

Draft Conservation Chapter

2019-2021 Crozet Master Plan Update

May 4, 2021 Working Draft

Prepared for: Albemarle County Planning Commission

Prepared by: Albemarle County Planning Staff

Enhance Crozet's natural beauty, existing environmental resources, and the surrounding rural areas with an integrated network of parks and gathering spaces, trails, and natural areas that offer increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and protect natural resources.





The Lickinghole Basin Natural Area provides a habitat for over 200 species of birds and serves as a sediment basin for stormwater management.

Overview + Background Conservation Overview

The Conservation Chapter establishes the Guiding Principle, Goals, and Recommendations related to parks, trails, and environmental features in the Crozet Development Area. Crozet community members shared their desire to protect natural features in Crozet, such as tree canopy and waterways, and to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities. This Chapter highlights the importance of a connected network of Green Systems, including providing connectivity to the adjacent Rural Area amenities such as the Blue Ridge Mountains and nearby County Parks.

Goals within this Chapter address parks, trails, regional amenities, and natural resources in Crozet. Each goal is supported with actionable recommendations. The Future Parks & Green Systems Plan and supporting narrative also serve to reinforce the Conservation Guiding Principle and Goals.

Existing Conditions and Environmental Features

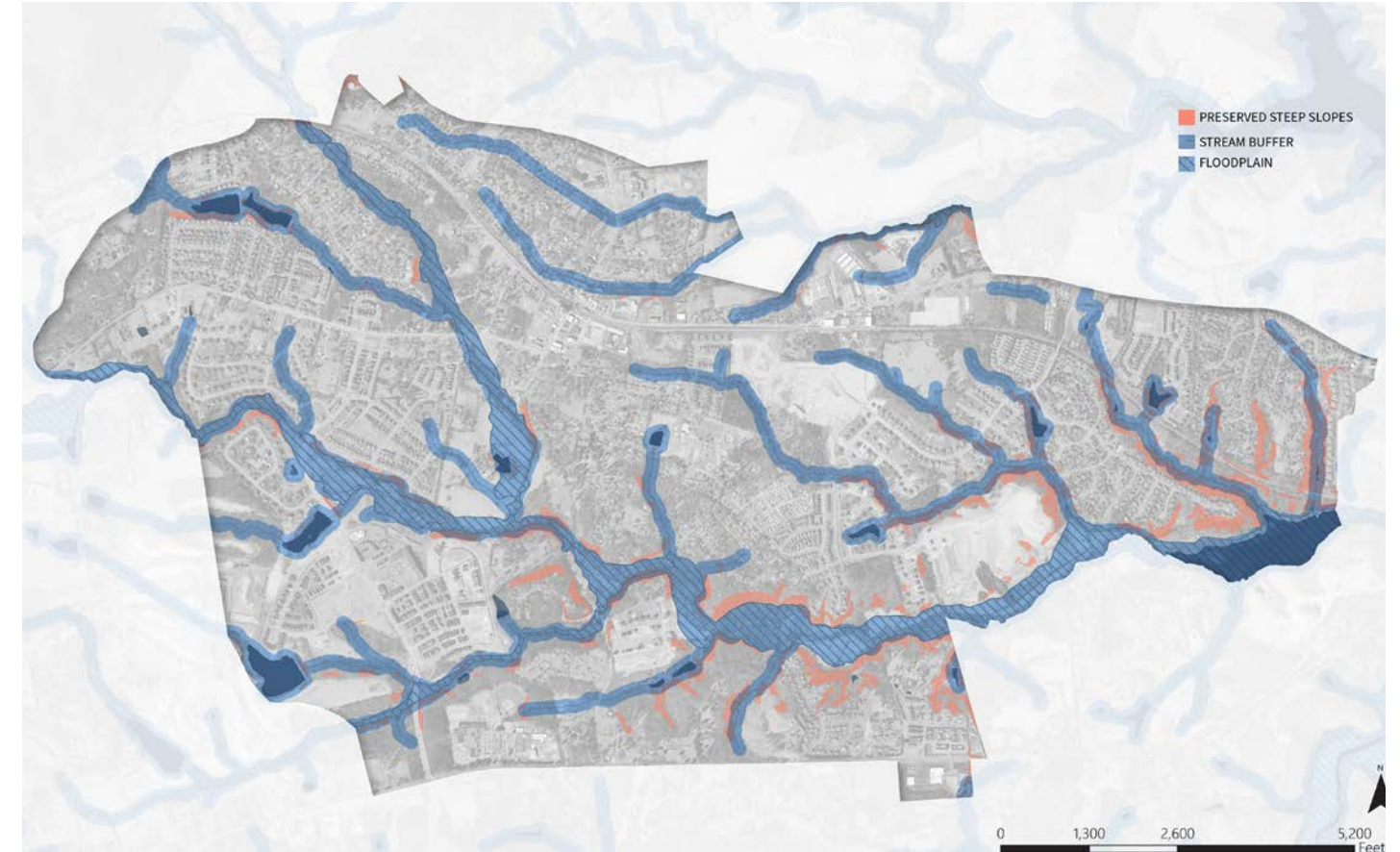
Crozet is known for its location nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains as well as its natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Downtown Crozet is located approximately 10 miles from the entrances to Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Nearby County Parks in the Rural Area include Mint Springs Park and the Beaver Creek Reservoir, which is partially managed by the Parks & Recreation Department.

Within the Crozet Development Area there are several public parks that are in various stages of development, such as Crozet Park, the Downtown Plaza, and Western Park. Additional development of Western Park is needed to provide additional recreational opportunities for Crozet community members.

The Crozet Trail system has been building out over the past several years, in large part due to efforts by The Crozet Trails Crew, a volunteer organization that helps plan and build segments of the trail network within Crozet. The Crozet Connector Trail is one such trail that provides connectivity between Lickinghole Basin and Crozet Park. There are still key segments of trails missing in Crozet, especially trail connections providing north-south routes and connections to schools.



Mint Springs Park is located nearby in the Rural Area, and provides opportunities for hiking, swimming, and fishing.



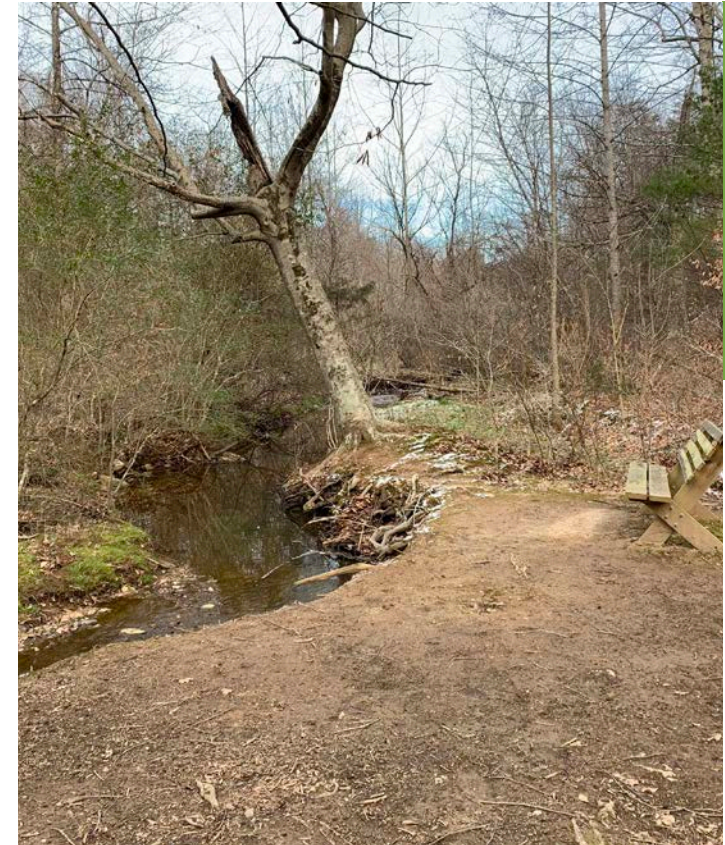
The map above shows the existing Environmental Features in Crozet, which include preserved steep slopes (pink), stream buffers (blue), and the 100-year floodplain (hatched blue).

