AMEND THE “2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF HILLSBORO, VIRGINIA” BY DELETING THE STRIKETHROUGH TEXT & CURRENT FIGURES 7-9, INSERTING THE UNDERLINED RED TEXT AND INSERTING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP (NEW FIGURE 7) AFTER THE EXISTING ZONING DISTRICT MAP (AFTER PAGE 57 OF THE CURRENT PLAN) AS DETAILED BELOW:

VIII. LAND USE

BACKGROUND

The land in Hillsboro is dedicated primarily to 18th- and 19th- century stone, clapboard, log and stucco homes, assorted barns, outbuildings, a former church and existing church and graveyard, and a few small commercial establishments. The majority of the properties and their residences are of pre-Civil War construction and were oriented to the main thoroughfare that bisects the Town, with relatively narrow frontages and deep lots. A plat of the Town’s lots dating from the mid-18th century is nearly identical to one from the early 21st century.

In 1835 the Hillsboro population was reported to be 172 with some 30 dwellings and three mercantile stores and an academy. Fifty years later the population had decreased to 135 but the general composition of buildings remained the same. The final two decades of the 19th century saw the last building boom in the Town, with new houses replacing old or being constructed on the remaining available lots.

The rolling countryside immediately northwest and southeast of Hillsboro is almost exclusively rural and accommodates cattle farms, dairy farms, horse farms, vineyards and other agricultural enterprises.

Rising precipitously on the northeast and southwest of the linear Town are the steep and heavily wooded Short Hill Mountains, part of the foothills of the Blue Ridge. A few long-established and a handful of recently constructed residences are now found on the southern Short Hill, while there exists only one home on the immediate north slope.

A century ago a small African American community inhabited the southern slope, with a schoolhouse and church Ruins of long-abandoned houses are still found along the mountain roads of the northern slope. (See Chapter IV and V for more detailed descriptions of the Town’s historic assets and natural resources.)

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan recommends a study to update and possibly expand the Hillsboro Historic District to consider inclusion of properties and structures incorporated into the Town in 2016 and lands on the Town’s outskirts that comprised the historic African American communities and enslaved people’s burial grounds.

This Plan strongly recommends continued land uses that are harmonious with the Town’s rural setting and will encourage the retention of open spaces and of the existing viewsheds on all sides of the Town.
With completion of the Hillsboro Traffic-Calming project and the advent of a walkable, accessible, history-rich community, Hillsboro’s growing appeal as a destination and the likelihood and desirability of appropriate and contextually scaled commercial activity is greater, prompting the need to carefully review the Town’s zoning and subdivision regulations. The Plan recommends policies to maintain the Town’s diverse residential, commercial, and agricultural activities and an appropriate balance that is compatible with the Town’s rural and historic character.

The Town’s 2016 boundary line adjustment nearly doubled Hillsboro’s land area, with most of the land in agricultural use or forested. All land brought into the Town limits was designated Agricultural-Conservancy (AC), and as a result a number of properties formerly designated Residential (R-1) were split into two different Town zoning districts. Beyond those lands, nearly all of the lots within the Hillsboro Town limits are developed, occupied by an existing structure, primarily residential in nature. The Town comprises approximately 171.77 acres within the corporate limits.

Figure 6 illustrates the current Hillsboro zoning districts.
Figure 6: Existing Town of Hillsboro zoning districts.
**Future Land Use**

Hillsboro’s land use vision is illustrated in the Future Land Use Map (Figure 7). This map is a guide for the Town, its residents and its property owners in how land within the Town can best be used to implement the Town’s land use goals, including through its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. The Future Land Use Map is divided into five land use categories:

1. **Agricultural Conservancy.** This category, shown in yellow on the map, includes areas intended to be used in a manner that supports continued agricultural, horticultural and agritourism use and open space within Town and promotes the vision of the Town for the Agricultural Conservancy designated areas (detailed further later in this chapter). Existing farmland, forest, and floodplain areas are designated in this category. This category encompasses most of the properties zoned to the AC Agricultural Conservancy Zoning District when they were brought into the Town limits by the most recent Town boundary line adjustment.

