Land Use and Development

Analysis of current land use patterns within the town is useful for developing a plan for its future development, not only in terms of how land may be used but what infrastructure will be needed to provide services to that future development. This section of the comprehensive plan describes current land use patterns within the town as well as desired future land uses that will serve to achieve land development that is consistent with the future the town sees for itself. In addition, this plan section provides guidance as to how the town's Land Development Ordinance should be written so as to implement the desired development patterns.

Figure 1. Town of Gordonsville, 2008. (Source: Google Earth, 2012)

Current Land Use Patterns

Land use patterns in the town of Gordonsville are reflective of how other small towns have developed over time and, like so many of those small towns, they have been influenced by the convergence of both major roadways and rail lines within the town. The following provides an overview of land use patterns in the town today.

Generally speaking, the town enjoys three distinct, yet different commercial hubs located along major road thoroughfares passing through town:

> *Gordonsville Traffic Circle--For the traveling public, one of the best known features of Gordonsville is the traffic circle, where US Routes 15 and 33 and State Route 231 converge and where a hub of commercial development has been located since the early days of the town. Today, convenience stores, gas stations and fast food restaurants cater to the needs of the thousands of motorists who travel though the circle each day.*

> *Downtown--From the circle, US Routes 15 and 33 continue to the south along Main Street and lead to the town's downtown commercial core. In the early days of the town, the location of the railroad enhanced the development of downtown because of the proximity of the passenger and freight depots once located near the downtown area. Over time, the downtown area has transitioned from a base level of retail services (grocery, pharmacy, etc.) to higher end restaurants and shops offering higher level retail, art, jewelry, antiques and other specialty shops that are popular with tourists visiting the area.*

> *Commercial Entrance Corridors--Two other commercial areas in the town, Gordonsville Plaza along West Gordon Avenue at the western entrance to town (State Route 231 South toward Charlottesville) and businesses along Martinsburg Avenue (US Routes 15 and 33) at the southern entrance to town, provide primary and secondary level retail services, such as groceries, household goods, clothing, auto repair, etc.*
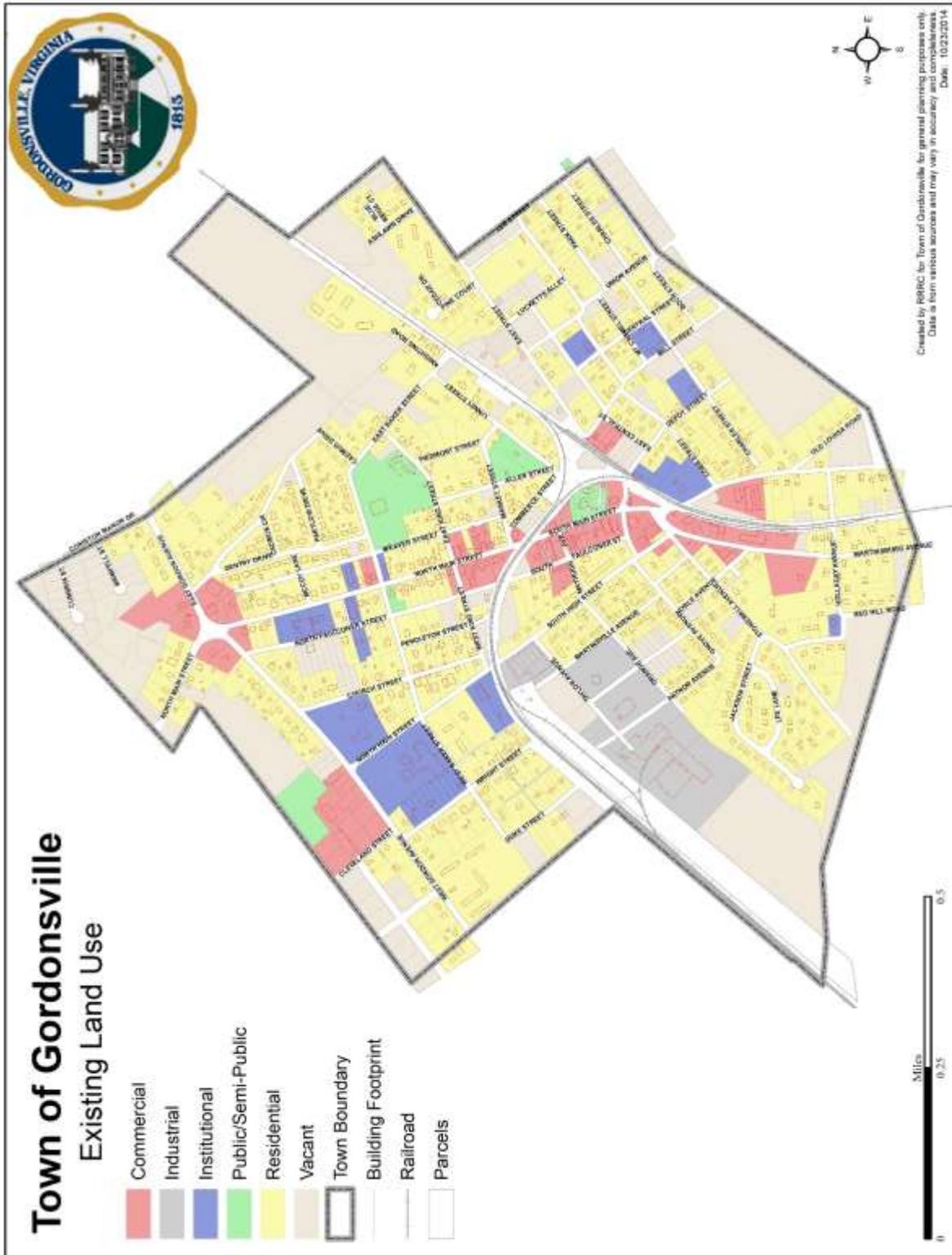
Adjacent to these commercial areas is compact residential development on relatively small parcels of land. The homes along Main Street and one or two blocks behind the street developed in the late 19th and early 20th century and are styled in the vernacular architecture of that time. As one moves away from the town center, distinct neighborhoods of residential development are clustered in each quadrant of the town. A majority of the homes in these neighborhoods were constructed during the 1960's and are the brick rambler/cottage construction popular at that time. Other homes were constructed as early as the late 19th century and as recently as the first decade of the 21st century and their style is reflective of that which was popular at the time of construction. These varying housing types give the town its character and should be emulated as new or infill construction is contemplated.

