Land Use & Planning

Land use decisions create lasting implications for transportation systems, infrastructure systems, the environment, cultural resources, civic systems including public safety and recreation, and community and economic development. Successful land use planning accounts for these implications and ensures adequate provision of public facilities and services to address these issues. Land use planning guides the physical development of land within the Town addressing location, type, and intensity of use as well as public infrastructure and facilities. Well planned land use decisions are key in creating, maintaining, and enhancing a livable community.

Land use planning accounts for existing conditions and historical development patterns and increases transparency in zoning and land use decisions by showing the process behind decisions. Coordinating individual decisions through a larger development framework reduces conflicting land uses and balances public and private needs. Through directed physical development, effective land use planning includes the provision of adequate fiscally responsible public facilities and services including public safety, recreation, and infrastructure; an integrated, efficient transportation system; the promotion of community and economic development; and the protection of natural and cultural resources.

Primary Land Use & Planning Goal

Guide and manage physical land development and community growth through a transparent citizen-based process that protects natural and cultural resources, promotes community and economic development, allows for an integrated, efficient transportation system, and plans for the provision of cost-effective public facilities and services while remaining compatible with community character. Ensure the supply of diverse and affordable housing through land use and planning to meet the needs of all Town residents.

Existing and Future Land Use & Planning

Historically, development in Christiansburg centered around the courthouse creating a compact business district in the present downtown area. Development spanned outward from the downtown along the major rail and road routes. Due to three annexations, multiple boundary adjustments, and inclusion of the former Town of Cambria, Christiansburg is now more than twelve times larger in land area than at the time of incorporation in 1833. Currently, Christiansburg is approximately 14.1 square miles. The following maps depict the development of land over time in Christiansburg and show the current Zoning Districts, respectively.

Zoning Map

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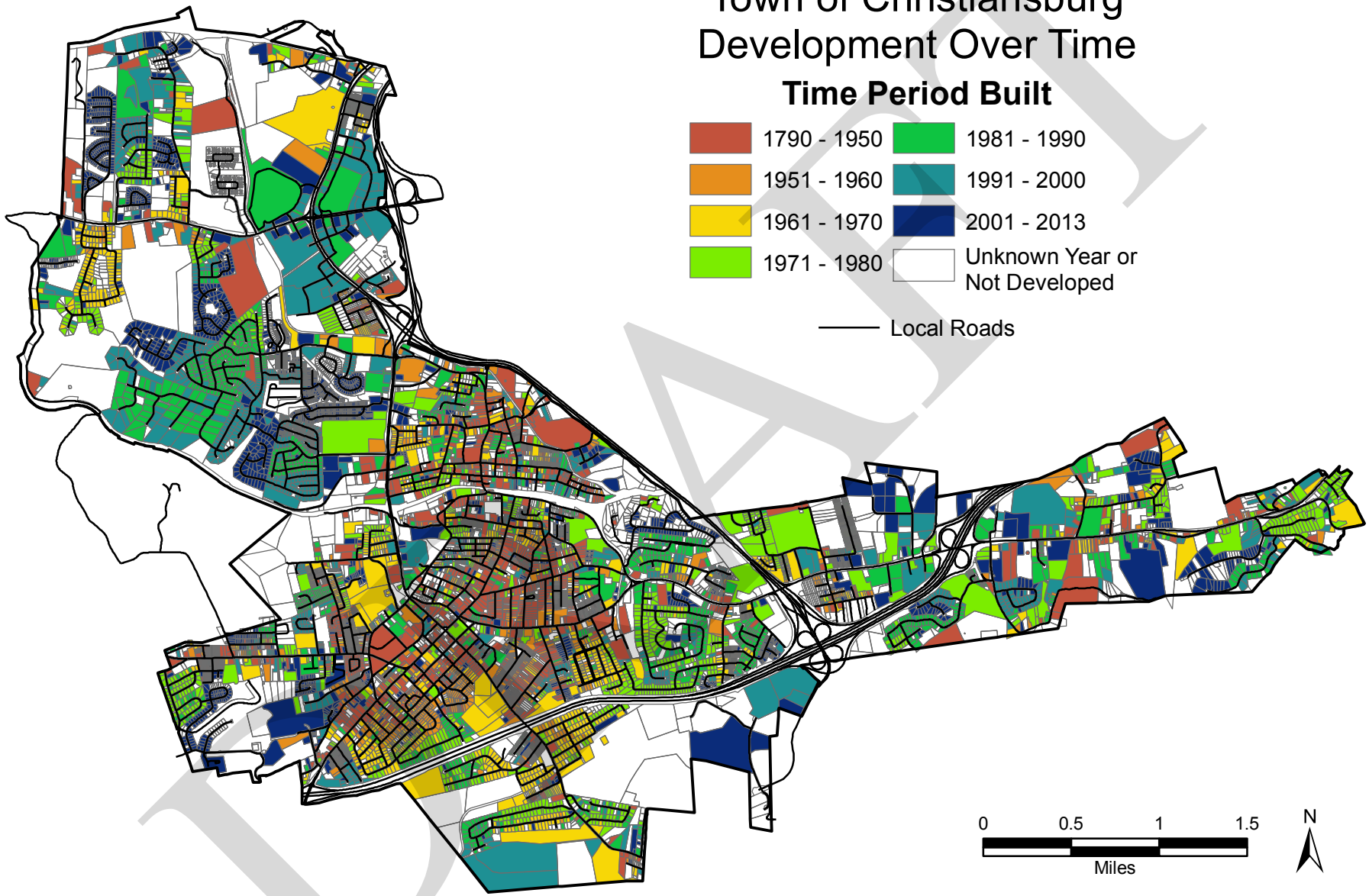

