

Friends of
ESMONT



Esmont, Virginia

Program Plan & Projects



PROGRAM PLAN

Esmont Virginia covers a large geographic area including the historic village of Esmont (Village), Porters Road, Chestnut Grove, and many farms surrounding the area. From its beginning in the mid-1800s, Esmont village, located on Esmont Road, was a bustling village with a regional bank, several thriving general stores, a profitable railroad, a wood yard for shipping and receiving railroad ties and pulpwood, a slate quarry operation, a livery stable, and doctor's office. This boom continued into the 1950s, when the quarry operation closed. The bank had previously been converted to a post office, the rails and depot were removed, the wood yard vanished, most of the stores had closed, and the historic village of Esmont started into steady decline.

Over the next 60+ years, the historic Village deteriorated from a lack of attention from its residents and county officials. The Village has never had its own elected officials, nor have Porters Road or Chestnut Grove. However, Porters Road and Chestnut Grove both prospered to some extent, while the Village steadily declined.

Friends of Esmont, Inc., (Friends) a non-profit 501 (c) (3), was started by a former resident of the Village, who upon return to the area after a long absence, was quite dismayed at the deteriorated conditions. Once word got around that an organization had been started with the purpose of bringing life back into the Village, turning it into a destination for locals and visitors, and making it the hub of activity as in the past, people from all around the area and across the country signed up to become Friends of Esmont. The response was overwhelming, and the organization quickly grew and organized, selecting a Board of Directors, developing a website, and holding regularly scheduled meetings.

This success attracted the town of Scottsville and the village of Alberene to join forces with Friends of Esmont, thereby covering the Southern Corner of Albemarle County, or the *Forgotten Southern Corner of Albemarle County*. These contiguous areas have a population of approximately 4,511 people.

After several meetings with residents, the question was asked of them, "what would you like to see done in the Village to make it an attraction?" A lot of discussion ensued and after several meetings, a list of fourteen (14) projects were identified as helpful to the Village, but also benefiting all the other Esmont areas, particularly Porters Road and Chestnut Grove.

PROGRAM PLAN, continued...

For a new, small organization, fourteen projects seemed too many at one time. Therefore, the next task was to cull the projects down to the top 7 or so. The goal was to have all projects benefit the Village, as well as the surrounding areas, and each project would benefit the others.

The projects getting final approval are listed below. Descriptions of each project are attached showing how each project benefits the community, relates to other projects, the estimated cost for each project, and each project's sustainability. Also attached is a map of the Village of Esmont showing all the structures and 5 of the 7 Projects, along with a map of Albemarle County showing all properties with Esmont addresses in green, Alberene addresses in pink, and Scottsville addresses in yellow.

PROJECT LIST:

- 1. Rails-to-Trails: Esmont Trail - *See Update Jan. 2020***
- 2. Memorialize the Esmont Depot**
- 3. Restoration of Historic Homes**
- 4. Establish a Wildlife Refuge Along Ballinger Creek**
- 5. Chronicle Esmont History - *See Update Dec. 2020***
- 6. Easy Access to Esmont Fulfillment Farms**
- 7. Purvis Store Market**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Though all the projects are interconnected, it is not expected that all seven will be active at the same time, but rather one or two initially. Rails-to-Trails will take many years to complete; the Purvis Store Market will take several years as will the Restoration of Historic Homes. The other projects should take less time per project.

The decision as to which project to begin with, and when, will be determined primarily by the availability of funds. Land acquisition could present time-lag problems for the Trail, Wildlife Refuge, the Depot Memorial and Purvis Store Market.



1. RAILS-TO-TRAILS: ESMONT TRAIL



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Esmont Trail is a 13-mile trail system from Alberene through the historic village of Esmont (the Village), to Warren. The Trail uses the abandoned Nelson-Albemarle rail line originally used for stone transport from the quarries to City of Charlottesville's C&O Railroad, and the town of Scottsville's Hatton Ferry on the James River. A .5-mile spur from the trail will connect the Village to Simpson Park on Porters Road.

BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY: The benefits to the community are tremendous. Albemarle County, City of Charlottesville, and the town of Scottsville are all working to be interconnected. Esmont lies within that connectivity and could bring in both Alberene and Schuyler, taking bicyclers, walkers, and horseback riders off the narrow roads, putting them on wonderfully scenic trails through old historic farmlands and beautiful quarry sites.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: An existing structure on the Purvis Store Market property will serve as a Trailhead offering bathroom facilities and bike repair facility.

ESTIMATED COST: Crushed Stone/mile \$100,000

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: The trail may be incorporated into the Albemarle County trails system.

JANUARY 2021 UPDATE: Friends of Esmont, Inc. was awarded a one-year planning grant for the Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail funded by Bama Works Fund of Dave Matthews Band at the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation. The Trail Master Plan, a working document, was created using these funds.

2. MEMORIALIZE THE ESMONT DEPOT



Esmont Depot Being Dismantled, 1964

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Esmont Depot was torn down and the railroad tracks were taken up in 1964, leaving the historic village of Esmont (the Village) with only a vacant pathway as a reminder of its busy railroad days when soapstone, slate, pulp wood, railroad ties, and mail traveled from Alberene, Esmont, Schuyler and Warren to places around the world.

Friends of Esmont, Inc. plans to memorialize the missing depot on the ground it was built on. The exact location of the building will be outlined with railroad ties, and a slate marker with the history of the depot will be installed. Village name signage, like that on the former depot building, will be placed on the newly renovated trail head building next to Purvis Store Market.

BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY: The Depot Memorial will serve as a resting place alongside the walking trail and give a short history lesson to those who visit.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: The memorial, with its historical marker, will serve as a reminder of the rich history of the Village and the major role it played in the region.

ESTIMATED COST: \$5,000

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: The memorial will require little maintenance which can be handled by volunteers.

3. RESTORATION OF HISTORIC HOMES



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A number of the historic homes, most of which are over 100 years old, along Esmont Road and Red Row Lane in the historic village of Esmont, (the Village), have fallen into disrepair. Several of those have been purchased and are being renovated. This “boom” began about six months after Friends of Esmont organized and may continue until all the houses are renovated.

BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY: Historic homes now threatened with being lost will be preserved and the Village will more closely resemble its appearance and charm of the early 20th century. These restored homes will instill pride in the neighborhood and provide affordable, attractive housing.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: Other projects aimed at drawing visitors and new residents to the Village will be enhanced as a result of this restoration project.

ESTIMATED COST: Absorbed by new homeowners.

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: The maintenance of the restored homes will be provided by homeowners.

4. ESTABLISH A WILDLIFE REFUGE ALONG BALLINGER CREEK



Esmont Purple Martin Houses

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Ballinger Creek runs through the historic village of Esmont, (the Village), mostly in an area that is a flood plain, creating a situation ideal for a Wildlife Refuge.

BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY: Building a boardwalk and planting native plants to attract birds, ducks, and other wildlife, would bring life and beauty to that area which could be used for education and research. Creating this outdoor attraction would bring visitors to Esmont elevating its image as a destination.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: The Trail will run along the Refuge, and the Fulfillment Farm property, owned by the Virginia Wildlife Foundation, abuts some of this property which will attract visitors to all three improvements.

ESTIMATED COST: Land acquisition and building the boardwalk will cost approximately \$200,000.

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: This is a low maintenance project that can be maintained by volunteers.

5. CHRONICLE ESMONT HISTORY

Friends of Esmont announces publication of its history book, Esmont Virginia
A community carved from the earth and sustained by story

Friends of Esmont, Inc., proudly announces the publication of its history book, **Esmont Virginia**, available for purchase in local bookstores and on Amazon. The **Esmont Virginia** history book was made possible by Preservation Piedmont through distribution from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation's Watha J. Eddins, Jr. Fund, dedicated for protection of historic resources and advancement of cultural heritage in Virginia, by Virginia Humanities, and The Caplin Foundation of Earlysville.

Esmont Virginia history addresses Land Grants from the mid to late 1700s, and the historic plantations built in the area in the 1700s and 1800s, most of which have been carefully preserved and are still residences. Many significant churches, some dating back to the 1800s are addressed along with schools from early days of Porters, Chestnut Grove and Esmont Village, and a Forward written by author Jan Karon of Charlottesville.