With regard to multi-family development, several different apartment complexes, constructed during the 1990's and located on the periphery of town, provide affordable living for town residents.

An area of industrial development is located on the western periphery of the town adjacent to the railroad. This area was developed in the late 1960's and early 1970's and served as the campus for American Press, which closed in 2011. Today, Green Applications occupies the property.
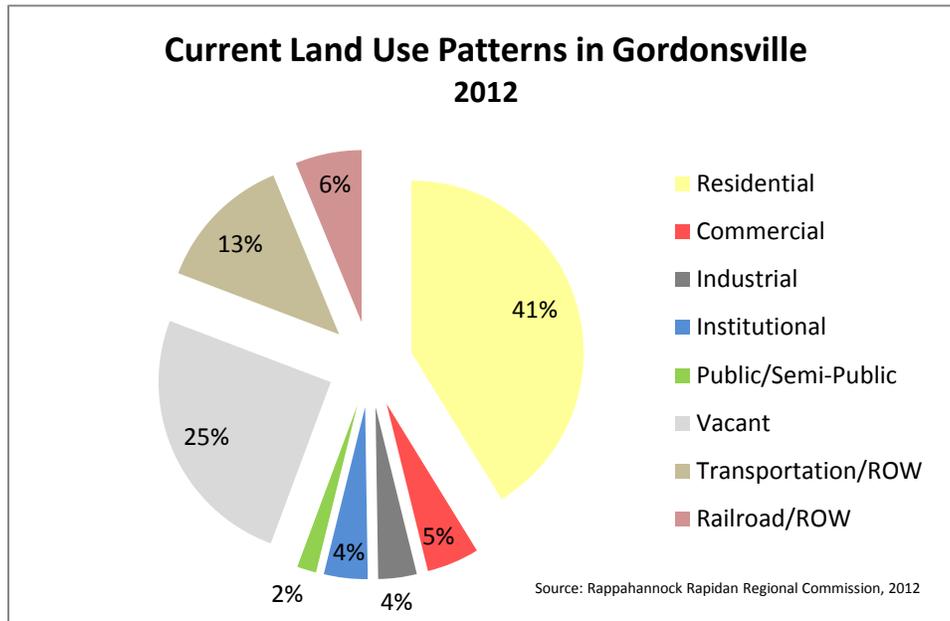
Public and institutional uses are interspersed throughout town, serving as anchors for the community and completing the fabric that makes up the town. Vacant properties can be found throughout town, providing opportunities for neighborhood parks or infill development.

