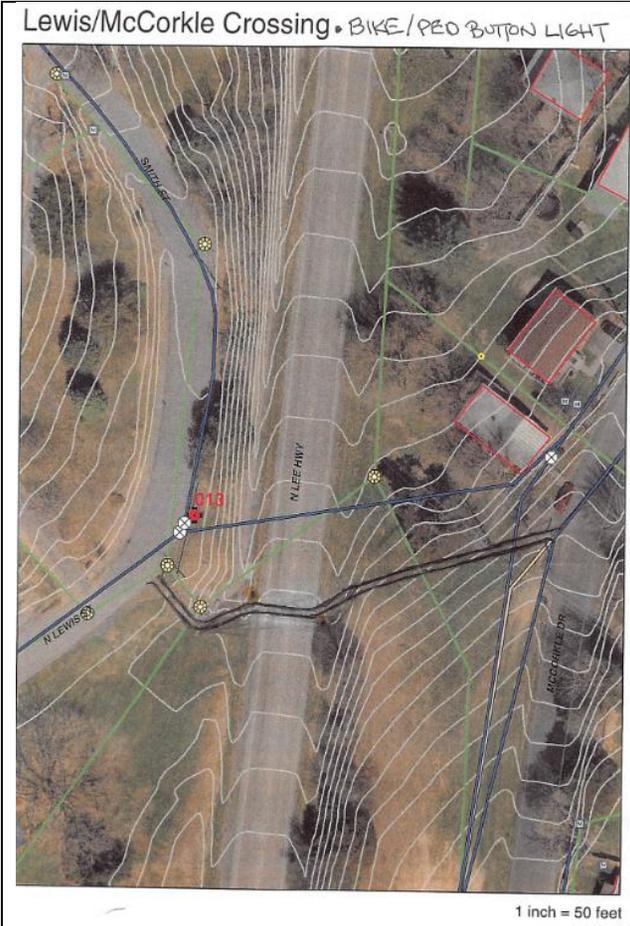
Table 2. Potential Sources of Green Infrastructure Funding	Eligible Applicant/Recipient		
	Public	Not-for-Profit	Homeowner
Rockbridge Community Foundation Health Foundation disseminated \$700,000 last year from an endowment to Rockbridge entities promoting community wellbeing and health this year. Major funder. Grant applications should be received by March 1 each year.		✓	
VDOT- Safe Streets Grants, Develop or update a comprehensive safety action plan (Action Plan). The deadline is usually September.	✓		
Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) – major funder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective Impact Environmental Coordination & Action • James River Water Quality Improvement Program (per above, focus on water quality anywhere in the watershed) 	✓	✓	
Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF). The program provides matching grants to local governments for planning, designing, and implementing stormwater best management practices (BMPs).	✓		
Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District Virginia offers small-scale funding for 15 practices under the program that are eligible for a 75% cost-share, and some provide a flat incentive payment up to the installation cost, see http://vaswcd.org/vcap			✓
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission	✓	✓	
Chesapeake Bay Trust: Green Streets Grant Program (major funder; annual competition)	✓	✓	
USDA Community Development Grants	✓	✓	
Community Foundation of Rockbridge, Bath, Allegheny		✓	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – major Bay watershed improvement funding		✓	