2. **Civic.** The Civic land use, shown in purple on the map, includes existing and proposed areas for public and semi-public uses. The category encompasses the Hillsboro Charter School, the Methodist Church, and areas currently in Town ownership such as the Old Stone School, as well as public utility facility sites. The latter includes the proposed location of the planned wastewater treatment plant on the west side of Hillsboro Road south of Stoneybrook Market.

3. **Commercial.** The Commercial land use category, shown in green on the map, includes areas currently zoned to the C-1 Commercial Zoning District, as well as areas deemed appropriate to consider for rezoning commercial to allow compatible commercial development that supports the Town’s vision for commercial uses. This vision is detailed further in a later section of this chapter.

4. **Mixed Use.** The Mixed Use land use category, shown in red on the map, is a new land use designation for the areas immediately adjacent to Charles Town Pike. These areas include the core of Hillsboro’s historic structures. Their location along the new pedestrian and streetscape improvements makes them appropriate for consideration for a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses that reflect the historic uses of these structures. A new zoning district, the Traditional Main Street District, is proposed in order to promote the goals of this Plan for the preservation of existing historic properties while providing opportunities for commercial development compatible with the historic character of the Town’s main street and existing residential uses.

5. **Residential.** The Residential land use category, shown in blue on the map, includes areas currently zoned to the AC Agricultural Conservancy Zoning District and R-1 Residential Zoning District and are intended to help achieve the residential vision within Hillsboro as described in the next section.
Residential Vision Within Hillsboro

It being the desire of the community, Hillsboro should continue to exist as a historic residential community of predominantly single-family, detached homes. Its future residential evolution should strive to remain true to what the National Register of Historic Places survey recorded in 1974:

A 19th-century rural town site, Hillsboro exists in an above-average state of preservation. Though traffic, on-street parking, cement sidewalks, and telephone wires indicate the shift from the 19th to the 20th century, these later additions appear without major conflict with the established 19th-century period appearance. The town’s salient features include the informal placement of buildings reflecting 19th-century evolutionary growth patterns, the lack of a formal street plan, the extensive use of natural field stone in construction, and a rural setting in a richly wooded area. Combined, these features impart to Hillsboro a calm and intimate air.
In recognition of the above, The 2020 Comprehensive Plan recommends the study and consideration for strengthening the Hillsboro Historic District Design Guidelines to ensure this state of preservation remains.

These guidelines should not impair nor prohibit homeowners from making changes that are in keeping with the Town’s historic, diverse and evolutionary vernacular. New construction on existing lots, or to existing houses or businesses, should be carefully designed to protect and perpetuate the traditional visual character of the Town.

It is critical to the preservation of Hillsboro’s historic heritage that the scale and appearance of additions or improvements be compatible with the Town’s existing atmosphere. Activities that would modify resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places designation or the Town’s Historic Buildings List should continue to be subject to the Historic District Design Guidelines and the appropriate zoning permit review procedures.

Hillsboro’s current Residential Zoning District (Figure 6) is intended to accommodate single-family detached residential uses within the Town, with reasonable ancillary commercial home occupation commercial uses that support the “live, work, play” concept consistent with the existing pattern of the Town. The district permits single-family attached or detached dwellings and accessory home occupations. The Residential District also conditionally permits some non-residential uses, with a special use permit, including libraries, schools, utility facilities, and other Town Council-approved commercial uses.

Some dwellings within the Town have been utilized as a bed and breakfast for short-term (less than 30 days) rentals. These parcels are currently zoned in the Residential District.

