



Save Rural Loudoun

Input for the Zoning Ordinance Re-Write



Agenda

- I. SWOT analysis
- II. SRL priorities
- III. Relevant County policies
- IV. Technical approaches to the priorities





I. SWOT Analysis



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Longstanding policy commitment to preserve
- Designated policy areas for preservation
- Zoning Administrator responsible for enforcement

Weaknesses

- Disconnect between policy and enforceable zoning
- Lack of protection for farmland and other resources
- County relies on citizen complaints for enforcement



SWOT Analysis

Opportunities

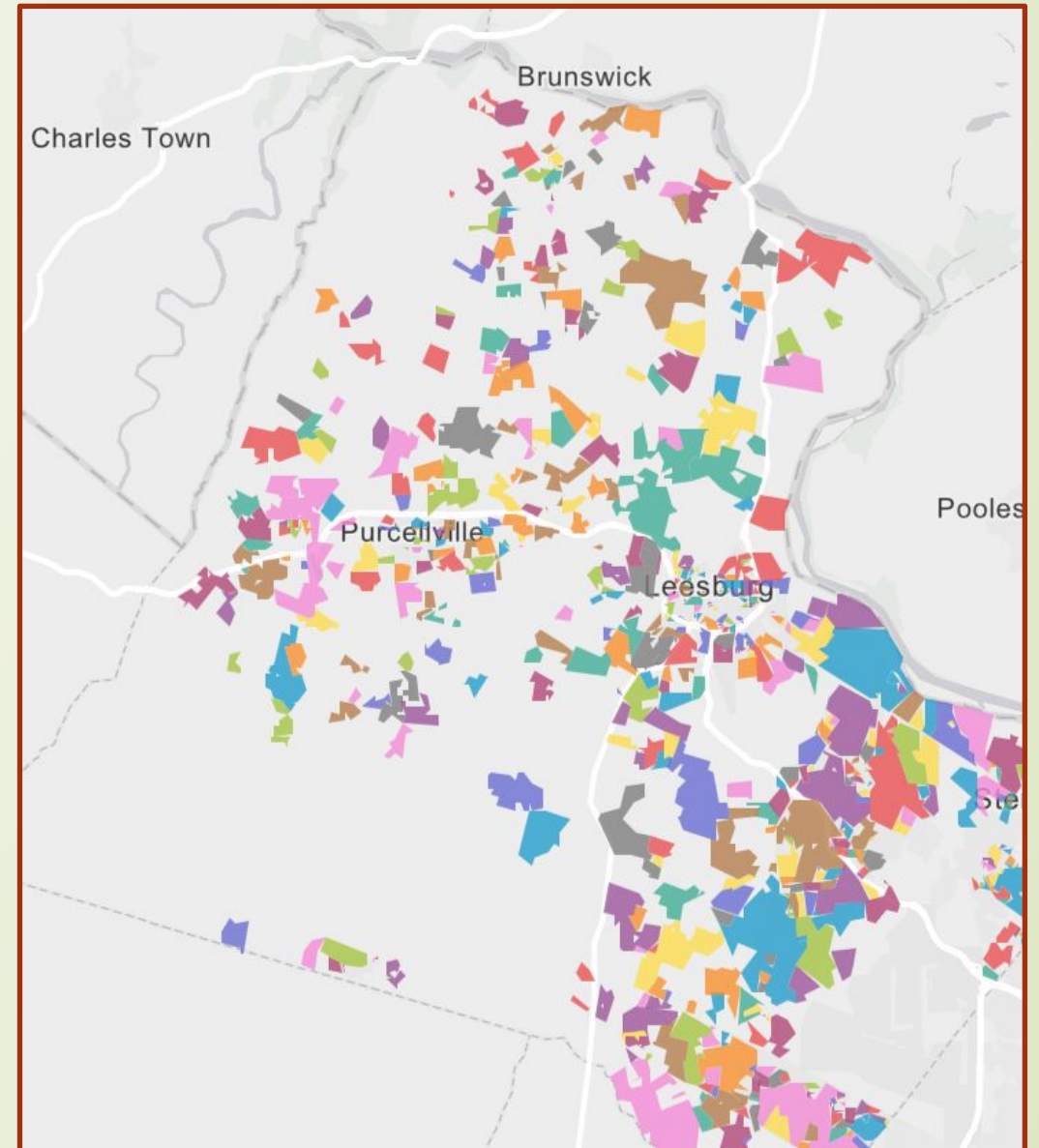
- BOS committed to rural preservation
- Broad citizen awareness and engagement
- Vibrant rural economy