Annexes

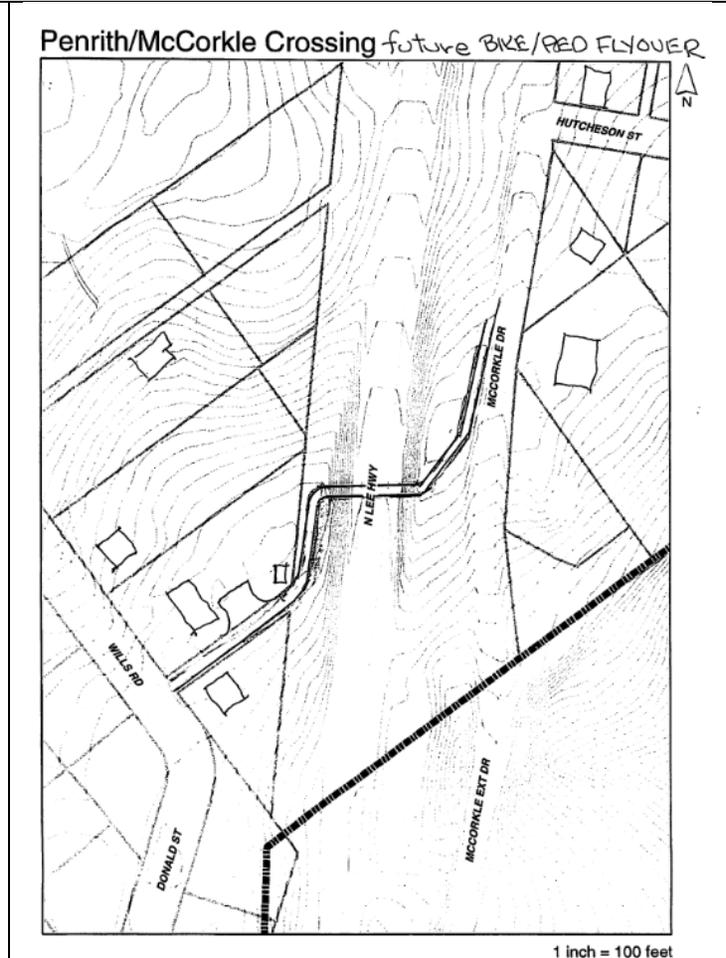
Annex 1-Green Infrastructure Working Group Meetings

<p>October 26, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Review of the Scope of our work • Nick Britton of Michael Baker International, Bike-Ped presentation • Discussion on the Green Infrastructure Chapter <p>November 16, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Great Reveal—Rank Order of Strategies and Projects • Review the definition of Green Infrastructure in the Chapter • Define and discuss the activities <p>December 14, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight emerging issues and directions coming out of the first two meetings, John Driscoll • Activities of the Tree Board & The Urban Tree Canopy Study of 2009, Betty Besal • Mapping Green Infrastructure, Lee Merril and Arthur Bartenstein • COREworks, Boxerwood's Local Carbon Offset Marketplace, Elise Sheffield <p>January 18, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dale Brown, VMI Green Infrastructure initiatives • Holly Ostby, Health Impact Assessment and the role of the Live Healthy Rockbridge • Sam Allen, Framework for considering Green Infrastructure proposals 	<p>February 15, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discussion on the 60% draft Bike-Ped Plan Draft • Outline the Report and selection of activities for members to work on • How could the work of the Green Infrastructure Working Group continue? <p>March 15, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Stewart, University Energy Specialist • Alexia Smith, Brushy Hills <p>April 19, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandra Stuart, Natural Bridge Soil & Water Conservation District <p>June 28, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss the working draft of the Report <p>September 20, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss the final draft of the Report to be presented to the Planning Commission. <p>December 15, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the Report based on Planning Commission comments.
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Annex 2-Lexington Pedestrian Flyover



Source: Lee Merrill



Source: Lee Merrill

Annex 3—Lexington GIS and Mapping

Key elements to be mapped for GI conservation and restoration are patches (planted yards), forests, and corridors connecting into County. See <http://gicinc.org/>

- **Status Notes on GIS Layers relevant to developing a Lexington GI Plan 12/14/22**

Natural features layers

- Topography @2' contour interval - available in the system now - add visual analysis of both elevation patterns (e.g., prominent valleys and ridgelines) and relative slope gradients.
- Floodplains - available in the system now
- Critical Riparian zone (av. 35' alongside all-natural streambeds)-citizen surveys?
- Retention/Filtration structures, public and private (VMI students 2022)
- Tree Canopy Inventory from photography – City RFP being developed 2022
- Plant Groundcovers: maintained turf, seasonal grasses, gardens (recommend inclusion in Storm Water Study 2022?)

Open (undeveloped) space by ownership layers

- Municipal, available for public use
- Institutional, available for public use
- Private property, open for public use
- Private visually-contributing open space

Human movement layers

- Footpaths/trails in public use
- Public sidewalks with/without barriers
- Bike routes
- Alleys
- Quiet streets
- Arterials

Impermeable developed layers

- Building footprints (including Noli diagram, i.e., figure-ground study)
- Public vehicular roadbeds
- Off-street vehicle parking
- Private paving for walks, terraces, etc.

Annex 4-Community Facilities Map

Community Facilities & Infrastructure

Map 10.1 Community Facilities



Annex 5- Collective Impact Characteristics

Collective Impact Characteristics

1. Common Agenda

The common agenda is a mutually accepted vision for change, which helps create objectives and targets and aligns the entities involved. Each participating organization spanning the public, private, and non-profit sectors must see itself contributing in a positive way.