The map below illustrates the location of the various land uses within the town.

Town of Gordonsville
Existing Land Use

Commercial
Industrial
Institutional
Public/Semi-Public
Residential
Vacant
Town Boundary
Building Footprint
Railroad
Parcels

Approximately 75% of the total acreage in the incorporated area of the Town of Gordonsville is developed in the sense of actually being covered by a structure and its related uses (yards, driveways, etc.) or pavement. This figure includes residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and public/semi-public uses as well as all transportation and railroad right-of-ways. The following chart shows the breakdown of current land use patterns within the town:

Current Land Use Patterns in Gordonsville 2012

- Residential — 41%
- Commercial — 5%
- Industrial — 4%
- Institutional — 4%
- Public/Semi-Public — 2%
- Vacant — 25%
- Transportation/ROW — 13%
- Railroad/ROW — 6%

Source: Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission, 2012

Residential land use is the predominant land use in the Town of Gordonsville, accounting for 41% of the total Town acreage. Interestingly, approximately 25% of the town's land area is vacant. Nearly 20% of the town's land area is in transportation and railroad right-of-way.

Future Land Use

A critical component of the town's comprehensive plan is the future land use plan which serves to achieve the vision town residents have for the physical land form of the community. As such, this plan serves as a guide for future development, taking into consideration current land use patterns, future infrastructure needs, future land use plans of surrounding localities, and the expressed desire of town residents to protect the historic and small town characteristics of the town, all while promoting areas of growth that are compatible with surrounding uses and will foster economic development within the community.

Gordonsville and areas immediately surrounding the town are identified as a growth area for Orange County in the County's comprehensive plan[1]. By its very nature, the town is an Urban Development Area within the county and meets the requirements for designation as such as set forth in §15.2-2223.1 of the Virginia Code. Current town land area is sufficient to accommodate projected population growth for the town for the next 10-15 years. Additionally, the current development patterns within the town are that of traditional neighborhood design that provides for pedestrian-friendly road design, interconnection of new and existing streets, preservation of

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[1] Orange County Comprehensive Plan, 2006; pages 77 and 89.

natural areas, mixed use neighborhoods with mixed housing types, and reduced street widths and building setback requirements.

The following is a description of the land use patterns envisioned for the future of the town:

Downtown Business

Figure 2. Businesses line Main Street in Downtown (staff photo, 2016).

This category is the traditional historic downtown business core of the town, with attached buildings on small lots placed close to the street and parking provided both on-street and in lots located beside and behind uses. Land uses include a mix of service and retail establishments, with residential spaces above the ground floor. Future development in this area of town should continue these features, allowing buildings close to the sidewalk, ease of pedestrian access resulting from wider sidewalks and crosswalks at key locations along the street. To further protect the character and historical integrity of downtown, future development in this area, whether it is new, infill or rehabilitation of existing property, should emulate the design features of the downtown area and as set forth in the plans for the town's Main Street streetscape project, which adds street trees and landscaping to add beauty and stormwater management, and parking on-street or in landscaped lots at the rear of buildings.

North Main Street Mixed Use Corridor

This category is the area of Main Street that connects downtown to the traffic circle, with 19th century homes and churches and old growth trees that line the street. Land uses in this area are characterized by a mixture of residential, office, institutional and public uses; residential uses are located on both sides of the street generally between major road intersections, while office, institutional and public uses tend to be located at the major street intersections (Baker Street, King Street and Market Street), at the southern end of Main Street near downtown and at the northern end near the traffic circle. Form-based codes focusing on the co-location of compatible uses and building forms reflective of the character of Main Street should be written into the town's Land Development Ordinance to guide future development in this area of town.

Figure 3. Main Street Gordonsville, looking north (staff photo, 2012).

Specifically, future residential and non-residential uses along this section of Main Street should reflect the characteristics of existing land uses: one or two-story clapboard siding homes with front porches, setback a short distance from the street so as to maintain a connection with the street and passersby. Non-residential uses should be compatible with the surrounding residential uses and should be concentrated at the major road intersections along the street, leaving areas in between to remain residential to keep this section of Main Street from fully transitioning to uses other than residential. Building setbacks, scale, design, lighting and signage for non-residential uses should be compatible with that of surrounding residential uses. Parking should be located in landscaped lots beside or behind buildings fronting the street. The tree canopy along this section of Main Street is a defining characteristic of the corridor and should be maintained.