There is a significant network of “Environmental Features” within the Crozet Development Area. Environmental Features consist of land that is within the 100-year floodplain, within stream buffers, or consist of preserved steep slopes.

The County’s Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) regulates stream buffers within the County. The WPO requires 100-foot wide stream buffers on each side of a stream within the Rural Areas and within water supply watersheds. Since Crozet is within a water supply watershed, both perennial and intermittent streams in Crozet have 100-foot stream buffers. Piped portions of streams do not have stream buffers. Buffers are intended to preserve existing vegetation and stream banks.

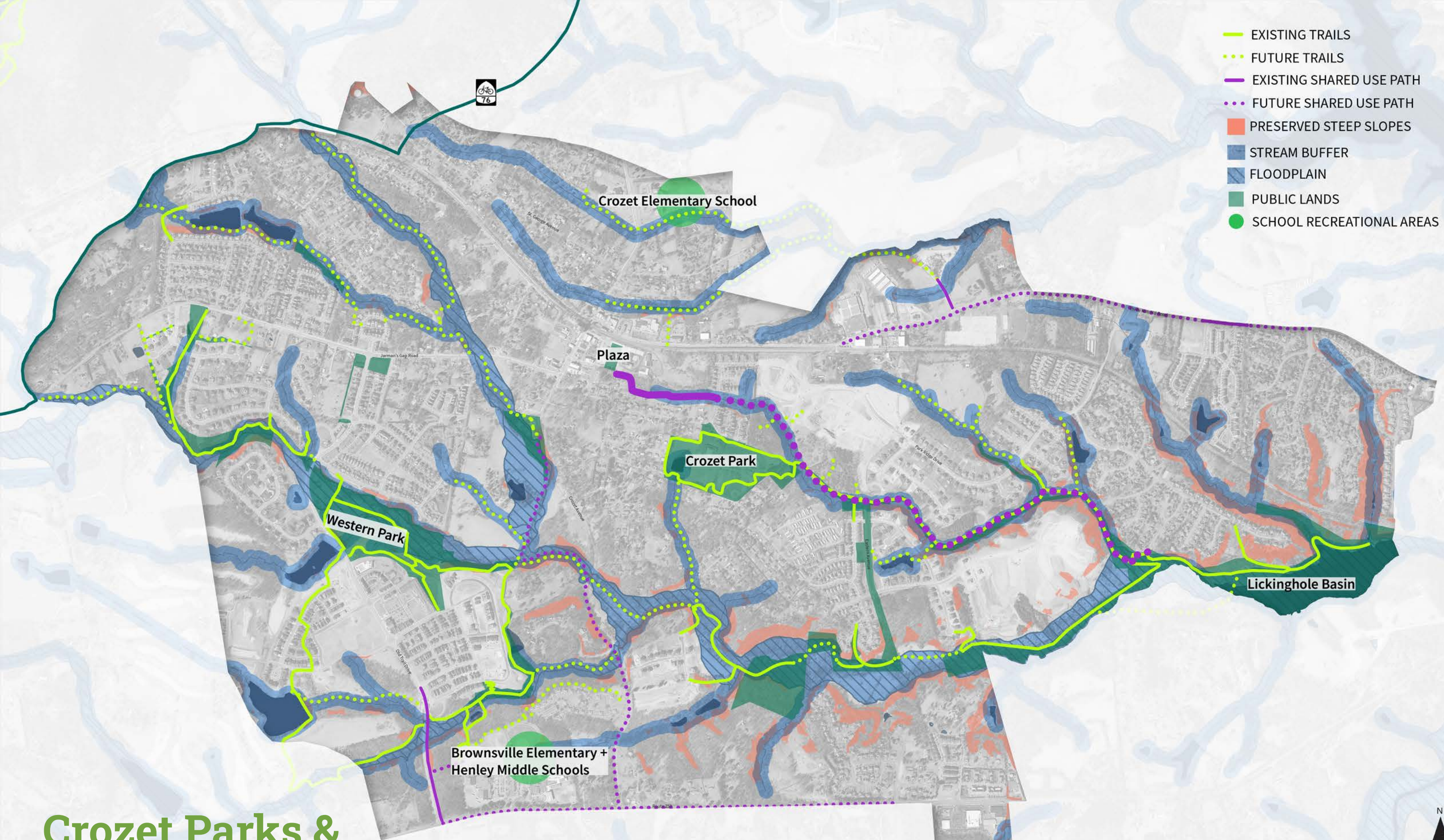
Development is restricted within the Environmental Features shown on the Parks & Green Systems Plan. Disturbance of these features requires additional design standards and approvals. Recreational amenities and activities may be permitted, and should be sited carefully to protect streams, stream banks, and other waterways.

Protection of Environmental Features and of water quality is especially important as Crozet is within a water supply watershed.



Much of the Crozet Connector trail follows along Lickinghole Creek.

- EXISTING TRAILS
- ⋯ FUTURE TRAILS
- EXISTING SHARED USE PATH
- ⋯ FUTURE SHARED USE PATH
- PRESERVED STEEP SLOPES
- STREAM BUFFER
- ▨ FLOODPLAIN
- PUBLIC LANDS
- SCHOOL RECREATIONAL AREAS



Crozet Parks & Green Systems Plan



1 inch = 1,200 feet



Parks & Trails

The Parks & Green Systems Plan for Crozet shows existing and proposed public parks, publicly-owned land, and trails. Future trails are shown with dotted lines. The exact alignment of future connections should be determined in collaboration with Albemarle County Parks and Recreation staff, County Planning staff, and property owners, with consultation from trail groups when appropriate (such as the Crozet Trails Crew).

Park Typologies

Different types of parks serve different functions and provide unique amenities and experiences to their users. This section of the Master Plan identifies different types of parks and describes their intended function and typical amenities provided. Park master plans should be used to guide individual park designs.



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Plaza

A central amenity space intended to function as the primary outdoor civic space for an area. It is designed to accommodate a range of functions and uses, such as event spaces, social gathering spaces, farmers markets, outdoor learning, food trucks, and more.



(Above) Lickinghole Basin is an example of a Natural Area in Crozet and is home to a variety of wildlife, including the bald eagle.

Natural Area

An area intended to preserve and protect natural resources and to provide opportunities for respite from the surrounding developed environment. Natural Areas should be designed to protect natural resources, such as forest, streams, or wetlands. Natural Area amenities could include trails, walking paths, and passive recreation amenities such as benches and picnic areas.