Map prepared by Town of Christiansburg Engineering and Planning Departments. May 10, 2013.
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The following table provides statistics showing the approximate land area and percentages of each Zoning District as of May 2013. This area does not include street rights-of-way.

Christiansburg Land Area and Percent of Total Area by Zoning District (May 2013)

Zoning	District	Area (Acres)	Percent of Total Area
A	Agricultural	2,084.3	26.6%
R-1A	Rural Residential	239.0	3.0%
R-1	Single-Family Residential	1,735.7	22.1%
R-2	Two-Family Residential	727.5	9.3%
R-3	Multi-Family Residential	774.4	9.9%
R-MS	Residential Manufactured Home Subdivision	0.0	0.0%
MU-1	Mixed Use: Residential-Limited Business	100.8	1.3%
MU-2	Mixed Use: Residential-Limited Business-Limited Industrial	7.6	0.1%
B-1	Limited Business	66.7	0.9%
B-2	Central Business	68.0	0.9%
B-3	General Business	1,275.4	16.3%
I-1	Limited Industrial	56.2	0.7%
I-2	General Industrial	709.6	9.0%
Total of Agricultural Districts		**2,084.3**	**26.6%**
Total of Residential Districts		**3,476.6**	**44.3%**
Total of Mixed Use Districts		**108.4**	**1.4%**
Total of Business Districts		**1,410.1**	**18.0%**
Total of Industrial Districts		**765.9**	**9.8%**
Total Area in all Zoning Districts		**7,845.2**	**100.0%**

Source: Town of Christiansburg

According to the zoning map, residential uses are the largest land classification within Christiansburg. Excluding special residential uses in business districts, almost 45% of Town's land area is residential. Since the adoption of the 2003 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan, the Town's residential zoning districts have increased approximately 150 acres. Most of these 150 acres were previously in agricultural or forestry use in the Northwest quadrant of Town. Additional residential growth is expected to occur through rezoning of agricultural land, which accounts for over 25% of the Town's land area. This growth will likely be limited by availability of infrastructure and environmental challenges to development.

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According to the zoning map, commercial uses account for 18% of the land area within Christiansburg. Commercial development in Christiansburg includes a regional retail hub surrounding the Peppers Ferry Road/North Franklin Street intersection and a regional automotive center along eastern Roanoke Street. In addition to these regional business centers, commercial development is located along the North Franklin Street corridor, Roanoke Street corridor, Radford Street corridor, and in the two downtown areas. Continued commercial development and infill redevelopment is expected along these major roadways.