Business Development Campus

Figure 4. Green Applications (photo courtesy of Google Earth, 2012).

This category applies to areas that are developed for business and light industry with potential for the development of expanded business use or accessory support uses in a campus-like setting. New development should include uses that complement and support existing businesses, including but not limited to food establishments, copy centers, etc., and should include landscaping and buffers to minimize land use conflicts with adjoining residential uses. Amenities such as walking or biking trails and park areas should be incorporated into new development to provide an aesthetically pleasing working environment.

Entrance Corridor

The entrances to a town give visitors their first impression of the community, making them an important component of successful economic development and heritage tourism efforts. In Gordonsville, the entrances to the town include a mixture of residential and commercial uses in varying levels of condition. Homes along these corridors are setback a greater distance from the street than are homes in the center of town. Businesses in these areas are located at the edge of the street with ill-defined access and insufficient off-street parking opportunities.

Figure 5. Martinsburg Avenue (Google Earth, 2015).

The Entrance Corridor land use classification presents opportunities for the creation of an overlay district that outlines standards for redevelopment of property that provides for safe ingress/egress through coordinated road entrances for the traveling public as well as pedestrian

access to and from the downtown area and adjoining neighborhoods through sidewalks and crosswalks where needed. These standards would call for development in these corridors to be reflective of the town's rural and historic character through trees and landscaping at the street, parking areas with landscaping to provide shade and stormwater management, as well as minimal signage and lighting with building construction for both residential and non-residential uses designed to reflect the historic character of the town.

Commercial Center

Figure 6. Gordonsville Plaza (staff photo, 2012).

This land use category generally surrounds or is located along major highway corridors within the town and accommodates large-lot commercial development that is oriented to automobile access. Development in these areas should include trees and landscaping at the street, parking areas with landscaping to provide shade and stormwater management, coordinated road entrances, and minimized signage and lighting. Building design and construction should be consistent with surrounding uses and be compatible and reflective of the historic character of the town. Minimum lot sizes should be approximately 5,000 square feet.

Neighborhood Business

This category applies to small commercial uses adjacent to or located within established neighborhoods. Businesses are small in scale and provide services to neighborhood residents and others. Large-scale retail and service enterprises are not located in these areas. Development in these areas complements adjacent residential neighborhoods, with buildings generally located close to the street with the same setbacks as adjacent residential uses, sidewalks, landscaping, directed lighting, minimal signage, parking in the rear or on the street (with minimal parking preferred). Design of future development, including infill development, should be reflective of and protect the architectural features and historic integrity of surrounding neighborhoods. Minimum lot sizes will generally be between 2,500 and 5,000 square feet.

Figure 7. The Emporium thrift shop is located adjacent to residential neighborhoods in southeast Gordonsville (staff photo, 2015).

Neighborhood Residential

This land use category is a lower density area generally applied to older, established residential neighborhoods within the town. Residential uses in this category are generally characterized by single family residential uses and duplexes. Lot sizes average approximately 9,000 square feet in size. Traditional neighborhood development features, such as narrow streets, sidewalks and small lots exist and should be emphasized for new, infill or redevelopment in this area. In addition,

Figure 8. Homes on Gentry Drive (staff photo, 2012).

the pattern, scale and design of new or infill development in these neighborhoods should be reflective of existing neighborhood characteristics; lot sizes should be a minimum of 7,000 square feet (6 units to the acre). Property owners are encouraged to reduce the number of nonconforming lots (those smaller than the current minimum lot size as prescribed by the zoning ordinance) within these neighborhoods by combining them with adjoining properties as available. Vacant properties within these areas should be considered for uses such as community gardens, playgrounds, or parks for both active and passive recreational use. Non-residential uses in this land use include churches, schools and other similar institutional uses.

Medium Density Residential

This land use category applies to residential areas within the town on lots that range in size from .25 to .5 acre in size or 3-8 units per acre. Typical land uses include single family residential, duplexes, and small-scale townhouse or multi-family developments. New development should reflect the characteristics of adjacent existing development; multi-family developments should feature 8-12 units per acre in structures designed to reflect the historic character of the town and clustered around common areas that provide community gardens, playgrounds, or parks for both active and passive recreational use. A pedestrian network should be established in these areas through the use of walking trails or

Figure 9. Grove Street apartments (staff photo, 2012).

sidewalks to provide adequate access within each development and as a linkage to the rest of town.