(Above) Crozet Park is an example of a Recreational Park and includes amenities ranging from sports fields to a community center.

Recreational Park

A park that provides a variety of spaces for formal recreation, such as athletic events and gatherings, with sports fields, pavilions, playgrounds, and associated facilities.

Parks in Crozet

There are four main public parks within the Crozet Development Area: Crozet Park, the Downtown Plaza, Western Park, and Lickinghole Basin Natural Area. Each of these parks serves different recreational needs. Continued build-out and amenity development will occur at The Plaza and Western Park. Expanded amenities, trails, and educational signage may occur over time at Crozet Park and Lickinghole Basin Natural Area.

Crozet Park



(Above) A photo of the existing Crozet Park.

Crozet Park is a 22-acre Recreational Park. While the majority of outdoor amenities and facilities are publicly-accessible, most of the indoor facilities and activities require a paid membership. The non-profit Claudius Crozet Park, Inc. owns the park, except for the County-owned dog park. The Crozet Connector Trail is accessible from the eastern edge of Crozet Park and leads to Lickinghole Basin about 1.5 miles to the east. Eventually the Crozet Connector Trail will also provide a connection between Crozet Park and The Plaza (Downtown) to the east.

Given the many adjacent neighborhoods and parking availability at Crozet Park, it is an ideal access point to the Crozet Connector Trail. Opportunities for enhancing the Park connection to the Crozet Connector Trail should be explored. Potential expansions of amenities may occur at Crozet Park through both private and public funding.

Crozet Park is designated as a Recreational District, and additional information on use, form, site design guidance, and building types can be found in the Land Use Chapter of this Plan.

The Plaza



(Above) A rendering of the future Downtown Plaza. Credit: Mahan Rykiel Associates and Warren Byrd

The Downtown Plaza is a planned public Plaza that will be completed as part of the Crozet Square redevelopment. As the Downtown area in Crozet continues to expand and add a variety of uses, the Plaza will provide an important gathering space and opportunity for events.

The developer of Crozet Square and Albemarle County have entered into a public-private partnership to develop and design The Plaza. Significant community input was used to determine the final Plaza design, and support for future plaza programming may be provided by the Downtown Crozet Initiative in partnership with County Parks & Recreation. Crozet Plaza is shown as the center point of the Town Center in this Master Plan's Land Use Chapter, highlighting its importance and location in the core of Downtown.



The drawing above illustrates the future Western Park, as shown in the adopted 2018 Western Park Master Plan.

Western Park

Western Park is a 36-acre planned Recreational Park and Natural Area to the northeast of the Old Trail Village Development. According to the Western Park Master Plan, the western portion of the park will include formal recreational amenities such as sports fields and playgrounds. The eastern portion of the park contains areas with floodplain, stream buffers, wetlands, and a variety of wildlife habitats. This area will function as a Natural Area and will include trails, meadows, and natural play areas.

Parking and vehicular access from Old Trail Drive is planned along the southern park edge. Western Park will be developed in phases, with the earlier phases expected to provide a playground, parking and access, shelter and restroom facilities, landscaping, and stormwater management.

Western Park is also designated as a Recreational District on the Future Land Use Plan and additional information on use, form, site design guidance, and building types can be found in the Land Use Chapter of this Plan.



(Above) A portion of the site of future Western Park, with the Ballard Field/Old Trail neighborhood visible.



(Above) A photo of the existing Lickinghole Basin, a Natural Area and sediment basin in Crozet.

Lickinghole Basin

Lickinghole Basin is a public 70-acre Natural Area and sediment basin (for stormwater management) with trail access from adjacent neighborhoods and the Crozet Connector Trail. The Basin and surrounding land are owned by the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA), which also manages the Basin and associated dam. The Basin captures eroded and disturbed soil that washes off of developed areas during rain events, protecting the quality of surrounding waterways. The Basin is identified as a priority area in the County's Biodiversity Action Plan due to the variety of species and habitats, including over 200 species of birds and a bald eagles' nest.

This Natural Area should continue to be used for trails, bird watching, and other lower intensity recreational activities. It is not an appropriate location for more intensive uses, such as sports fields or vehicular access. New and extended trails should be sited carefully, keeping habitats and sensitive stream banks in mind. Opportunities for educational signage, invasive species management, trail connections, and furnishings, such as benches, should be explored in collaboration with staff from Parks & Recreation, Natural Resources Planning, and RWSA.

Trail Typologies



(Above) A portion of the Crozet Connector Trail.

Trail

A primitive waking path with a typical width of at least 5 feet. Some trails may be narrower, especially "spur trails" which provide connections from main trails to neighborhoods or streets. Surfaces include stone dust, gravel, mulch, or earth.



(Above) A Shared-Use Path outside of the Wickham Pond neighborhood in Crozet.

Shared-Use Path (SUP)

A shared accessible path that is a minimum width of 10 feet with space for both pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail surface is usually paved with asphalt, but can also be crushed gravel. SUPs are ADA-accessible and are shared by people walking, running or riding bikes. They can offer routes not provided by the road network, provide additional recreational opportunities, or serve as a direct commuter route adjacent to a road.



(Above) An existing portion of the Crozet Connector Trail, an important segment of the bicycle and pedestrian network in Crozet.

Trail Connectivity and Improvements

The Crozet Connector Trail is intended to be the ‘backbone’ of Crozet’s off-road pedestrian and bicycle network. The trail will eventually connect Downtown to Crozet Park and Lickinghole Basin. The current surface is a mix of gravel and earth, and the width and grade vary along its length. It is recommended to be upgraded to a shared-use path to provide enhanced accessibility and to serve as a commuter and recreational route between destinations.

Additional east-west trail connectivity should be provided between Lickinghole Basin and Western Park. The final alignment for this connection should be determined with Parks and Recreation staff,

Planning staff, property owners, and Crozet community members. A potential crossing at Crozet Avenue (near Chesterfield Landing and the Meadows) will also require VDOT review and approval.

The primary north-south trail route is identified for a future SUP and trail along Crozet Avenue and Powells Creek. Alignment of this route will require further study. This alignment is challenging due to right-of-way and topography constraints.

Currently, there are few formal trailheads in Crozet. Trailheads may include enhanced signage, maps and other information, gateway entrances, and parking. They are intended to serve as clear access points to trails and paths. Crozet Park is currently used as an informal trailhead for the Crozet Connector trail. Additional trailheads and options to enhance the Crozet Park trailhead should be explored.

Other County-Owned Properties

Along with properties such as Western Park and the public schools sites, there are several other County-owned parcels in Crozet. The following three properties have been identified as areas with unique features where additional recommendations can support the goals of this chapter.

Lickinghole Creek Property

The County owns a 15-acre property (Tax Map Parcel 56N-D) to the east of Chesterfield Landing and north of Sparrow Hill, where Lickinghole Creek runs along the northern portion. The Creek is surrounded by a significant stream buffer due to the flood hazard overlay. There are existing trails through this site, with a trail connection planned to the east to connect to Eastern Avenue and to the natural area at Lickinghole Basin. Trail planning will require careful consideration due to the preserved steep slopes on the site and the need to protect Lickinghole Creek from erosion and damaged stream banks. Stream restoration efforts are needed along the Creek, as there are existing issues with erosion. The stream buffer should be enhanced with plantings and other restoration efforts as needed. Due to the sensitive Environmental Features on this property, the tree canopy should be retained, and it should continue to be used as a natural area with limited improvements.