According to the zoning map, industrial zoning accounts for approximately 10% of the Town's land area. The majority of industrial development within Christiansburg is concentrated in two industrial parks: the Christiansburg Industrial Park and the Falling Branch Corporate Park. Additional industrial sites are located throughout Town primarily limited by topography. Buffering industrial uses from less intense land uses is critical for future land use within the Town. Expansion of industrial uses will be limited to areas with suitable topography and protected from sensitive environmental features.

While mixed uses zoning districts contain just over 1% of the Town's land area, mixed use development is very common in the two downtown areas. Historic downtown and Historic Cambria were settled by traditional development patterns including a mix of commercial and residential uses within individual structures. This type of mixed use allows for pedestrian scale and orientation and can generate 24 hour footprints. Infill development and redevelopment in these two historic areas will enhance community character in the future.

In addition to these defined zoning classifications, areas dedicated to open space including parkland are not separately delineated. While some of these areas are developed parks and facilities, other areas may be designated as conservation areas due to environmental restrictions.

Housing

As previously mentioned, residential zoning districts account for almost 45% of Christiansburg's total land area. As shown in the following table showing housing growth, this classification will likely continue to grow as Christiansburg does.

1990-2010 Housing Growth

	Number of Units 1990	Number of Units 2000	Number of Units 2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010
Total	6,267	7,430	9,556	18.6%	29.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, and 2010 U. S. Census of Population and Housing.

Christiansburg provides a diverse housing market in order to meet the needs of current and future residents. Single-family, duplex, townhouse, condominium and apartment units are available within the Town. The variety of housing units presents a wide variety of amenities to accommodate varying housing demand. In addition, Christiansburg has a relatively low vacancy rate when compared with Virginia and the nation as a whole.

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2010 Occupied Housing Units, Vacant Housing Units, and Vacancy Rates

	Town of Christiansburg		Montgomery County	Virginia	United States
Occupied Housing Units	8,873	92.9%	92.7%	90.8%	88.6%
Vacant Housing Units	683	7.1%	7.3%	9.2%	11.4%
Total Housing Units	9,556	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, Summary File 1, Tables H3, H4, H5, and HCT1.

Availability of housing can affect affordability and property values. Moreover, substandard housing is a serious problem that creates health and safety issues. Christiansburg supports the provision of affordable housing for all socioeconomic levels as it is a recognized need within the region. Christiansburg must also support the provision of housing for other groups that are often overlooked by typical housing developments including the elderly, the disabled, and the homeless. In addition to new housing growth, maintenance and preservation of existing housing and neighborhoods in Christiansburg is vital. These maintenance and preservation goals can be addressed through funding assistance as noted below as well as increased code enforcement provisions.

The New River Valley HOME Consortium is a regional organization comprised of representatives from the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, the City of Radford, and the Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Pearisburg, and Pulaski that receives funding the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program provides an opportunity for participating localities to plan for and address housing needs on a regional basis. HOME funds assist in the construction of affordable housing, the purchase of property for development, the rehabilitation of existing property, and/or rental assistance and down-payment assistance. The New River Valley Planning District Commission partners with participating jurisdictions to undertake the consolidated planning process and assists in the program administration. The HOME program offers localities the flexibility to develop projects that capitalize on community partnerships to offer affordable housing to the region.

The Town of Christiansburg 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan and the Town's Annual Action Plan (a Comprehensive Community Development Plan) was prepared by the Town as required by HUD as part of the Town's designation as an Entitlement Community. Town Council adopted a resolution for the submittal of the most recent plan on August 17, 2010. The plan includes an analysis of homeless issues, an analysis of population with special needs, information on housing needs and assistance, a housing market analysis, barriers to affordable housing, an analysis of community development issues, and a strategic plan.

Housing Goal

Provide a diverse, affordable, accessible, and safe housing supply sufficient to meet the needs of all residents.

Implementation Strategies

- Continue to support local and regional partnerships to provide affordable housing opportunities to residents.
- Create and enforce maintenance standards on rental housing.
- Ensure equitable enforcement of property maintenance according to Town Code.
  - Hire code enforcement staff to create proactive code enforcement.