Recreation and Open Space

Figure 10. Verling Park (staff photo, 2012).

This land use category applies to existing and future recreational and open spaces. With the exception of northwest Gordonsville, certain vacant properties within each neighborhood are shown on the future land use map as potential sites for meeting the town's goal of locating a park or recreational space in those areas. Except for Cooke Park and the small lot located within Confederate Manor subdivision, these properties are privately owned. Because of the presence of the playground at Gordon Barbour Elementary School in northwest Gordonsville, no separate recreation and open space area is shown for that part of town. As new open spaces are

developed as parks or for recreational purposes, efforts should be made to ensure each area is linked through a network of sidewalks or bike/walk trails.

Public/Semi-Public

This land use category applies to those properties in town that are owned by the town or a department of the town and includes Town Hall, the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company fire hall and fairgrounds, and the public works yard located behind Gordonsville Plaza shopping center, which is planned for the future location of the town's public works facility. Other new public spaces or structures not currently identified in the plan may be amended into the plan as set forth in §15.2-2232 of the Virginia Code.

Future Town Growth Areas

Despite the fact there is no immediate pressure for the town to grow outside its current boundaries, it is wise for the town to consider possible growth areas, specifically those areas that identify themselves with the town and where town services such as public water are currently provided or are available. The future growth areas shown on the Future Land Use Map are somewhat similar to those areas previously discussed with Orange County as potential boundary adjustment areas but have been pared down to more accurately reflect a likely growth expansion for the town.

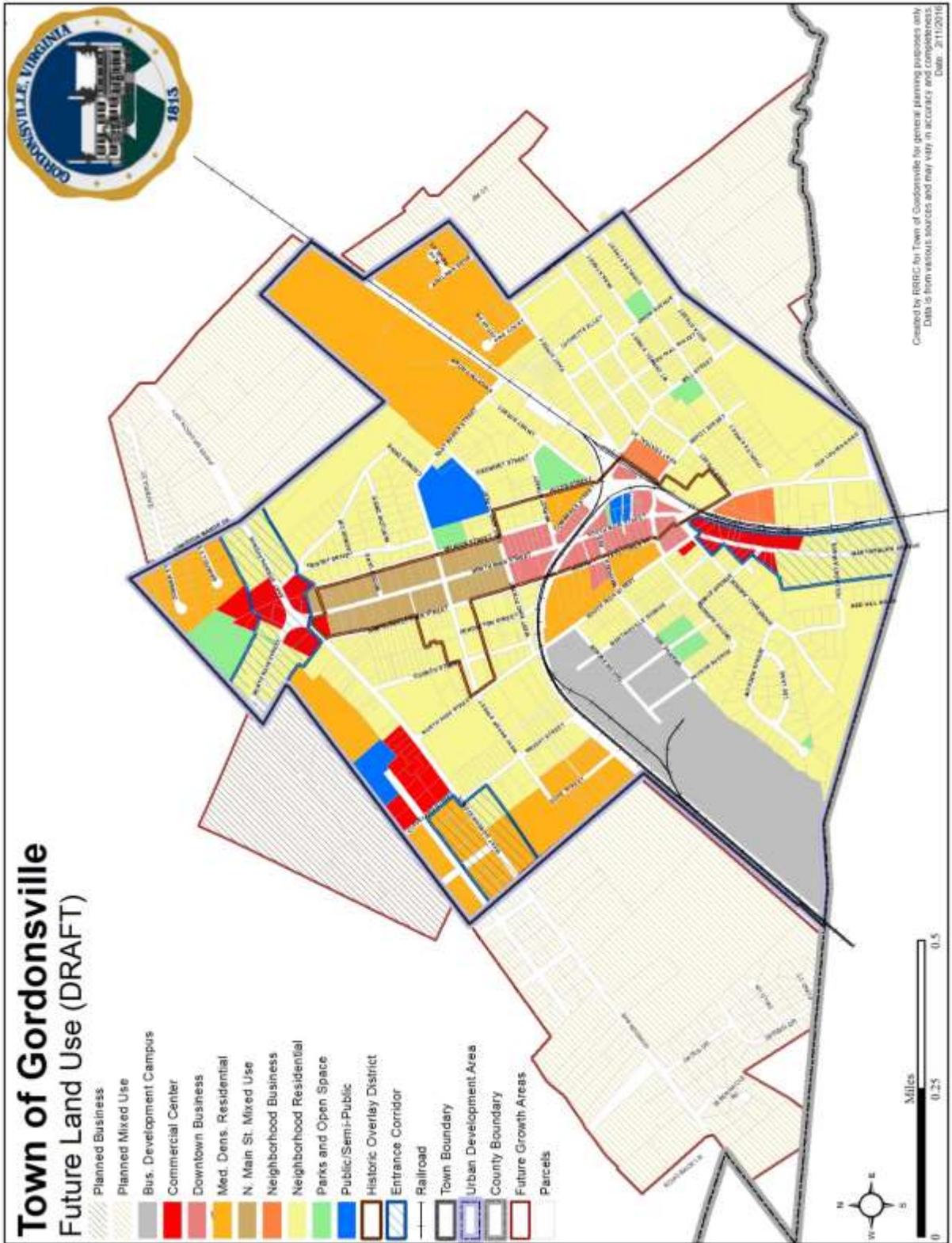The following land uses are in place to guide development in the future growth areas as proposed.