The rich industrial and commercial history including quarrying slate and soapstone, building railroad lines connecting Warren, Esmont, Schuyler and Alberene, building and creating the busy regional Esmont National Bank and other commerce are all detailed in this amazing book.

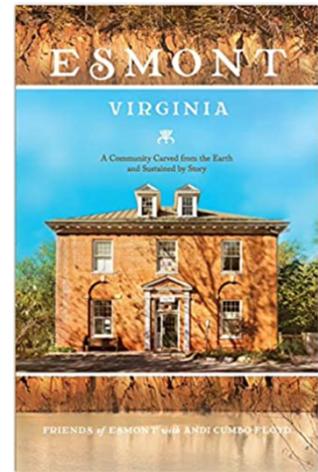
Peggy Denby, Chair of Friends of Esmont, says, "We are delighted we had the opportunity to research, document, and now share the rich and interesting history of Esmont, Porters and Chestnut Grove areas that for all these many years had been untold."

Andi Cumbo-Floyd, the historian and author, commented "having grown up in Bremono Bluff, a rural Virginia community, I fell in love with Esmont's long history, its economic boon, and its continuing heart-beat in the lives of its people."

Friends of Esmont is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, organized in 2018 to rejuvenate the historic village of Esmont. The Board of Directors has selected seven projects to fulfill this mission which include, in addition to the History: Building a walking/riding trail; memorializing the Esmont Depot; creating a wildlife wetland; restoration of historic houses in the village; restoration of Purvis Store as a marketplace for grocery store and local arts/crafts; and gaining easier access to Fulfillment Farm for recreational purposes.

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Available for purchase at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and through local bookstores, New Dominion Bookshop on the Mall in Charlottesville and Baines Bookstore in Scottsville.



6. EASY ACCESS TO ESMONT FULFILLMENT FARMS



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The plan is to work with the Virginia Wildlife Foundation to designate the 200 acres of Fulfillment Farms abutting the historic village of Esmont to a nature trail, making that land more accessible and family friendly as a recreational area for walkers, hikers, birders, and others.

BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY: This park will create much needed recreational space for the Village.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: The connection to the Wildlife Refuge and the Esmont Trail will provide important recreational opportunities to outdoor enthusiasts.

ESTIMATED COST: Paths will be cleared by volunteers.

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: This property is owned and maintained by Virginia Wildlife Foundation. They will be assisted by volunteers.

7. PURVIS STORE MARKET



Purvis Store - Current State

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *Built in the early 1900s, the store and adjacent outbuilding are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Contributing Resource to the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District and is listed on the Albemarle County Important Country Stores list along with two other stores in Esmont: Payne's Store and Pace's Store.*

For many years Purvis Store was the hub of activity in the historic village of Esmont (the Village). The store played many roles in serving area residents in addition to selling groceries and gas and making home deliveries. It was also a message center for those who had no telephone, a recreation center for those who had no television, and a place to go when they needed help or wanted to visit with neighbors.