Stormwater Management Facility along Crozet Avenue

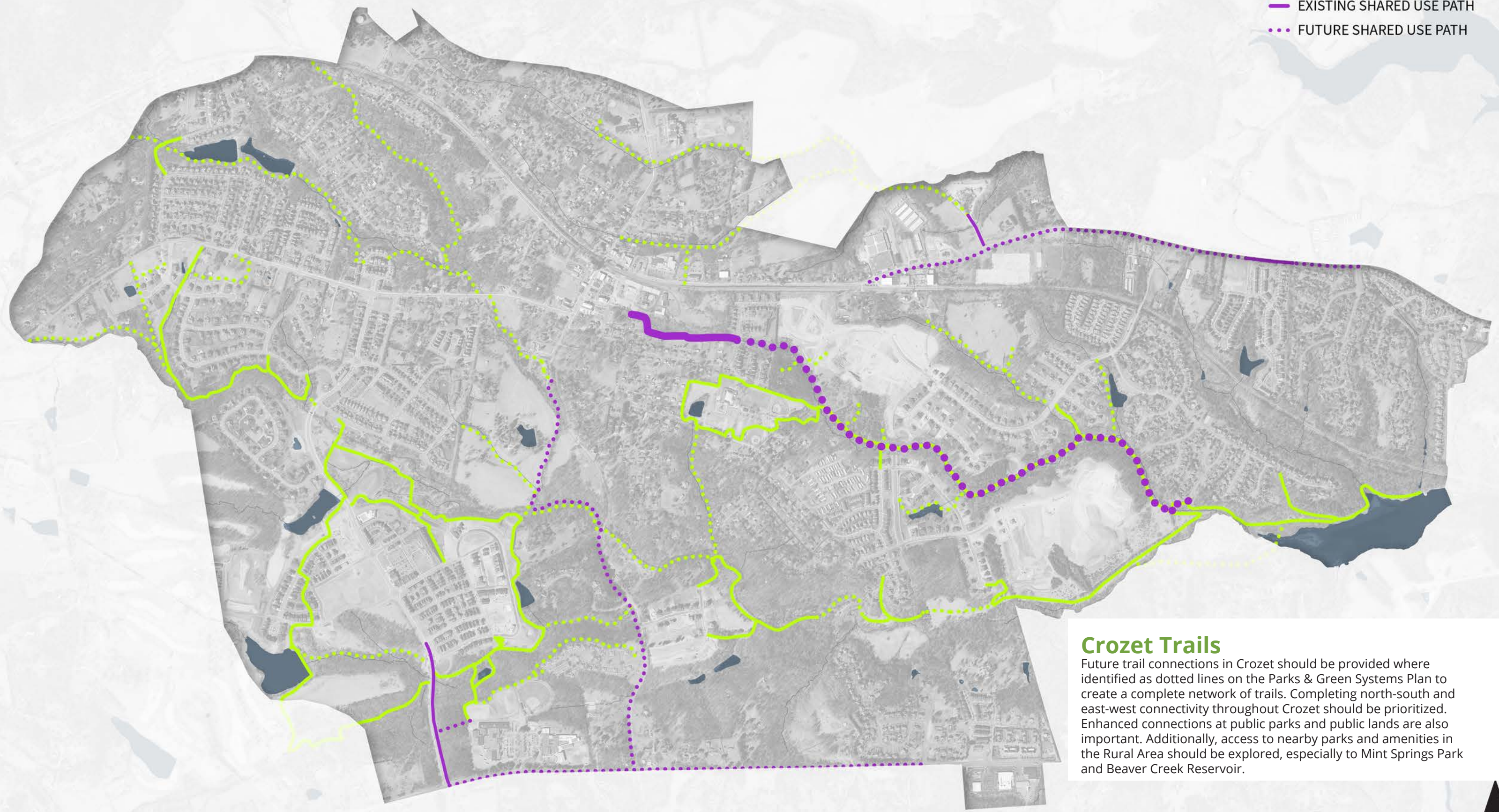
This property (Tax Map Parcel 56-11) is used as a County-owned stormwater management facility. Powells Creek runs along the western portion of the site and includes a larger stream buffer due to the additional flood hazard overlay along the creek. There are also preserved steep slopes on most of the eastern portion of the property along Crozet Avenue. A future trail is recommended through this site and would continue across Jarman’s Gap Road along Powells Creek. This property should continue to be used as a stormwater management facility and should be enhanced as a more accessible natural area. Improvements could include seating, educational signage, and a trail access point. While this natural area has a different scale and form than most of Crozet’s other natural areas, it can still provide access to trails and to wildlife viewing.

Old Crozet School Property

The property directly south of the Old Crozet School (Tax Map Parcel 56-61) is mostly undeveloped and is on the western side of Crozet Avenue North. The Parrot Branch waterway runs along the southern edge of both this site and the Crozet Elementary School property, where there is a 100-foot stream buffer. A future trail is recommended along Parrot Branch which could eventually connect to Three Notch’D Road and Park View Drive. Restoration efforts are underway for the stream buffer around Parrot Branch on the eastern side of Crozet Avenue. Additionally, there is a stormwater management facility on the Crozet Elementary School site, just north of Parrot Branch.

As the current tenant of the Old Crozet School prepares to relocate, the County should solicit community input about a future use of the property. Future use should include restoration efforts for the stream buffer, a retrofitted storm water management approach to this property that uses natural elements such as native plants, and other sustainable site design measures. Space for a small pocket park or other outdoor public civic area should also be considered.

- EXISTING TRAILS
- ⋯ FUTURE TRAILS
- EXISTING SHARED USE PATH
- ⋯ FUTURE SHARED USE PATH



Crozet Trails

Future trail connections in Crozet should be provided where identified as dotted lines on the Parks & Green Systems Plan to create a complete network of trails. Completing north-south and east-west connectivity throughout Crozet should be prioritized. Enhanced connections at public parks and public lands are also important. Additionally, access to nearby parks and amenities in the Rural Area should be explored, especially to Mint Springs Park and Beaver Creek Reservoir.



1 inch = 1,200 feet

Biodiversity, Natural Resources, and Green Systems

Green Systems

Crozet's Green Systems consist of public parks, trails, other public lands, and areas referred to as "Environmental Features," which consist of land within the 100-year floodplain, stream buffers, and steep slopes. The Green Systems network, sometimes referred to as a "green infrastructure network", provides a variety of benefits such as improved air quality, water quality protection, flood protection, climate mitigation, and aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Green Systems also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking and wildlife observation.

Water Quality

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) assesses the quality of all surface waters within the state every two years in order to comply with requirements of the U.S. Clean Water Act and Virginia Water Quality Monitoring, Information and Restoration Act. Waters that do not meet DEQ water quality standards are designated as "impaired" and subsequently issued Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) to achieve DEQ water quality standards.

DEQ identified the following waterways as impaired in Crozet: Lickinghole Creek, Slabtown Branch, and an unnamed tributary of Parrot Branch.

DEQ is currently completing a TMDL study for the South Fork Rivanna River watershed, which includes the Crozet Development Area. The final draft of the study is expected to be approved by EPA in early 2022. The resulting implementation plan to decrease pollution in impaired waterways will provide additional opportunities for state funding and grants.