Planned Business

This land use category contains large business and light industrial uses in a master-planned campus-like setting that includes complementary service and institutional uses. A planned business area should be a minimum of 10 acres in size; individual smaller lots may be permitted as part of an approved master plan. Development is coordinated with surrounding land uses to provide for pedestrian and vehicular access. Open space preservation and design standards for architecture, site design and signage reflective of the historic character of the town should be incorporated as part of the master plan for development.
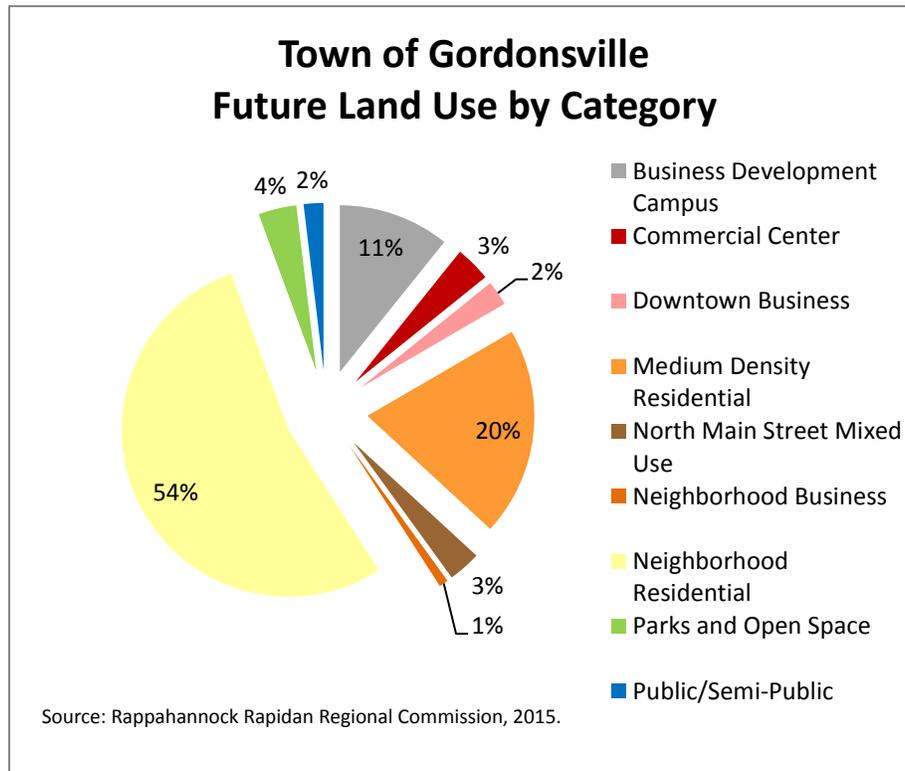
Planned Mixed Use

This land use category provides for the development of a master planned residential and business community that is generally five acres or more in size and is comprised of smaller lots of varying sizes and housing types that include single family, multi-family and townhome development. These areas will be primarily residential in nature, but should include support commercial or service development (approximately 25 percent of the land area). Form-based codes should be used to achieve development that allows for mixed uses in a traditional neighborhood setting in this area, coordinating architecture, landscaping and site design that is reflective of the historic character of the town to allow for its natural extension, preservation of environmentally sensitive and open space areas, and pedestrian and vehicular connectivity to adjoining properties.