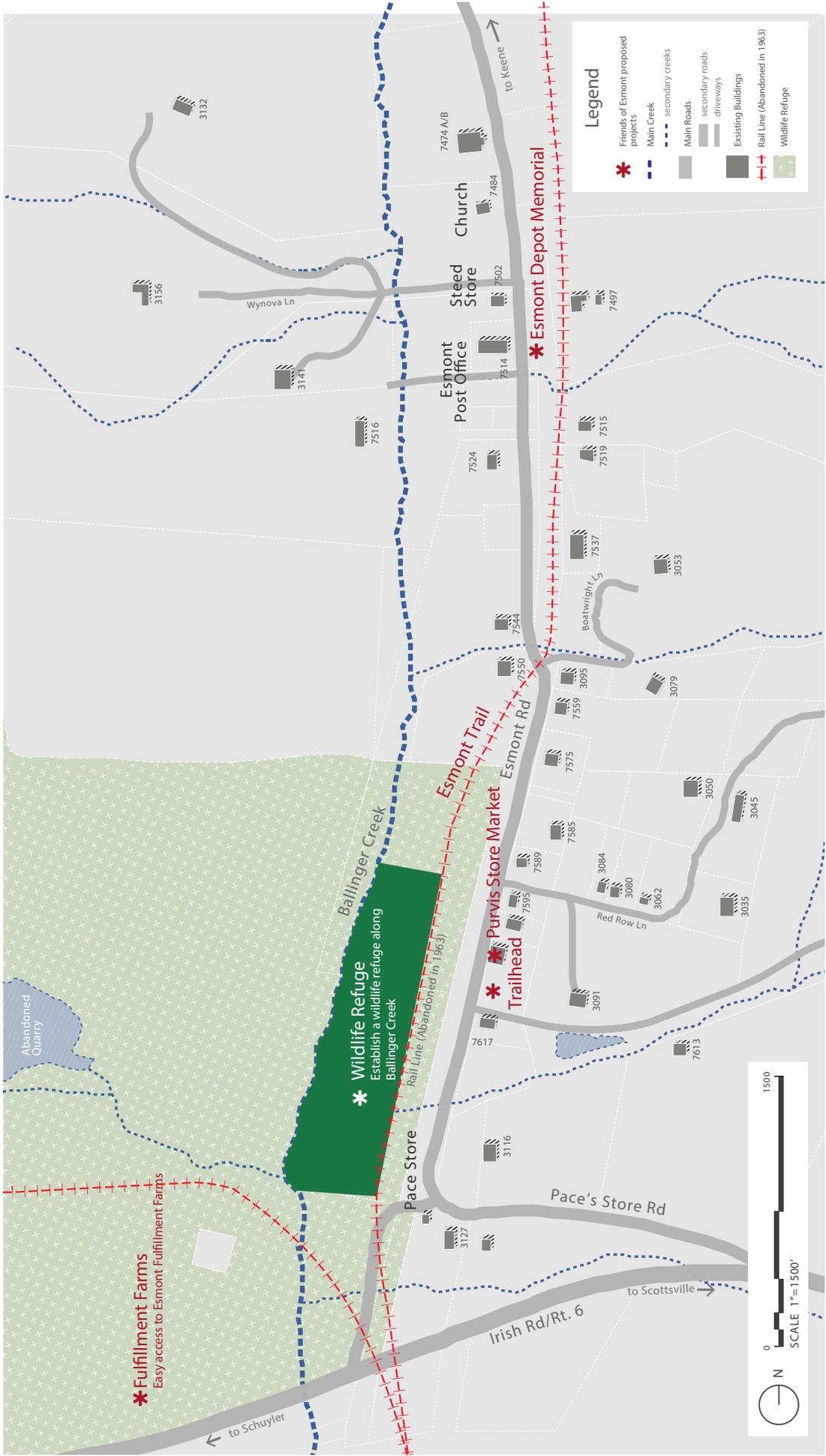
Restoring this property as the hub of the Village again, instead of allowing its collapse, will bring new life to the Village and surrounding area. The vision is to provide a marketplace for crafts people to sell their wares, perhaps making them on-site, along with a small grocery and coffee shop. Items sold in the Purvis Store Market will be locally made or tied to the history of the area. A small museum will be included for local artifacts, and the Esmont History Book will be displayed there. A care-taker's apartment will be included in the design of the building.

BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY: Purvis Store Market will attract artists, craftspeople, history buffs, and visitors to the area, providing economic opportunities. The shed next door will be converted into the Trailhead with amenities such as bathrooms, seating, bicycle repair. The care-taker resident will benefit from lower rent.