The Zoning Ordinance allows a bed and breakfast as a home occupation (see §10-5) in the Residential District but does not further specify if other short-term rentals are allowed. The Zoning Ordinance also identifies bed and breakfast and rooming and boarding houses as a permitted use in the Commercial District and a bed and breakfast as a special exception use in the Agricultural-Conservancy District.

In light of the past and expected continued use of residential properties as short-term rental opportunities, including bed and breakfast establishments in a primary dwelling and rentals in accessory buildings, this Plan recommends that these uses should be considered as a subordinate use under the Residential Zoning District and that properties used for a bed and breakfast or other short term rental should be owner- or resident- occupied in keeping with the residential character of the district.

As the properties and buildings within Hillsboro have historically been utilized for both residential and commercial uses, this Plan recommends Hillsboro modify the Zoning Ordinance to allow for additional commercial home occupation uses for permanent residents occupying property within the Residential District, to provide business opportunities for residents of the Town.
Hillsboro’s history was built on a mixed use of Town property where property owners lived within Town and established businesses, such as mills, general stores, medical offices, taverns, and tanneries on their property. While the nature of the commercial uses within Town have changed over time—and with the improved pedestrian accessibility arising from the Traffic-Calming and Pedestrian Safety project—the mixed-use zoning structure area along Charles Town Pike can be a key component for ensuring Hillsboro’s residential and commercial sustainability.

Modification of the Zoning Districts. Promotion of a traditional mix of compatible residential and commercial uses along Charles Town Pike may be accomplished through the addition of a “mixed-use overlay zoning district” and/or modification of the Residential District permitted uses to provide for greater flexibility in the type of residential and commercial uses of the property along this corridor. In keeping with the residential character of this district, in most cases such commercial uses should be subordinate to the residential use of the property.

This Plan also recommends modifying the Residential Zoning District to better align with property boundaries where possible and appropriate to eliminate situations where a single parcel is split between two districts, particularly for those parcels brought into the Town through the 2016 boundary line adjustment and partially zoned Agricultural-Conservancy.

In addition, revision to the Residential District should account for and maintain the traditional use of the land and consider its suitability for residential use, such as consideration of how the land has been traditionally zoned or if the parcel lies within a floodplain.

[EXISTING FIGURE 7 TO BE DELETED]

Figure 7: Existing Residential District within the Town of Hillsboro.

Commercial Vision Within Hillsboro

Hillsboro presently has two areas zoned as C-1 Commercial Districts. One includes several parcels on the western edge of the Town and one parcel is designated Commercial in the center of Town (Figure 6). The existing Commercial Districts are situated in what has been for the past 100 years the traditional commercial area of Town along the west end of Charles Town Pike in Hillsboro.

The Commercial District land use category is designed to allow appropriate commercial uses that offer goods and services consistent with and supportive of the primary residential uses within the Town. Commercial uses in this district the commercial land use areas will be located in new buildings or buildings which were formerly residential, but which may be more desirable for commercial activities because of higher traffic volumes or other market factors. It is Town’s preference that existing residential buildings be adapted to commercial use rather than have new buildings constructed, whenever possible. Newly constructed commercial buildings are to be designed to be compatible with the existing historic buildings within Town.
With the advent of a walkable, accessible, history-rich community and Hillsboro’s growing appeal as a destination and hub to the surrounding agritourism activities, the likelihood—and desirability—of appropriate and contextually-scaled commercial activity is greater, prompting the need to carefully review the Town’s zoning districts. Key to this review will be the implementation of policies and planning that ensure a proper balance between residential and commercial activity within the Town and be responsive to potential future demands.

[EXISTING FIGURE 8 TO BE DELETED]

Figure 8: Commercial Districts within the Town of Hillsboro.

Agricultural-Conservancy Vision within Hillsboro

The 2016 boundary line adjustment brought additional property into the Town, most of it being open space consisting of flood plain and/or steep slopes and agricultural lands, some of which have been permanently preserved through conservation easement.