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    - Enforce regulations regarding home maintenance including yard upkeep.
    - Create a mechanism to address recurring violations in a proactive and timely manner.
- Evaluate existing neighborhoods for opportunities to create connections to trails and sidewalks.
- Ensure a wide range of housing types and choices within neighborhoods including accommodations for those with special needs.
    - Promote housing with universal design features to support aging in place.
- Maintain and enhance the stability and integrity of Christiansburg's older neighborhoods.
    - Ensure new housing developments and infill structures are designed in context with existing built neighborhoods, complement the overall character and architecture of the neighborhood, and do not overtax existing public infrastructure.
- Develop an effective and efficient program for condemning dilapidated properties.

Existing and Future Land Use & Planning Goal

Land development and community growth must be undertaken in an orderly manner that is compatible with community character, protects important environmental features, and provides a fair return on public investment. The land use decision-making process must be open and transparent and encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.

Implementation Strategies

- Educate citizens to ensure an understanding of zoning and land use regulations and decisions.
- Guide growth and development in a logical and consistent manner.
    - Ensure development is compatible with surrounding uses through buffers and other techniques.
- Develop and implement consistent development standards.
    - Periodically inspect developments for compliance with site plan for signage, stormwater management, and other features.
- Revise and rewrite the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance as needed to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
    - Use plain language when revising the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance.
- Revise the current zoning designations of Town property to better align with actual physical use.
- Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Promote environmentally friendly neighborhoods and housing developments.
    - Protect environmental features (e.g. floodplains, karst) in new residential development.
    - Preserve important scenic views, woodlands, and natural areas.
    - Control stormwater runoff in new residential developments and subdivisions. See Infrastructure Services Chapter and Environment Chapter.
    - Encourage common open spaces and playgrounds in new development.
- Ensure land use decisions are integrated with transportation decisions to maintain or improve access to various uses and prevent future gridlock.

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    - Promote connected and walkable neighborhoods. Promote multiple entrances, interconnected streets, and pedestrian sidewalks or trail linkages for neighborhood development.
    - Effectively manage traffic and encourage attractive and safe pedestrian-friendly environments through landscaping and traffic calming features.
- Eliminate code violations that degrade the appearance and quality of life within neighborhoods and affect the public health, safety or welfare of occupants.
- Encourage cluster development to preserve natural resources and increase the provision of open space.
- Work to achieve a balance between residential, commercial, and industrial land uses in order to provide adequate support services, quality employers, and a sustainable tax base.
    - Encourage innovative economic development initiatives that enhance community character and the environment.
- Promote new infill development and redevelopment utilizing existing infrastructure.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map visualizes how the Town will develop and grow in the long term future. In contrast, the Zoning Map is typically utilized as a tool to implement the Future Land Use Map. Explanations of the classifications for the Future Land Use Map are given below.

Residential

Residential development is the predominant land use in these areas. Type and intensity of housing development will be determined by zoning classification and other constraints.

Commercial

Commercial development including retail, office, and service uses are typical in this classification. Type and intensity of these developments will also be determined by zoning classification and other constraints.

Active and Passive Recreational Areas

This category includes active and passive recreational areas including associated facilities and other incidental uses. This category also includes cemeteries, museums, and cultural resources where appropriate but excludes dedicated open spaces within subdivisions.

Mixed Use

Mixed use areas allow for residential and non-residential development in one area. The ratio of residential to non-residential uses in these areas varies. Mixed use may indicate vertically mixed uses within a building or horizontally mixed uses within a larger development area. Mixed use denotes pedestrian scale and orientation, complementary uses, and promotion of a 24 hour footprint.

Industrial

Industrial use includes manufacturing, processing, and warehousing uses including incidental uses such as loading and parking.

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Buffer – Industrial
This classification allows for industrial uses with less significant external impacts. These areas necessitate serious considerations with regard to buffering from less intense adjoining land uses.

Buffer – Residential/Commercial
This classification typically allows for higher intensity residential uses and low impact commercial uses. These areas also necessitate serious considerations with regard to buffering the surrounding land uses.

Floodplain
This classification is an overlay for other Future Land Use classifications. This designates areas that are subject to flooding during 100-year and 500-year floods. New development within the 100-year floodplain is discouraged and is governed by the Zoning Code.

Conservation - Limited Development
This classification does not appear on the Future Land Use Map but includes areas with steep slopes (over 25%). A map denoting these areas is included in the appendix for reference and is utilized during the development review process.

The following table depicts the percentage of total land area for each classification for the Future Land Use Map.