DEQ has found high levels of nitrogen in the unnamed Parrot Branch tributary. Existing septic systems from nearby neighborhoods may be a potential source of nitrogen. While these neighborhoods are within the jurisdictional area for public water and sewer, some homes are still using septic systems. Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA), and Albemarle County should collaborate with property owners to explore options for connecting to public utilities in this area and other areas as needed in the Crozet Development Area.

There are several areas in Crozet where waterways exist without vegetated and established buffers. Most of these areas are neighborhoods where development predates current WPO regulations, such as along St. George Avenue. These waterways are largely located on private, residential property. The County should hire an independent third-party consultant to study this area and confirm the status of these waterways (see Conservation Goal 4). If the consultant finds these waterways should be officially classified as streams, then subsequent recommendations for re-establishing buffers and restoring stream health should be developed, in consultation with property owners.

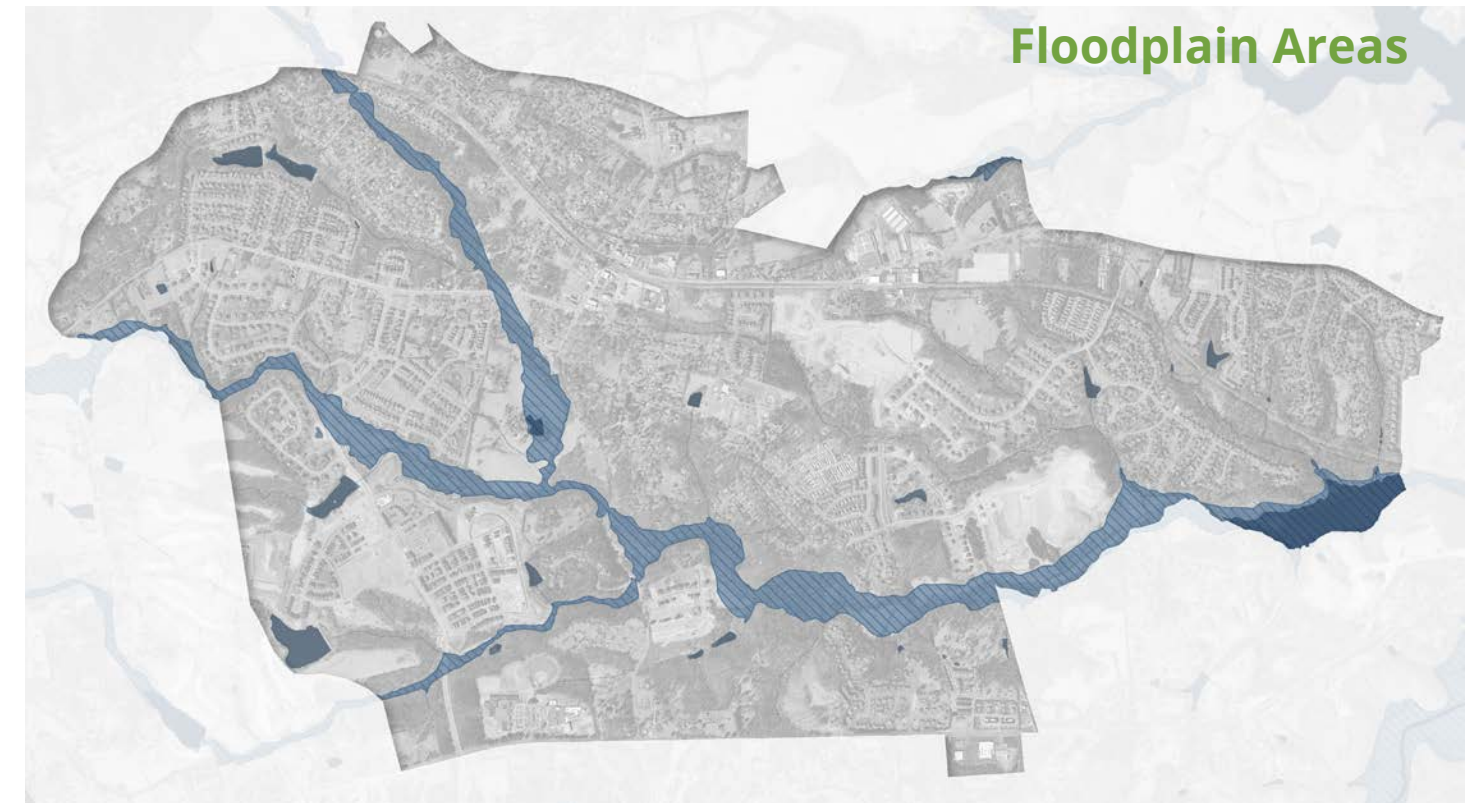
Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is encouraged to be addressed on-site with development projects, especially by incorporating Low-Impact Development (LID) strategies. Practices that mimic or preserve natural drainage processes, such as bioswales, depressions, and vegetated areas, can help protect Crozet's waterways. DEQ has identified Lickinghole Creek as impaired due to sediment buildup. Additionally, these techniques remove pressure from the sediment basin in Lickinghole Basin and slow the rate of sediment accrual there.

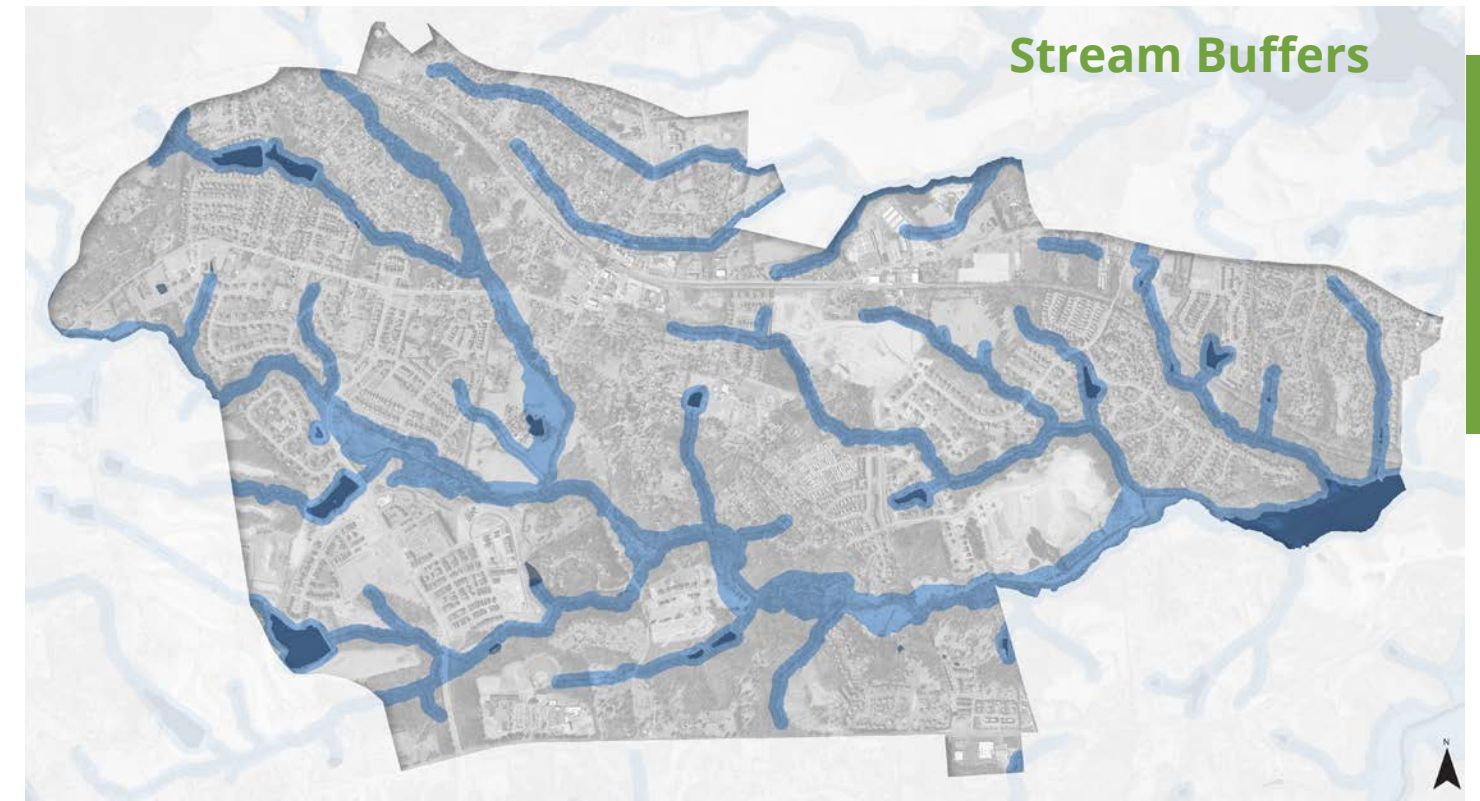
The County owns an existing stormwater management facility in Crozet's downtown area, to the west of Crozet Avenue. A future trail is recommended through this site, which would connect to Jarman's Gap Road and a future trail network to the north. This property should continue to serve as a stormwater management facility and should be enhanced with native plantings and landscapes.