All of the parcels or portions thereof brought into the Town limits through the boundary line adjustment were zoned in the Agricultural-Conservancy District (Figure 68).

Because of discrepancies in official maps, prior to the 2016 boundary line adjustment several residentially zoned parcels had small portions lying outside the pre-2016 boundary. Those small portions subsequently brought within the Town in 2016 were designated, for administrative purposes, as part of the Agricultural-Conservancy (A-C) District. The Town’s intent was to— with the implementation of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan revision—recommend the rezoning of these small portions of predominately residential parcels as Residential.

A number of parcels brought into the Town were existing residential properties with single-family homes. These parcels were also designated A-C, with the Town’s intention to rezone as Residential (R-1) or another more appropriate zone depending upon the location of the parcel.

The small number of parcels or partial parcels that were brought into town and contain more than 10 acres may offer opportunities for uses not currently permitted in the A-C district. This Plan recommends careful examination of the permitted uses in the A-C district and consideration of expanded uses consistent with the promotion of agritourism opportunities.

The Agricultural-Conservancy District is currently designed to accommodate low-intensity horticultural and agricultural uses within the Town and to maximize and preserve areas of open space. The district provides for residential development ancillary to agricultural uses and certain low-intensity non-residential uses that would maintain the majority of open space in these areas, while accommodating uses that would complement and enhance the historic character of the Town. It is intended that uses in this district will be designed in a manner that:

(a) Conserves open land around the Town’s periphery, including those areas containing historic resources or sensitive natural features such as woodlands, steep slopes, streams, floodplains and wetlands, by setting them aside from development;
(b) Accommodates and promotes agritourism, agricultural and horticultural related business operations

(c) Protects productive agricultural soils for continued or future agricultural use and conserves blocks of land large enough to allow for efficient farm operations;

(d) Reduces erosion and sedimentation by the retention of existing vegetation;

(e) Provides for the maintenance of open land within the Town, which can help to provide opportunities for recreation, public-access trails, protect scenic and historic views, minimize the visual impact of new development, and preserve the historic rural setting surrounding the Town;

(f) Accommodates certain low-intensity public or institutional uses; and

(g) Promotes a hard edge marking the transition from the historic village limits to the surrounding countryside.

Open space and productive farmland is crucial to the Town’s comprehensive planning effort, for it forms the basis of the rural character and identity of the Town and the surrounding countryside. Open spaces reflect the agricultural heritage of the region and serves as the context for agritourism, while forming and preserving the scale and place for popular historic sites. Open space is a critical resource that plays a large role in maintaining the sense of quiet that is integral to the quality of life.

Open spaces are also home to a variety of land and water-based wildlife in diverse and large concentrations. Deer, squirrels, snakes, coyote, mice, salamanders, bats, red foxes, cotton tail rabbits, chipmunks, bears, box turtles, the endangered painted turtle and a great number of migratory birds call this space home. This wildlife is critical to the local ecosystem and serves as a gauge with which to measure its health.

This Plan recommends that all areas of the Town that are environmentally sensitive should be preserved through easement, dedication or other means. Protecting endangered species that claim these lands as their homes will contribute to initiatives to prevent further sprawl and residential development on the outskirts of Hillsboro.

[EXISTING FIGURE 9 TO BE DELETED]

**Figure 9: Agricultural Conservancy Districts within the Town of Hillsboro.**

**Vision for Area Immediately Surrounding Hillsboro**

Given the historical pattern of 18th- and 19th century village development that saw a concentration of residences in close proximity on small lots, the preservation of open space
within the Town limits is not sufficient to protect and retain the historic character of Hillsboro. The Town existed and grew to serve the surrounding agricultural region. Its several mills were critical to processing crops grown on neighboring farms. The Town’s tradesmen, retailers and professionals serviced the needs of the surrounding populace.