The proposed future land use map for the town is shown below.

Town of Gordonsville
Future Land Use (DRAFT)

- Planned Business
- Planned Mixed Use
- Bus. Development Campus
- Commercial Center
- Downtown Business
- Med. Dens. Residential
- N. Main St. Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Business
- Neighborhood Residential
- Parks and Open Space
- Public/Semi-Public
- Historic Overlay District
- Entrance Corridor
- Railroad
- Town Boundary
- Urban Development Area
- County Boundary
- Future Growth Areas
- Parcels

Miles
0   0.25   0.5

The following chart illustrates the breakdown of projected future land use within the town:

Town of Gordonsville
Future Land Use by Category

- 4%
- 2%
- 11%
- 3%
- 2%
- 20%
- 54%
- 3%
- 1%

Legend:
- ■ Business Development Campus
- ■ Commercial Center
- ■ Downtown Business
- ■ Medium Density Residential
- ■ North Main Street Mixed Use
- ■ Neighborhood Business
- ■ Neighborhood Residential
- ■ Parks and Open Space
- ■ Public/Semi-Public

Source: Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission, 2015.

Residential uses will continue to dominate the landscape of the town, while commercial and business uses will total approximately 19%, providing a solid housing base for the town with ample opportunities for business growth to bolster the economy of the town. Planned Business and Planned Mixed Use land uses (not shown in the graph) will add nearly 380 acres to the town if those growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use map are successfully added to the town through boundary adjustment at some time in the future.

Development Design Guidelines

Development pressure and the desire to quickly and easily accommodate economic development can lead to compromises in development standards and processes that result in lost community character. Gordonsville wants and needs to allow for development that will provide jobs for town citizens and improve the town's overall economy. Just as important, the town wants to preserve its unique sense of place. With carefully constructed design guidelines and efficient review processes, development may be achieved while enhancing and protecting the character of the community. The following provides development guidelines that should be applied to new or infill development or rehabilitation of property.

Downtown Development

As the traditional center of commerce and business for Gordonsville, the downtown area is particularly important to the character and identity of the town. More and more, downtown is becoming a destination for tourists. As all of the downtown area is located in a historic district,

new development must be carefully designed so that it complements existing development, enhances the downtown, reinforces and protects its architectural character and contributes to its revitalization. Form-based codes focusing on the co-location of uses compatible to the area and building forms reflective of the character of historic downtown should be written into the town's Land Development Ordinance to guide new development in this area. Specifically, the following should be considered as new development is contemplated:

- Rehabilitation and reuse of existing historic buildings should be encouraged over demolition, and inappropriate elements that cover or detract from architectural details should be removed from building façades.

- New buildings in downtown should be built close to or on the front property line and should be designed to reflect the historic character of the downtown area. Specifically, the scale, mass, dimensions and general style of adjacent historic buildings should be considered in the design of new construction.

- Parking in downtown should be provided along the street or in existing common areas behind or to the side of buildings. Canopy trees and landscaped areas should be used to shade and beautify areas provided for parking.

- Where feasible, above-ground utilities should be placed underground or at the rear of properties.

- Signage should be strictly controlled in downtown to maintain historic character. Signage placed on a building should relate to the architectural features of the building and not obstruct key architectural features.

Entrance Corridor Development

As mentioned previously, the entrance corridors leading into Gordonsville give an important first impression of the community to visitors. Specifically, Route 15 north and south of town, Route 33 west and east of town, and Route 231 north and south of the town set an expectation of what the town has to offer newcomers. Development along all of these corridors extends beyond the jurisdiction of the town such that communication and coordination with Orange and Louisa Counties is important.

Traditionally, corridor development equates to sprawl development that consists of large retail establishments with site development and design features that are inconsistent with local characteristics. As development within the entrance corridors to the town is contemplated, the following guidelines should be considered so that development is reflective of Gordonsville's unique sense of place:

- Parking areas should be limited to the minimum amount needed for adjacent businesses and should be placed primarily at the side and rear of buildings where possible. Shared parking and connectivity between adjacent properties is encouraged.