2. Shared Measurement System

A shared measurement system provides a framework from which to track the project's progress and success. Participating organizations agree upon common indicators, which maximize transparency, accountability, and commitment. These indicators must be reassessed as the project unfolds to allow for corrective action and allow the indicators to be changed or the project to be tweaked if necessary.

3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities

One of the unique approaches of Collective Impact is that of mutually reinforcing activities. It allows each participating organization to employ its strengths while sharing resources with others. Each organization's activity may be distinct, but the partners work together to address the same agreed-upon problem, letting cross-sector collaboration flourish with a coordinated plan of action.

4. Continuous Communication

Due to the array of partners, continuous communication is essential to developing trust across the sectors. Regular meetings, among other forms of interaction, allow each organization to feel that their interests are being heard, and provide opportunities to report upon metrics identified.

5. Backbone Support Organization

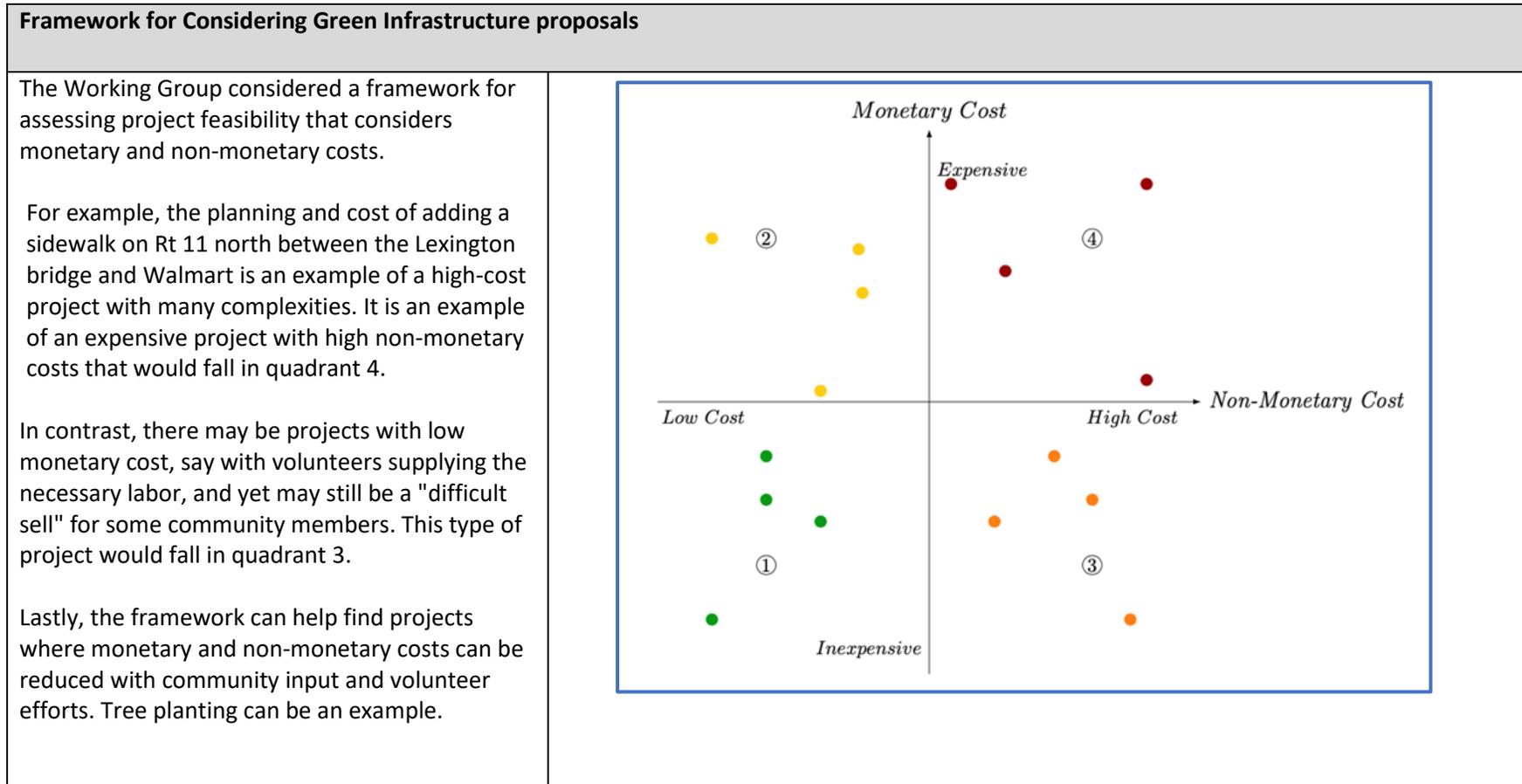
The backbone support organization is the one that advocates for the cause, coordinates between partners—both in terms of funding and activity—and makes sure that all those involved are actively pursuing the strategy. This organization is essential to helping this complex framework of cross-sector partners positively and effectively interact and reinforce each other's strengths.

