This bird’s eye perspective of Haymount shows it transformed into a “new town” laid out on a formal grid that will ultimately support 12,000 individuals over a twenty year time frame.

The charette in December of 1989 came up with the idea that having a compact close-knit community was somehow more important than having your typical suburban paradigm. Participants in the charette wanted a development in the rural landscape to only consume only about half of the total site, thus preserving the remainder as open space. The landscape design ranges from the most formal and manicured at the town squares, to a ring of controlled nature, to have nature left “savage.”

The New Urbanist philosophy regarding transportation puts the pedestrian first, and focuses on recapturing the narrow street as part of the public realm. The communities of Haymount are laid out with no more than a five-minute walk from one of the four neighborhood centers. Residents can also use a light rail system just five miles away in Fredericksburg that provides the opportunity for the fifty mile commute into Washington, DC. Haymount is considered to be in a resource-sensitive area, therefore development was only allowed in two places. The land adjacent to Haymount has been lobbied to the local Caroline County planning officials by the County citizens and the developers, Robertson and Clark in order to preserve the quality of this place for future generations. This not only protects the local ecosystem, but it also thwarts less desirable developers from coming in and developing on adjacent areas that would detract from Haymount’s well being.

The basic idea behind Haymount is to meld neotraditional community living with innovative ecological techniques. Knowing that development was going to affect the Rappahannock River, one of the Chesapeake Bay’s most pristine tributaries, precautions were therefore taken to make sure the area remained ecologically viable. The stormwater management system and organics implemented on site will actually reduce toxic runoff to well below current levels. Both the stormwater and wastewater will also be cleansed on site via constructed wetlands. These systems will not only treat 1.2 million gallons of water per day, they will also use a series of increasingly complex sewage treatment processes for cleaning industrial wastewater that will actually reduce runoff to well below current levels.

This unique community in Virginia said it would use only “eco” building materials, like permeable pavements and sustainable harvested lumber. Part of Haymount’s conservation energy plan, set forth by Armory Lovins’ Rocky Mountain Institute, calls for a mixed use development, including 750,000 square feet of office and retail space. This will not only encourage local employment, but it should also drastically shorten residential commutes which in turn cuts the amount of toxic exhaust fumes delivered into the atmosphere.

The sustainability component also includes private protection programs for eagles, wetlands, and woodlands; recycling and water conservation; a small public organic farm run by the homeowners; and controls on the pesticides and the use of fertilizers.

In December of 1989 a team of fifty concerned citizens led by Newurbanism mavens Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, both architects by profession, completed a week long charette in the rural county of Caroline, Virginia. The result of the charette brought about the plans for a future development on 1,700 acres of historic farm, called Haymount. The design and development of Haymount came in reaction to many of the ills of our current sprawl development pattern. The solution for this new community was a stylized “traditional neighborhood development” (TND) that would support 12,000 individuals in a 4,000- unit community, as well as support commercial and retail space to be built out over a twenty year period. Unlike many contemporary TND communities, Haymount is addressing opportunities for sustainability and extensive habitat preservation and restoration programs.
The developers say that Haymount will ultimately be designed in respect with the local vernacular, referring to regional examples such as Urbanna, Tappahannock, Port Royal, Fredericksburg, Leesburg, Williamsburg and old town Alexandria. Almost all of these towns were typically laid out on very formal, rigid grids. However, designing in the vernacular comes with a price to be met. The first section of Haymount that has been built contains 350 homes in a mixture of single family detached housing, row houses, town houses, and apartments; ranging in price from $58,000 to $450,000. The first houses were available in the summer of 1999.

Haymount’s developers state that the development costs, which include water, sewers, zoning, and everything else, total about $11,000/acre. This may be because Haymount is using a system of financing that is described as “Just in Time financing.” This means releasing financing and assuming debt only in a series of stages as each new neighborhood or commercial project comes on line. Rather than carry a large overhead of debt, each section of the development is financed in separate pieces from the same source. In addition, each of Haymount’s neighborhoods will offer various housing options, from detached single-family houses to garden and courtyard apartments to modest townhouses. Offering variety in housing options ensures the diversity of socio/economic levels of the residents that will ultimately inhabit Haymount.