Steep Slopes

The majority of the preserved steep slopes in Crozet (and the County's other Development Areas) are along river and streambanks. Protecting these slopes is vital for the health of Crozet's waterways. The County's steep slopes overlay district requires additional design considerations to protect identified steep slopes, downstream lands, and waterways. The intention of this regulation is to prevent movement of soil and rock, excessive stormwater runoff, and degradation of surface water. This Chapter also recommends preserving existing vegetation within stream buffers and floodplain and ensuring careful siting of new trails, which also help protect these steep slopes.



The map above shows areas within the floodplain (blue striped areas) and waterways (dark blue). A floodplain is an area adjacent to a body of water that is susceptible to being inundated by water normally associated with a 100-year flood or storm event. This includes, but is not limited to, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated floodplains.



The map above shows stream buffers within the Crozet Development area (transparent blue) and waterway (dark blue). Stream buffers are areas of land at or near stream banks and/or nontidal wetlands that provide environmental services, such as improving water quality, or are sensitive to changes that may result in water quality degradation. These areas are regulated by Albemarle County's Water Protection Ordinance, and are often referred to as the "WPO buffer".



This is an aerial image of the portion of St. George Avenue with a waterway that exists without a vegetated and established stream buffer.

Biodiversity and Climate Action Planning

Albemarle County's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies important species, habitats, and sites within the County and outlines goals and strategies to protect these habitats and species, such as minimizing habitat fragmentation and management of public lands to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The BAP maps large (greater than 100 acre) and small (between 10 and 99 acres) forest blocks throughout the County. A small forest block exists around Lickinghole Basin, which is also identified in the Plan as an important site.

The BAP also identifies a large area of the County, just northwest of the Crozet Development Area, as a "Conservation Focus Area" where land and habitat protection should be prioritized. The Northwest Focus Area includes land within Shenandoah National Park, Bucks Elbow Mountain, and Mint Springs Park. The BAP recommends protection of lands within the focus areas, and where possible, connections among them. The Green Systems Network within Crozet, especially the greenways along Lickinghole and Powells Creek, provide opportunities to preserve and enhance habitat corridors that provide potential connections to the Northwest Conservation Focus Area.

The County's Phase 1 Climate Action Plan (CAP) provides recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change within Albemarle County, such as protection of publicly-owned forested land and the use of native plant species. The Climate Action Plan discusses the importance of vegetative buffers and forest cover for multiple benefits, including carbon sequestration.

Urban Forestry

Urban tree canopies provide an important natural resource to Albemarle County's Development Areas as they have a significant role in mitigating the effects of climate change and urban heat islands. They also reduce stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces and decrease flood risk. In addition to their role in providing valuable ecosystem services, trees create an inviting, livable, and healthy atmosphere for community members, businesses, and visitors. Roots from large trees also stabilize soils, reduce sediment runoff, provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, and further enhance the quality of surrounding water systems such as Lickinghole Creek and Powells Creek.

In addition to supporting Goals of the CAP and BAP, protecting and enhancing the tree canopy within forest blocks and sensitive environmental features also supports the Conservation Guiding Principle. It is especially important to preserve native tree canopy in areas with identified forest blocks and areas within the floodplain and stream buffers. The Lickinghole Creek forest block should be protected and enhanced or expanded with additional native tree canopy where possible.