Source: FSG, The [Collective Impact](#) model

Annex 6 – Resources

- ✓ <https://hampton.gov/3003/Bike-Walk-Hampton-Plan>
- ✓ [Green Streets Handbook](#), EPA, March 2021
- ✓ <https://articles.vafb.com/news-and-features/categories/conservation-landscapes-offer-environmental-benefits-reduce-yard-work>
- ✓ [A Green Infrastructure Plan for the City of Norfolk](#): The link is to the Report; see current and future green infrastructure networks, pages 19 and 20. There is also a PowerPoint, see [A Green Infrastructure Plan for Norfolk: Building Resilient Communities](#)
- ✓ [CITY GREENPRINT: Charlottesville's Green Infrastructure Guide](#)
- ✓ [Jordan's Point Park Master Plan](#), November 2020, City of Lexington, Virginia
- ✓ <https://www.itreetools.org/>, This tool from the USDA estimates the value of trees and might be helpful for any metrics/progress on the Plan.
- ✓ [Project for Public Spaces](#).
- ✓ Climate Action Plan-- [Charlottesville](#) and [Roanoke](#) and [Washington & Lee University](#)
- ✓ Town of Blacksburg, [Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#), Sept. 2020
- ✓ [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions-A Guide for Local Communities](#), June 2021, FEMA

Annex 7 – Framework for Considering Green Infrastructure Proposals



Annex 8 – Lexington News-Gazette Editorial December 14, 2022

OPINION

SECTION A, PAGE 6, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022

*Editorial**Lexington Aims To Get Greener*

It is encouraging that Lexington government officials are not letting the city's comprehensive plan collect dust – that the planning document adopted last year has not just been put aside on a shelf somewhere to await its next state-mandated update. No, an effort is underway by city officials and a group of interested citizens to galvanize local resources to implement the green infrastructure chapter of the comprehensive plan.

These folks are putting into practice an often-heard admonition to “think globally and act locally.” They are thinking about the dire impacts of global warming like extreme weather, rising sea levels and melting glaciers, and responding by doing what they can on a local level to lessen the impacts. If such grassroots efforts were to be replicated in other communities across the country and around the world, real progress could be made in the battle to save our planet.

Lexington's Green Infrastructure Working Group, composed of 15 citizens who are laying the groundwork for carrying out the directives of the green infrastructure chapter of the comprehensive plan, recently presented a draft report to the city's Planning Commission. The report outlines ways the objectives can be accomplished and suggested the formation of a citywide coalition of relevant organizations who can work together on this mission.

The report notes that Lexington is “an engaged community” fully capable of harnessing its resources to “advance green infrastructure.” Past examples of city initiatives are cited that have promoted green space and the preservation of natural resources such as the funding of a city arborist, creating a tree board, having a tree canopy study, the restoration of Woods Creek and Trail, stormwater retention projects, development of bicycle and pedestrian paths and recycling programs. The report emphasizes the value of partnerships among residents, businesses, local nonprofit organizations, major institutions, agencies and City Hall “to create a greener, more sustainable Lexington.”

To truly make progress in combating the effects of climate change, of course, these local efforts are going to have to be supported by state,



IN ITS REPORT to the Lexington Planning Commission on Oct. 27, the Green Infrastructure Working Group pointed to the Woods Creek Restoration Project, which was completed in 2004, as an example of the kinds of things that can be accomplished when different organizations within the city work together toward a common goal.

national and international initiatives. Hopes for making substantial progress on a national level were enhanced greatly earlier this year with passage of the most far-reaching federal legislation ever to combat climate change. This legislation is investing \$369 billion in measures designed to reduce carbon emissions by 40 percent over the next eight years.