- Parking areas should be shaded from the sun by mature canopy trees to reduce heat build-up over paved areas. Where feasible, permeable surfaces should be used to

facilitate water infiltration into the ground and bio-swales and rain gardens should be used for the collection and filtering of stormwater runoff.

- New construction should be located to minimize the impact on existing tree canopies surrounding the site.

- Landscaping should be used along street fronts and in parking areas to minimize the visual impact of paving and to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff.

- Historic or architecturally significant buildings should be reused as much as possible. New buildings should be located as close to the street as possible, with parking areas located to the side or rear of the structure.

- Views along the street front should be visually appealing and uncluttered. Where feasible, above-ground utilities should be placed below ground or at the rear of properties. Signage should be limited to the minimum necessary for businesses, and should be designed to be in scale with the corresponding business and in keeping with the historic character of the town.

Residential Development

Most residential neighborhoods in Gordonsville are old and well-established, with attractive homes and well-maintained yards fronting on quiet residential streets. To protect the investment homeowners have made in these neighborhoods and to protect the distinct character of each, future renovation and construction in these areas should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Historic homes should be preserved and rehabilitated rather than razed for new construction. Additions to historic homes should complement the architecture of the existing structure.

- The mass, proportion, scale, building materials and setback of new homes should reflect that of surrounding properties. Street-front views should feature attractive landscaping and minimal signage, below-ground utilities, and pavement.

- New homes should consider deep front porches as an extension of living space into the outdoors.

- New residential developments should feature streets that are arranged to extend and connect to existing patterns of street networks. Street trees should be planted to provide shade and landscaping throughout residential areas.

- New residential developments should feature active and passive recreational facilities for the neighborhood, including but not limited to walking paths and bike trails that allow pedestrian access to adjoining properties and the rest of town.

Land Use Goal

To provide for the efficient use of land within the town that protects the environment and is reflective of the historic and rural, small-town character of the community.

Objective A. Ensure that the town's Land Development Ordinance is amended to reflect the land use principles set forth in the comprehensive plan.		
	A1.	*Review and revise the Land Development Ordinance to reflect the land use design standards and principles set forth in the comprehensive plan, including form-based code standards and the development of a town design matrix, where appropriate.*
	A2.	*Develop entrance corridor plans to guide the development of the entrance corridors to the town.*
Objective B. Locate a park or playground, and corresponding sidewalk or bike/walk trail connection to other town parks, within each neighborhood in the town.		
	B1.	*Work with residents of each town neighborhood to determine the best location for a neighborhood park.*
Objective C. Encourage the continued revitalization of downtown.		
	C1.	*Promote downtown as a destination for cultural events for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.*
	C2.	*Amend the town's Land Development Ordinance to incorporate form-based codes that set forth development standards that achieve development consistent on all levels with the character of downtown.*
Objective D. Maintain existing town development patterns in areas that are annexed or boundary-adjusted to become part of the incorporated town.		
	D1.	*Amend the comprehensive plan as needed to designate appropriate land uses for those areas to be annexed or boundary-adjusted into the town.*
Objective E. Ensure that adequate water and sewer facilities exist to serve new town development.		
	E1.	*Inventory existing water and sewer capacities and develop a plan for the expansion of facilities as needed to accommodate changes in land use within the town.*
Objective F. Encourage mixed use development through the use of form-based land development codes that provide for the mixture of compatible uses and building forms to create traditional neighborhood development, reducing the need for the automobile and emphasizing pedestrian access.		

F1.	*Review and revise the town's Land Development Ordinance to incorporate form-based code language to create traditional neighborhood features where appropriate.*

Objective G. Encourage neighborhood infill development that is consistent with the architecture, mass, scale and design features existing within each neighborhood.	
G1.	*Develop special area plans for each neighborhood to inventory the characteristics of each and provide standards for future development to preserve the character of each community.*

Objective H. Minimize the conflicts between incompatible land uses through the use of buffering and screening requirements for new development.	
H1.	*Review and revise the town's Land Development Ordinance to incorporate buffering and screening requirements between residential and commercial, business and industrial land uses.*

Objective I. Ensure consistency between the land use categories of the comprehensive plan and the zoning districts in the Land Development Ordinance.	
I1.	*Review and revise the zoning districts set forth in the Land Development Ordinance to be consistent with the land uses outlined in the comprehensive plan, including development standards and illustrations of principles used to define each land use.*