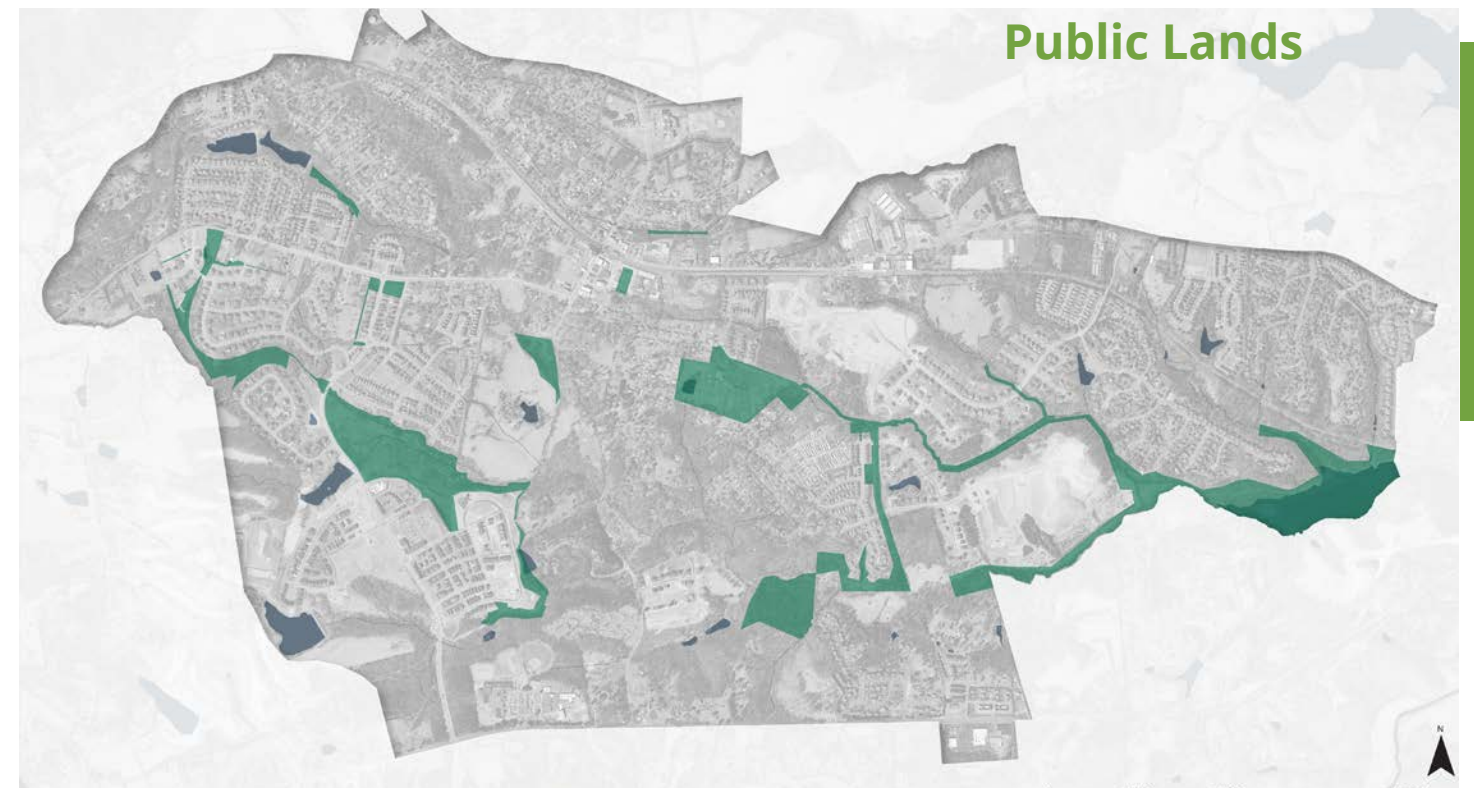
Areas of existing tree canopy can be seen on the aerial image on page 22. The aerial also identifies key areas where the urban forest network can be expanded upon within Crozet. Efforts to enhance and expand urban forest cover should be focused in areas that can increase habitat connectivity, such as along and adjacent to the Lickinghole Creek and Powells Creek greenway, areas that can contribute to water quality protection, such as within the floodplain and stream buffers, and those properties that are publicly-owned, such as parks, schools, public lands, and natural areas. Opportunities should also be explored to work with neighborhood associations to enhance tree canopy on their commonly held open space parcels, where no further development is expected, and areas that are shown for Green Systems on the Future Land Use Plan.

Steep Slopes



The map above shows areas within preserved steep slopes in light pink. Steep slopes are areas of incline with a 25 percent grade or greater (grade refers to the angle of the incline, where horizontal or flat equals zero). Steep slopes are regulated through a steep slopes overlay district in the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance.

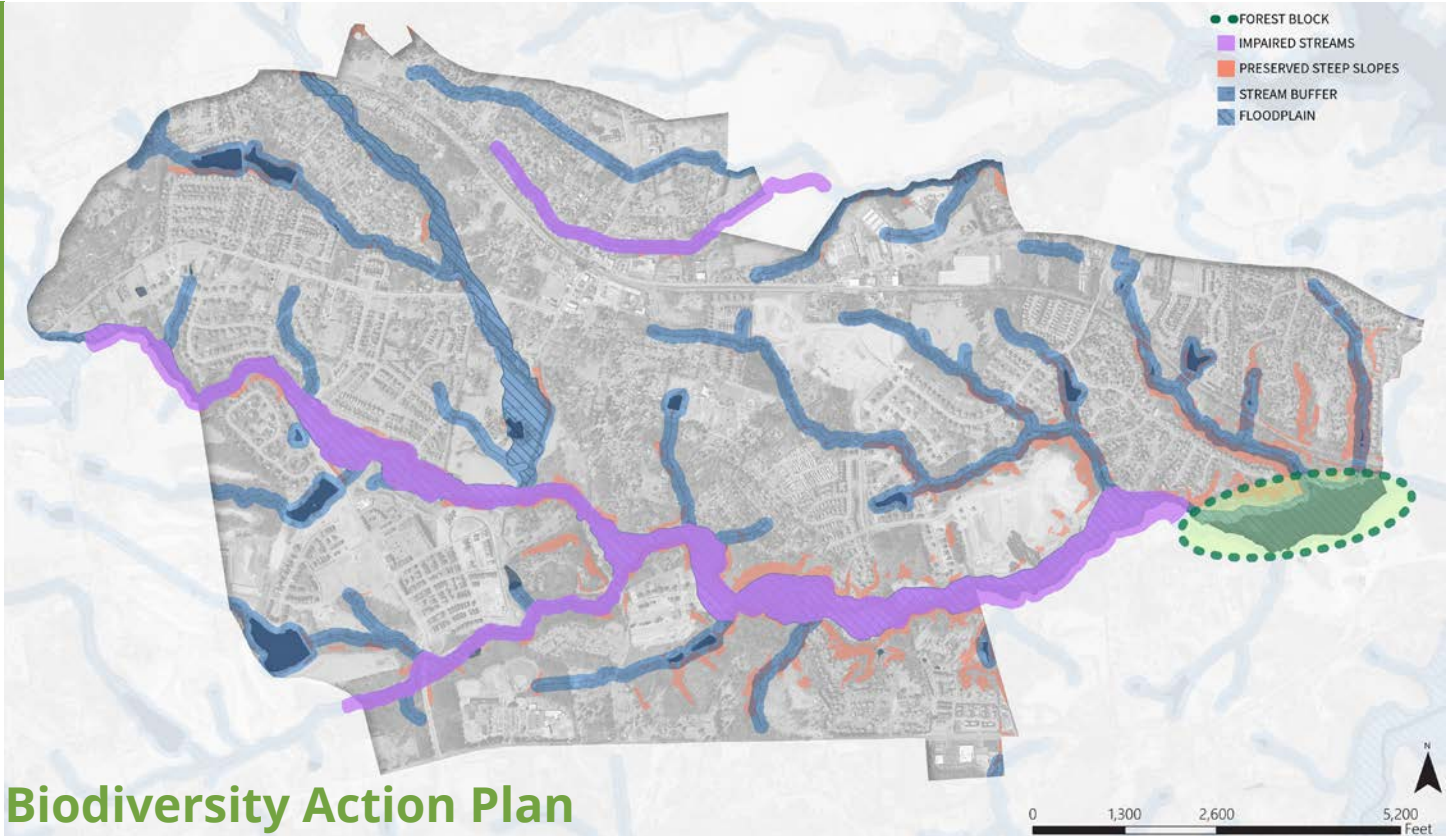
Public Lands



The map above shows areas that are publicly-owned land for recreation and conservation in Crozet. These areas include public parks and publicly-owned land around public trails.



This is a caption. It is Open Sans Regular 9pt with a slightly lighter color.



This map identifies impaired streams and a small forest block in Crozet from the Albemarle County Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Cultural and Scenic Resources

Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Crozet’s location near the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah National Park and its variety of events, festivals, and activities in both the Development Area and adjacent Rural Area present opportunities for continued and expanded heritage and cultural tourism.