Future Land Use Classification	Percent of Total Area
Residential	**69.6%**
Commercial	**12.3%**
Active and Passive Recreational Areas	**2.9%**
Mixed Use	**1.5%**
Industrial	**4.4%**
Buffer – Industrial	**6.3%**
Buffer – Residential/Commercial	**3.0%**
Total Area in all Future Land Use Classifications	**100.0%**

Source: Town of Christiansburg

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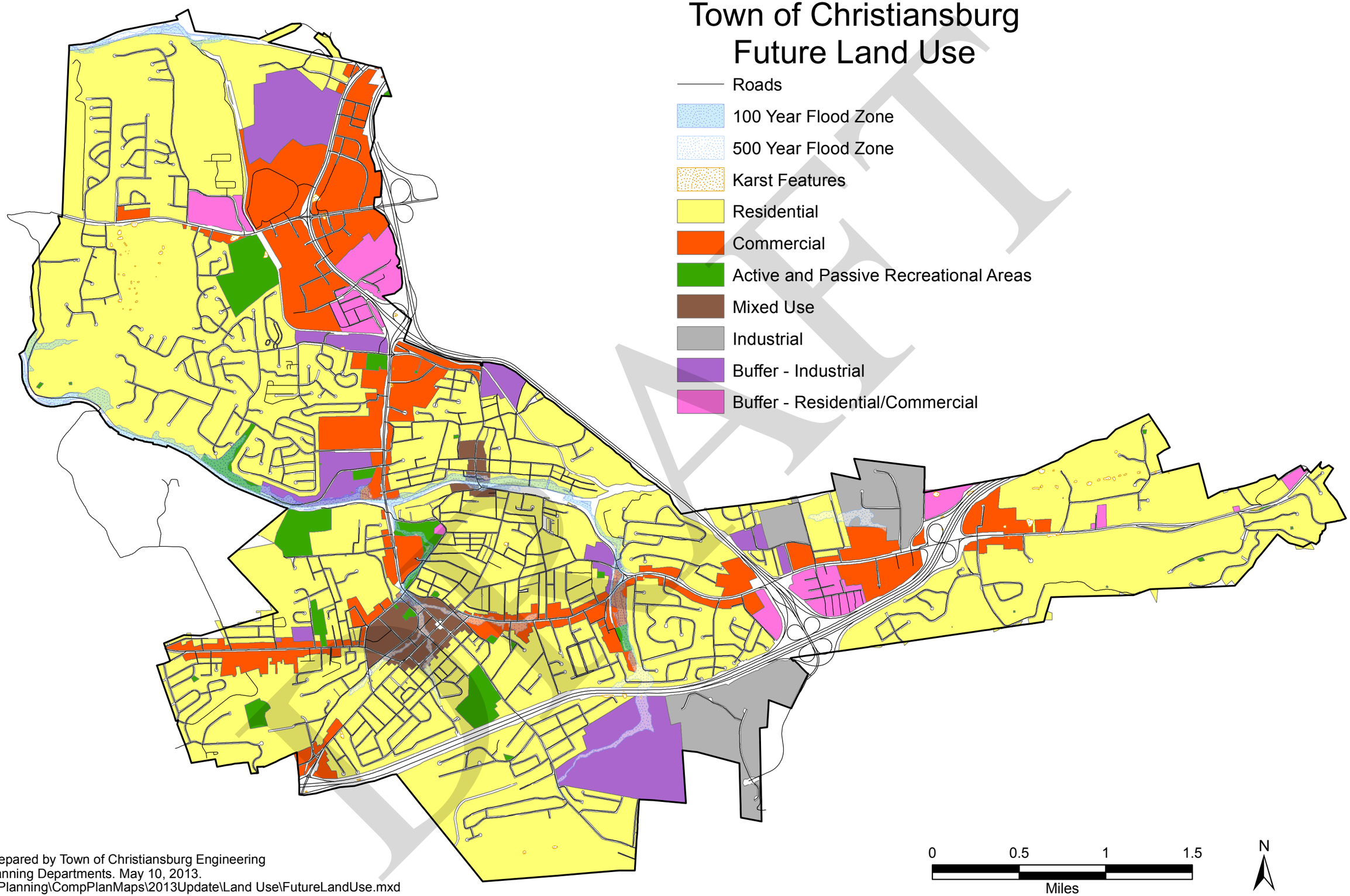