On a statewide level, though, we were disappointed by Gov. Glenn Youngkin's decision to pull Virginia out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. This multi-state, market-based program is enjoying success in leading the way to promote clean, renewable energy and offset the harmful effects of pollution and extreme weather events. It is indeed a shame that our state will no longer be a contributor to and beneficiary of this collaborative approach among states along the eastern seaboard.

Still, we can do what we can at a local level to contribute to the global campaign to combat climate change. A number of solar array renewable energy projects have come down the pike in Rockbridge County the past couple of years. These projects have been scrutinized by the county's planners to ensure that the benefits of producing renewable energy outweigh the costs of the loss of productive farmland. The county would do well to establish standards for how such projects can be reviewed efficiently and uniformly in the future.

Perhaps the county and Buena Vista can follow Lexington's lead in seeking out citizens to develop local strategies to combat climate change. All of us need to work together and pool our resources so that we can act locally to counter the very real dangers of this global menace. We commend Lexington for taking the initiative to start this process.

Annex 9 - Short History of Green Infrastructure in Lexington's Comprehensive Plan

Sixteen years ago, the previous 2007 Comprehensive Plan stated plainly, "Green infrastructure planning should be integrated into this chapter when it is updated." It gave as a goal, "***Encourage local environmental and community groups to work together, with the assistance of City staff, to engage the community in a planning process to create a green infrastructure plan.***"

When drafting the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, one of the most significant changes in approach was in the "Green Infrastructure & Natural Resources" section, formerly "Natural Resources." As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, a green infrastructure working group that included two planning commissioners, was tasked with examining the existing conditions of green infrastructure in the Lexington community and providing recommendations for improvement to be considered by the Commission. The working Group identified a key challenge for the chapter: how can we align City planning with ecological principles that promote human well-being and respect the value of ecosystems as a cornerstone of sustainable development in Lexington? The new chapter signaled a more intentional, active understanding of and approach to interacting with our environment (Comprehensive Plan p.33).

As part of the Commission's nomination of catalyst projects towards the end of 2020, the Green Infrastructure Working group was reconvened as a Planning Commission-led initiative. This was reflected in the Commission's 2020 Annual Report and a subsequent joint work session with the Council in July 2021.

Beginning in October 2021, the reconvened working group with two planning commissioners began meeting. Over the course of the year, the Planning Commission was briefed on the progress of the Group leading to the publication of the Draft Report, *Getting Greener in Lexington-Moving the Conversation Forward* in October 2022. The recommendations in the Report include using the Collective Impact model to engage a public/private partnership to initiate green infrastructure initiatives for the City of Lexington.

Endnotes

ii [Maury Scenic River report, Rockbridge County](#), April 2020 and [Extension of the Maury River Scenic River Designation](#), November 2021

ii **Benefits of scenic river designation** • Provides opportunities to consider scenic and other resources in planning and design. • Focuses on Federal Energy Regulation Commission reviews of hydro or related project proposals. • Encourages closer review of projects and proposals by state agencies and localities. Requires General Assembly authorization for dam construction. • Provides for continued existing appropriate riparian land uses. • Provides a framework for the appointment of a local Scenic River Advisory Committee. • Provides eligibility for land use tax considerations, if locally adopted.

Source: [DCR Virginia Scenic Rivers Program](#)

iii VDOT has an available bike/ped planner, and CSPD may have resources too. While the US Dept. of Transportation has a program for Reconnecting Neighborhoods to reconnect neighborhoods cut off by roads, Lexington's population may not meet the minimum threshold for eligibility.

iv <https://vpm.org/news/articles/30411/lawmakers-expand-opt-in-tree-replacement-program>

The ordinance shall require that the site plan for any subdivision or development include the planting or replacement of trees on the site to the extent that, at 20 years, minimum tree canopies or covers will be provided in areas to be designated in the ordinance, as follows:

1. Ten percent tree canopy for a site zoned business, commercial, or industrial;
2. Ten percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned 20 or more units per acre;
3. Fifteen percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than 10 but less than 20 units per acre; and
4. Twenty percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned 10 units or less per acre.

v Current Opinion in Environmental [Sustainability](#) 2015, **14**:101–108. This review comes from a themed issue on **Open issue**, Edited by **Eduardo Brondizio**, **Rik Leemans** and **William Solecki**. For a complete overview see the [Issue](#) and the [Editorial](#)

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