Bike Route 76 is a long-distance bicycling route between the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and Missouri, and which then continues westward as the TransAmerica Trail, ending in Oregon at the Pacific Ocean. It includes shared roadways, on-road accommodations, and off-road shared-use paths. Bike Route 76 runs along the edge of the Crozet Development Area, including portions of Lanetown Road, Railroad Avenue, and Buck Road. Consideration should be given to either re-route Bike Route 76 through Downtown Crozet (via Jarman’s Gap) or to include signage at Jarman’s Gap and Lanetown Road for visitors to stop in Downtown Crozet.

Several annual parades and events take place in Downtown Crozet and Crozet Park. These include the twice-annual Crozet Arts and Crafts Festival in the Park, which features local food and beverages, live music, and the sale of local artisanal goods.

Crozet is within the Monticello American Viticultural Area (AVA) and is near several vineyards on the Monticello Wine Trail. The Monticello AVA features an annual Wine Week festival, which includes vineyard tours and events. There are also breweries in both the Development and Rural Areas. Starr Hill Brewery in Crozet is also part of the “Brew Ridge Trail”, which is a self-guided network of local craft breweries within the region. Visitors and locals may use small tour buses to ‘hop’ to several different nearby wineries and breweries. Farms and orchards within the Rural Areas adjacent to Crozet offer activities including pick your own fruit, live music, and shopping for artisanal goods.



(Above) Access to Bike Route 76 along Railroad Avenue in Crozet.

Rural Connections

These activities and resources highlight the need for connections between the Development and Rural Areas. The type of connection will depend on the distance from the Development Area and the feasibility of providing pedestrian and bicycle access. The four Rural Shared Road sections recommended in the Connectivity Chapter are intended to provide enhanced bicycle access to the nearby Rural Area, including Mint Springs Park. Additional opportunities for trail connections to Beaver Creek Reservoir and Mint Springs Park should be explored.

The County’s Comprehensive Plan recommends future trail connections in the Rural Areas adjacent to Crozet. One is the Three Notched Trail connecting the Western Neighborhoods to Crozet along Route 250 and a trail connecting Crozet from Half Mile Branch Road to the Blue Ridge Tunnel in Afton. Alignments for these trails will require further study. This chapter recommends a feasibility study in coordination with regional partners to determine the appropriate alignment of this trail network through or adjacent to Crozet.



(Above) Lanetown Road, Crozet

View Corridors and Vistas

While walking, biking, hiking, driving, and relaxing outdoors in Crozet, the surrounding mountains are often visible. These mountains include the Blue Ridge mountains, Bucks Elbow Mountain, and several smaller peaks. Many of these view corridors and vistas are visible from the public right of way and public parks and trails. Promontory decks are planned for Western Park, which will provide public access points for these views. Views along Lanetown Road, Railroad Avenue, and Buck Road are also important, as they are part of national Bike Route 76. Future development and redevelopment along these roadways and adjacent to Western Park should consider mountain viewsheds and preserve their visibility from the public streets and park to the extent feasible.

Conservation Guiding Principle

Enhance Crozet's natural beauty, existing natural resources, and the surrounding rural areas with an integrated network of parks and gathering spaces, trails, and natural areas that offer increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and protect natural resources.

Goal 1: Continue to develop community parks and support expanded opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreation activities in Crozet.

- A. Construct Western Park in general accord with the 2018 Western Park Master Plan.
- B. Manage Lickinghole Creek Reservoir and the surrounding area primarily as a Natural Area with passive recreation opportunities and trails that are compatible with Environmental Features and wildlife habitat, such as wetlands and the bald eagle nest.
- C. Pursue opportunities for interpretative and educational signage, removal of invasive species, as well as installation of additional site furnishings (e.g. benches) at Lickinghole Creek Reservoir.
- D. Enhance the existing County-owned stormwater management facility along Crozet Avenue to provide a trail access point, educational signage, site furnishings, and areas for viewing wildlife.
- E. Through the development review process and through future Parks and Green Systems Planning efforts, explore opportunities for new trailheads that provide vehicular parking to increase access to Crozet Trails.

Goal 2: Build and maintain an interconnected network of trails that expand recreational opportunities in Crozet and provide alternate routes for travel between neighborhoods and to centers of activity.

- A. Extend and upgrade the Crozet Connector Trail to a shared-use path standard from Downtown Crozet to Westhall, creating a multimodal route with a natural aesthetic. If phased, the priority should be to finalize and upgrade the connection between Eastern Avenue and Downtown.
- B. Enhance the connection between Crozet Park and the Crozet Connector Trail through improved signage, wayfinding, or other similar site improvements.

- C. Establish a trail along Lickinghole Creek, creating a continuous trail between Lickinghole Creek Reservoir and Western Park.
- D. As opportunities through new development proposals arise, continue to pursue trail connections as shown on the Parks & Green Systems Plan and to provide spur trail connections to new and existing neighborhoods.

Goal 3: Leverage Crozet's proximity to the Blue Ridge Mountains and County Parks in the Rural Area by expanding access to rural and regional amenities.

- A. Explore opportunities for trail connections between Crozet Trails to Mint Springs Park and to Beaver Creek Reservoir.
- B. In coordination with regional partners (such as VDOT, TJPDC, and community trail groups), conduct a feasibility study to determine the appropriate alignment of the planned Three Notched Trail through or adjacent to Crozet, including a connection between Crozet and the Blue Ridge Tunnel.

Goal 4: Conserve and enhance Crozet's natural resources through natural resources planning, sustainable land management practices, and the use of sustainable and restorative site design practices.

- A. As new County-owned parks and trails are constructed or improved, leverage opportunities for installing educational and interpretive signage about biodiversity, ecosystem services, and habitat protection. Explore partnerships with local schools and community groups in this effort.
- B. Protect areas with important biodiversity and natural resources through careful siting of trails and other recreational opportunities, especially around Lickinghole Creek Reservoir and areas identified on the Tree Canopy Map as existing or potential forest blocks.
- C. Hire an independent, third-party consultant to study the status of the Parrot Branch tributary stream between Railroad Avenue and St. George Avenue to identify the status of the stream. Based on study findings, develop recommendations for restoring stream health while allowing current uses to continue adjacent to the stream.

- D. Continue stream restoration efforts along Parrot Branch on County-owned properties. As part of these improvements, retrofit the existing stormwater management facility at Crozet Elementary School to improve runoff and treatment.
- E. Update residential zoning requirements to eliminate cluster and bonus-cluster lot size and frontage requirements to allow for more open space, tree canopy, and stream buffer preservation.

Goal 5: Support County-wide initiatives such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) by identifying areas to enhance and expand tree canopy and other native habitats within Crozet.

- A. Explore opportunities to enhance and expand Crozet's urban forest, increase native tree canopy, and restore stream banks and buffers, especially within and adjacent to Powells Creek and Lickinghole Creek Greenways, the Lickinghole Basin Natural Area, and on County-owned parcels such as parks, natural areas, and public lands.
- B. Collaborate with willing Homeowners Associations and developers to enhance and expand native tree canopy on their open space parcels, especially those adjacent to the Lickinghole Creek and Powells Creek Greenways.
- C. Where possible, reduce mowing in public parks and on County-owned property in Crozet and replace mowed lawns with natural landscapes such as forest, pollinator gardens, and meadows.
- D. As opportunities arise, through new development and County-initiated projects, remove invasive species in stream buffers, floodplains and greenways and replace with native planting to improve aquatic ecosystem health, water quality, and riparian habitat quality.