Threats

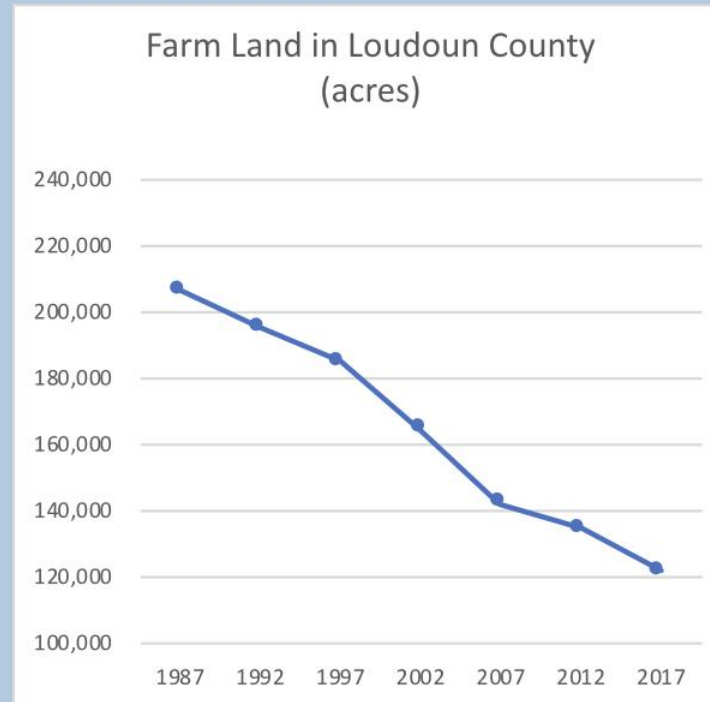
- Running out of time – near tipping point
- Unresolved policy conflicts in Comp Plan (by-right growth versus preservation goals)

Tipping point?