The Town has no direct control over land use policies outside its tightly drawn boundaries. In order to preserve the cherished historic appearance of the Town itself, Hillsboro’s government and citizens must work proactively with Loudoun County, property owners and citizen action groups to encourage the maximum preservation of the open, agricultural spaces. A high priority of the Town must be preservation of area viewsheds, of that area which is visible from within the Town and the entrance corridors on the east, west and south of Town.

Beyond preserving the Town’s immediate viewshed, the Town must actively encourage viable economic alternatives to sprawling residential subdivisions. The Town endorses rural preservation policies adopted by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in the County’s revised 2019 Comprehensive Plan. The Town strongly supports the efforts of individuals, trusts and other public and private organizations in the implementation of conservation easement acquisition and purchase of development rights programs for the rural lands surrounding Hillsboro. The Town of Hillsboro endorses and urges implementation of the Coalition of Loudoun Towns 2019 Blueprint. (Appendix…..)

**Future Zoning and Subdivision**

Hillsboro’s zoning regulations should continue to emphasize residential use with sufficient flexibility to provide for compatible commercial and agritourism growth in support of the Town’s economic needs and the goals of this Plan. Careful consideration for rezoning individual parcels to the appropriate commercial districts Commercial District or a new mixed use district may be desirable necessary in the future as now that Hillsboro has completed its Traffic-Calming and Pedestrian Safety Project and the commercial viability of particular parcels increases.

The physical constraints of small lots is a limiting factor, thus any rezoning of parcels to the existing or new commercial districts Commercial District or a new mixed use district should carefully consider the specific attributes of the parcel and its suitability for commercial use, such as, but not limited to, available parking, pedestrian and motorized traffic, compatibility with the Town’s historic character, and potential impacts on adjacent Residential District properties (e.g., from noise, lighting), Town water supply, and wastewater system.

The Plan recommends the careful study of the existing zoning ordinance subdivision limits and permitted uses for the Agricultural-Conservancy District in support of continued agricultural, horticultural and agritourism use and open space within Town. Rezoning portions of existing A-C zoned parcels to allow for commercial opportunities should be considered where appropriately located, such as portions of parcels located adjacent to other residential or commercial properties.

**GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTION ITEMS:**
GOALS: Ensure land-use plans that will retain Hillsboro’s historic, small-town character in a rural setting and accommodate appropriate and contextually scaled commercial and agritourism activity.

Play an active role to ensure, where development does occur beyond the Town limits, that every effort is made to achieve results consistent with the objectives of this plan.

POLICIES:

1. Maintain the Hillsboro’s diverse residential, commercial, and agricultural activities and ensure an appropriate balance compatible with the Town’s rural and historic character.

2. Maintain the Town’s historic and residential attributes, and preserve pedestrian and motorized safety.

3. Ensure new construction and renovation are compatible with existing structures and the Town’s historic district guidelines.

4. Ensure commercial uses are compatible with the Town’s historic character.

5. Protect and maintain viewsheds from within Hillsboro and on the approaches to Hillsboro.

6. Protect, preserve and promote the productive agricultural uses of farmland.

7. Encourage area-wide conservation easement efforts and cooperative planning with Loudoun County to limit residential development of adjacent farmlands and protect open space in the area beyond the Town limits.

8. Cooperate with Loudoun County to limit development of commercial establishments on the Route 9 corridor that are inconsistent with the traditionally rural and agricultural character of the area.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Conduct a timely and thorough review and revision of the Hillsboro Zoning Ordinance consistent with the policies adopted in this Plan.

2. Update the Town Zoning map consistent with this Plan.

3. Evaluate the 2016 Town boundary expansion implications on properties with split zoning.
4. Revise the Residential District as necessary to permit—with limitations that maintains a strong community—the use of owner- or resident-occupied dwellings and accessory structures to be used as a bed and breakfast or other short-term rental.

5. Review and revise as appropriate Agricultural Conservancy District regulations to provide for agritourism opportunities.

6. Initiate a study for potential expansion of the Hillsboro Historic District.