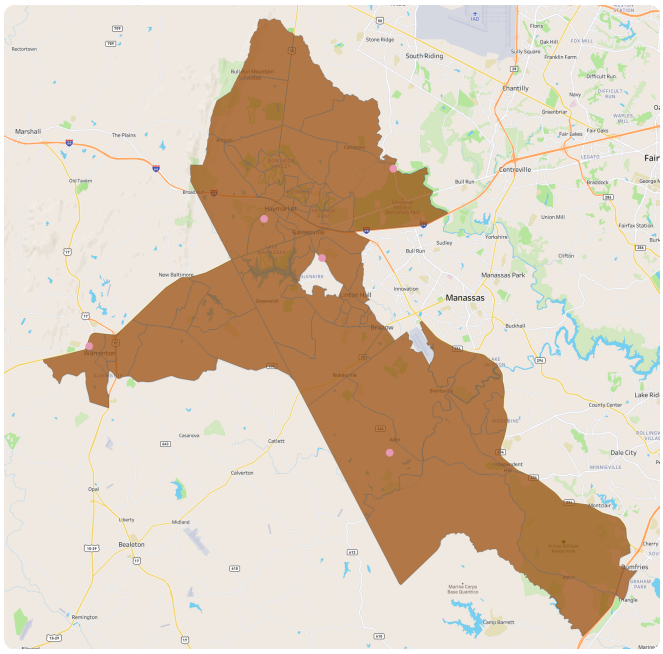
A MICRO-COMMUNITY PORTRAIT

Prince William Rural Crescent

Conservation-zoned farmland, equestrian centers, and wineries in wooded lots — a community determined to keep Prince William rural.



Micro-community shown with block group boundaries

123,855	5	780	5
residents in 2025 129,277 projected by 2030 (+4.4%)	UM churches	average in worship	appointed UM clergy

WE ALREADY KNOW MANY OF OUR NEIGHBORS

780 average in worship × **150** Dunbar's Number* = **117,000** Number of people within the Micro-community we may already know

That is 94% of everyone who lives here.

It can seem daunting to reach a community of 123,855. Yet as neighbors we are already within meaningful relationship with about 117,000 of our neighbors.

***Dunbar's number (150)** the number of meaningful relationships a person can sustain, per anthropologist Robin Dunbar — a conservative gauge of a community's existing relational reach.

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WHERE WE CALL HOME

A landscape defined by conservation zoning and farmland preservation policies, marked by rolling fields, equestrian centers, wineries, and small subdivisions tucked into wooded lots. We identify strongly with keeping Prince William rural, contrasting ourselves with the rapidly suburbanizing east. Gainesville and Haymarket serve as our entry points to suburban amenities, while much of our fence remains semi-rural in feel. Bull Run Mountains, Manassas National Battlefield Park, and the Fauquier line at Warrenton and New Baltimore anchor our western identity.

THE LIFE WE'VE BUILT

Our lives are shaped by commuting and car-dependence — many of us travel long distances along I-66 or US-29 to jobs in Fairfax, Loudoun, or D.C., and traffic congestion is a defining feature of daily life. Schools and youth sports still anchor our community identity, but the lack of dense retail and public transit means errands and entertainment require significant driving. We benefit from larger homesites and access to outdoor recreation in the Bull Run Mountains and our county parks. Wineries, small farms, and equestrian centers weave through the wooded lots that surround us.

CHALLENGES WE FACE

Our defining identity — the Rural Crescent, created in 1998 to limit development to one home per 10 acres across more than 100,000 acres — is under real pressure. The 2022 Comprehensive Plan Update proposed replacing the "Rural Area" designation with an "Agricultural and Forestry" label that would upzone roughly 75,000 acres to one home per 5 acres, effectively doubling potential density. In 2025 the Board of Supervisors approved rezonings for thousands of new homes across the county, including in and near our rural area. In October 2025, the beloved Merrifield Garden Center in Gainesville sold its 38-acre site to a data center developer for $160 million — $4.2 million per acre, likely a Prince William record — and closed on December 31. The site sits inside the county's Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District, a roughly 10,000-acre area where data centers are allowed by right. And energy demand from data center growth has raised concerns about regional grid capacity through the end of the decade.

THE FUTURE WE'RE BUILDING

Our future is being built through durable conservation on the parts of the landscape that citizens and public agencies have permanently protected. The Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve — approximately 2,500 acres straddling Fauquier and Prince William counties, owned and managed by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation — is surrounded by an additional 5,700 acres of privately-held conservation easements, for a total of roughly 8,200 permanently protected acres. Manassas National Battlefield Park's 5,000-acre battlefield landscape remains protected, and after July 2026, no longer sits adjacent to the world's largest planned data center campus. VRE's System Plan 2050 will bring more express and off-peak trains through Broad Run station serving our western commuters, and add full weekend service for the first time by 2030. And wineries, agritourism, and equestrian farms continue to define the rural crescent economy that we're still fighting to preserve.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS AND HOPE

Hope shows up in citizen coalitions winning. The Prince William Digital Gateway is dead. The proposed 2,000-acre, up-to-37-building, 22-million-square-foot data center campus along Pageland Lane adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park — approved by our Board of Supervisors in December 2023 — was voided by our Circuit Court in August 2025 for improper public notice, unanimously affirmed by the Virginia Court of Appeals on March 31, 2026, and finally terminated when developer QTS withdrew its Supreme Court appeal on July 2, 2026. The lawsuit was carried by the Oak Valley Homeowners Association — our neighbors — working alongside the American Battlefield Trust, the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, and other conservation partners. On July 7, 2026, the Board of Supervisors denied another 2,000-acre data center proposal in our Gainesville area after roughly 100 protesters gathered at the county government center. The citizen victories signal that the Rural Crescent's community voice remains genuinely powerful even as its formal policy protections are being unwound.

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THE CONNECTION

United Methodist Churches

5 congregations – our faithful presence within the micro-community

- **Asbury UMC**
  14113 Fleetwood Dr, Nokesville, 20181-2643
  (703) 594-3015

- **Gainesville UMC**
  13710 Milestone Ct, Gainesville, 20155-2998
  (703) 754-4511

- **Haymarket**
  15500 Learning Ln, Haymarket, 20169-2805
  (703) 743-1387

- **Sudley UMC**
  5308 Sudley Rd, Manassas, 20109-2105
  (703) 754-4380

- **Warrenton UMC**
  341 Church St, Warrenton, 20186-2713
  (540) 347-1367

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