Residential communities as
of 2017



Vanishing farmland

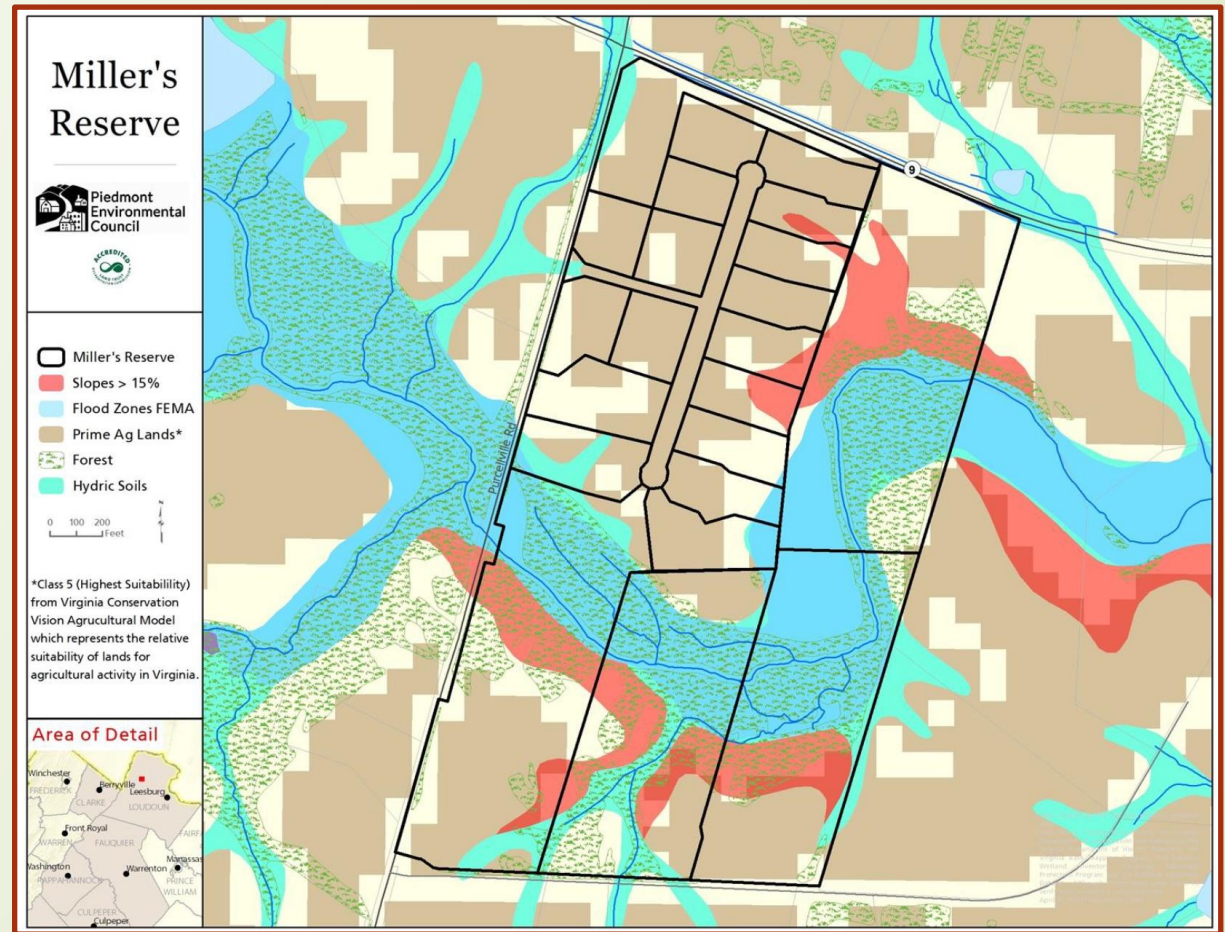


Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017.

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_2_County_Level/Virginia/st51_2_0008_0008.pdf

Lack of enforceable protections

Ongoing loss of prime soils





The Blue Ridge from
Woodgrove Road



Loss of visual
appeal





II. SRL Priorities for ZOR



Premises

1. Public infrastructure would be overwhelmed by another doubling of the rural population.
2. Farming and tourism can't survive and thrive if more prime farmland is destroyed.
3. Policies and regulations don't accomplish the County's goals unless they are enforced.



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Policy priorities

1. Uniform rural zoning (using AR-2 standards)
2. Preserve prime farmland
3. Preserve visual appeal
4. Effective zoning enforcement



II. Loudoun's Zoning Policies

Policy Basis for SRL Priorities

Chapter 2:

- “Protection of the RPA helps to ensure the preservation of **farmland**, natural, environmental, and heritage resources, open space, and **vistas** that are **vital aspects of Loudoun’s identity**.”
- “...geographic policy areas ... serve to prioritize areas for new growth and development **based on the availability of existing and planned infrastructure and public facilities**.”

2019 Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 2

RPA Policy 2.1. “Where residential development does occur ... it should be designed to **preserve the rural character, work with the land-form to preserve and protect natural features,** and conserve land for **agriculture, equine uses,** rural economy uses, passive recreation, and open space.”



2019 Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 2

- **RPA Policy 3.7.A.** “Maintain zoning regulations and design standards that **protect the right to farm.**”

Chapter 3

- **SGR Policy 3.2.** “Preserve and **protect prime farmland** and agricultural soils ...”



Zoning Ordinance (1993 revised)

Section 2-101 (AR-1)

- “The purpose and intent is to ... support the use of land for rural economy uses, with residential uses allowed at **densities consistent with the general open and rural character of the rural economy uses.**”

Section 2-103(C)

- “The Cluster Subdivision Option allows for the subdivision of a tract of land with a more compact residential design plus one or more large lots **suitable for rural economy uses** and/or common open space.”

Article 8

- “The **primary use** of such [rural economy] lot is for rural economy uses, with residential uses permitted **in association with a rural economy use.**”



Zoning Ordinance (continued)

Section 6-500 (Enforcement and Penalties)

- “The Zoning Administrator shall have the authority and **the duty to ensure** that all buildings and structures and the use of all land complies with the provisions of this Ordinance.”



III. Specific approaches



Uniform rural zoning in the RPA

Key AR-2 standards:

- ❑ Maximum lot yield of one house per 15 acres
- ❑ Minimum lot size for rural economy lots is 25 acres



Preserve farmland

1. Preserve 70% of property for "agriculture and other rural economy uses" only (the conserved area should not include open spaces with residential septic fields)
2. Preserve 80% of available farmland in rural economy lots
3. Avoid lot lines dividing up useable farmland
4. Require rural economy lots to be put under permanent easement
5. Clarify that "agriculture and other rural economy uses" are the primary uses on "rural economy lots"
6. Prevent HOA covenants from restricting the right to farm



Preserve visual appeal

1. Strengthen protections against clearing forestall areas in mountainside overlay (and review overlay to preserve vistas)
2. Specific design standards requiring residential developments to conform with the landform (as in existing Rural Hamlet standards)



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Effective enforcement

- Notify adjacent property owners of all cluster subdivision applications
- Require the Zoning Administrator to perform follow-up inspections of cluster subdivisions and approved special exceptions to verify compliance with preservation requirements



Thanks!

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