Map prepared by Town of Christiansburg Engineering and Planning Departments. May 10, 2013.
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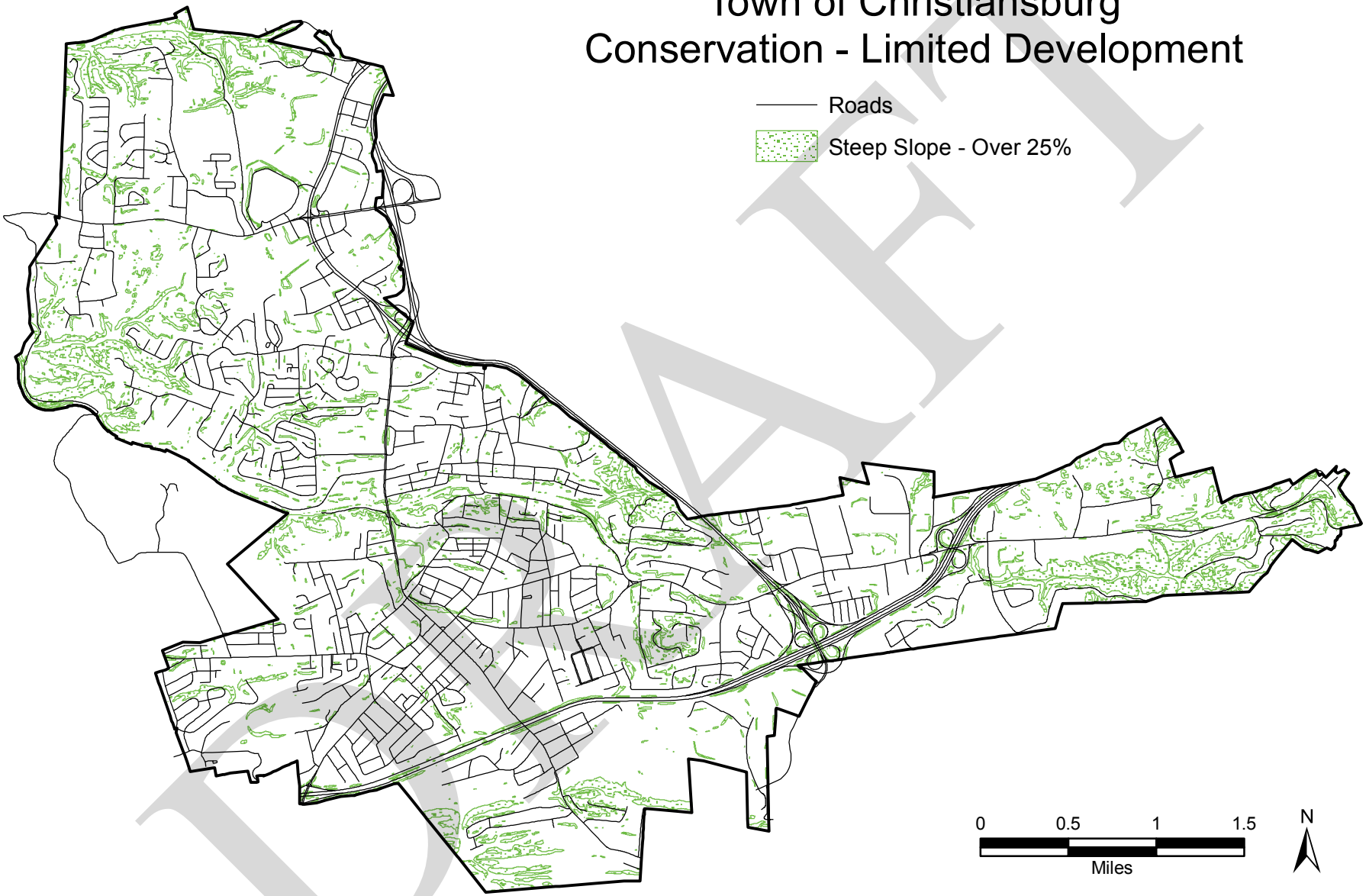

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