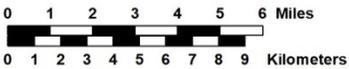
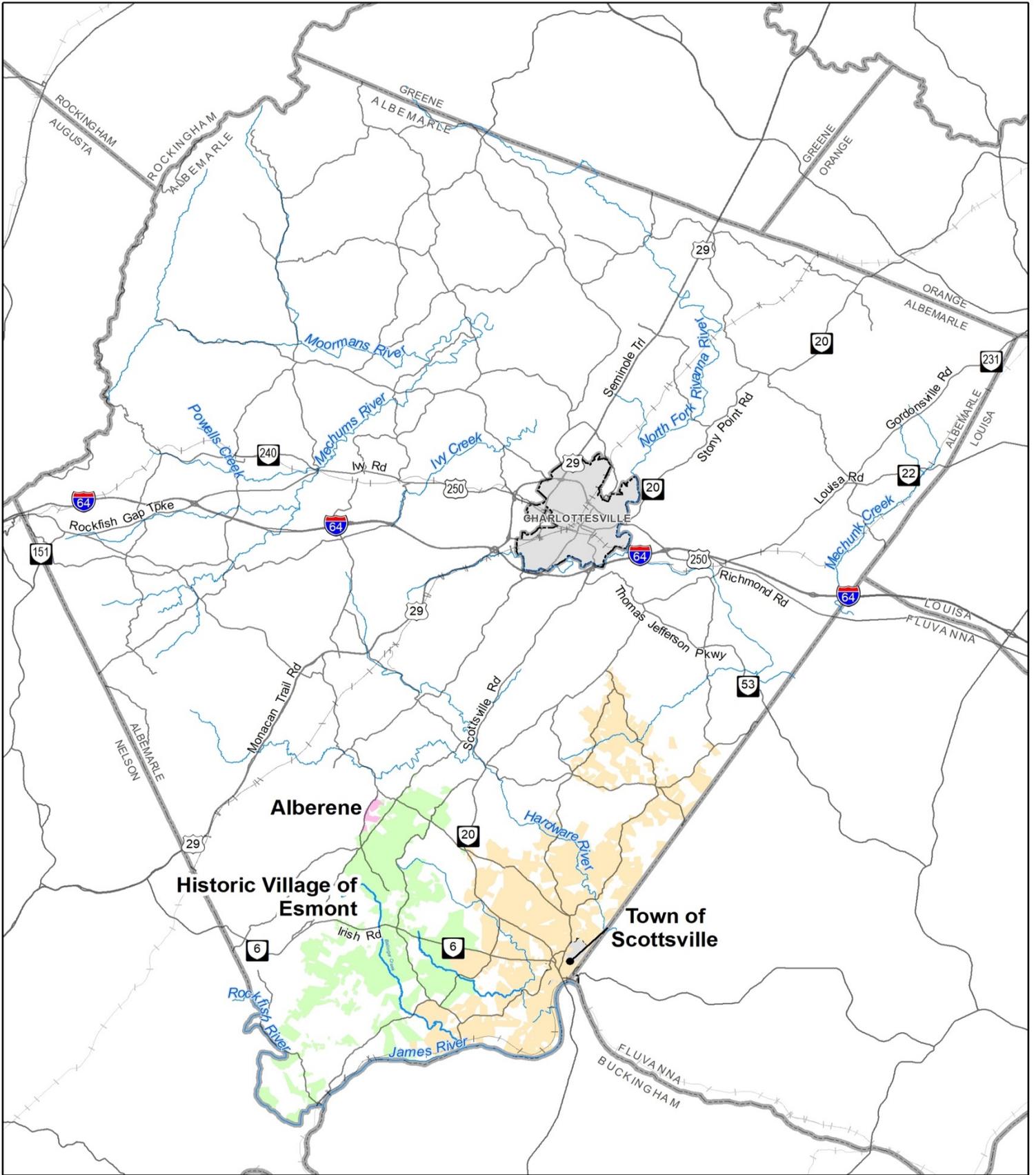
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS: Visitors to the Wildlife Refuge and those on the Esmont Trail will enjoy and extend their time in the Village by stopping by the Purvis Store Market availing themselves of the Trailhead amenities.

ESTIMATED COST: \$300,000 - \$500,000

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT: The headquarters for Friends of Esmont, Inc. will be housed in the Purvis Store Market along with other shops bringing in rental revenue.

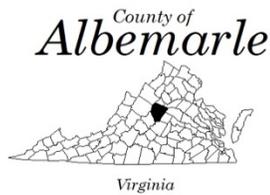


HISTORIC VILLAGE OF ESMONT, VA



Prepared by: Brian Becker
 Department of Community Development, Albemarle County
 Note: The map elements depicted are graphic representations
 are not to be construed or used as a legal description.
 This map is for display purposes only.

Map last edited: 6/17/2019



- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Major Water Bodies
- Major Streams
- Esmont Properties
- Scottsville Properties
- Alberene Properties