



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

November 19, 2020

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ben Berto, Director of Planning and Building Services

SUBJECT: Digitized Zoning Chapter 17.060 Ridgeline Development maps

BACKGROUND

Staff continues to work on developing digitized and georeferenced baseline maps to reflect the Zoning Chapter 17.060 definition of Ridgeline Scenic Corridors in Fairfax. Amendments to Zoning Code text may also be warranted to clarify use of such maps.

This is the Planning Commission's seventh meeting on this topic, commencing in June 2020, including a joint session with the Fairfax Open Space Committee.

At the last (October 15) Planning Commission meeting, there appeared to be consensus that Ridgeline Scenic Corridors should be terminated at the bottom of the ridge, i.e., they should not extend into the flatland portions of Town. The Commission also did not support using the 1974 General Plan Hydrology Map for purposes of defining "major ridges", instead all ridges drawn with a Ridgeline Scenic Corridor (RSC) on the 1974 Visual Resources Map No. 9/2015 General Plan Visual Resources Map to be considered "major."

There was also consensus that the areas encompassed within each of the various RSC subdefinition types (e.g., Map No. 9, Digitized/georeferenced Map No. 9, 150' horizontal, 100' vertical) should be combined such that a final "Ridgeline Scenic Corridor" represents the maximum cumulative combined area derived from the RSC subdefinitions.

The Commission also requested cross-sectional diagrams to assist in clarifying how the horizontal and vertical ridgeline scenic corridors are applied.

100-vertical foot Ridgeline Scenic Corridor

As discussed in the October 15 staff report, the ridgeline scenic corridors definition section of Chapter 17.060 states that areas located within 100 feet vertically of a major ridge (considered by your Commission any RSC-designated ridge) are within the ridgeline scenic corridor.

Mapping and reaching a consensus on how the 100-foot vertical RSC is applied has been challenging. Some progress has been made.

As shown in the October diagrams, on six of the designated ridgelines, if the 100-foot vertical distance RSC were literally applied, the RSC would extend out into and completely cover Fairfax's flat peneplane area.

Your Commission appeared to reach a rough consensus that RSC's should not extend out into the flatlands areas of Fairfax. Therefore, staff has reworked the downhill termini of the six ridgelines where the RSC otherwise extends into the flatlands, to end at the bottom of the ridges. Diagrammatic closeups of each of these circumscribed RSC's is shown in Attachments A1-A6.

Staff is proposing applying several parameters to determining the 100-vertical foot RSC, to better define the vertical RSC boundary:

- 1) Circumscribe the downhill end of the RSC at the bottom of the ridge if it would otherwise extend into the flatlands
 - 2) Measure it perpendicular to the ridgeline
 - 3) The outer boundary shall also occur if anywhere in the measured RSC distance an appreciable uphill slope is encountered
 - 4) The 1974 Map No. 9 should be used as a rough reference for the Town's intended RSC area in evaluating other RSC subdefinition boundaries.
 - 5) Where the bottom of the RSC would otherwise expand several hundred feet/indefinitely beyond the ridgeline, terminate the 100-vertical foot RSC at lowest point where 150-foot horizontal RSC and 100-foot vertical RSC boundaries coincide.
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- 1) As noted previously, the bottom of the RSC's are proposed to be terminated at the bottom of six of the designated ridgelines.
 - 2) A 'perpendicular to the ridgeline' approach was used to orient mapping the vertical drop. This perpendicular approach is consistent with the subdefinition of the 150-foot horizontal RSC.
 - 3) As discussed at the October 15 meeting, and shown in the cross-sections for this staff report (Attachment C), the bottoms of several of the designated ridgelines don't cleanly drop away from the designated ridgeline, but function as more of an undulating hillside. The cross-sections of the problematic ridgelines illustrate the

rolling nature of those ridgelines, and how terminating the 100-foot vertical downhill RSC before it extends back uphill makes sense from an application standpoint.

- 4) Two of the designated ridgelines - the Fairfax Ridge and the Bald Hill Ridge – would result in drastically widened RSC's if the 100-foot vertical drop were literally applied, even if recommendation 3) above were applied (the RSC would stop where the ridge goes back uphill). This is due to the bottom of these two ridges topographically being undulating hillsides at the bottom (see Attachments A4 and A5).

As noted in the October staff report, applying the 100-vertical foot RSC would widen the RSC by up to 1,500 feet at the bottom of these ridges. Creating an RSC five times as wide as the historic RSC unfairly penalizes properties and houses in these locations. Dozens of properties would be saddled with additional design restrictions and would have to pay \$6K for a Hill Area Residential Development (HRD) permit application to do an exterior expansion.

Staff used the historic 1974 RSC boundaries to compare against in suggesting where in staff's opinion the 100-vertical foot RSC should terminated to avoid its otherwise drastic widening at the bottom of the two ridges.

Both Fairfax Ridge and the Bald Hill Ridge have a location towards the bottom of each ridge where the 150-horizontal foot RSC and 100-vertical foot RSC come close together. These are identified in their closeup with a 'star' (see Attachments A4 and A5). Staff proposes terminating the 100-vertical foot RSC at/below these starred points. Instead, the three other RSC maps: 1974 Historic RSC, digitized/georeferenced 1974 RSC, and 150-horizontal foot RSC, would be used to determine the cumulative RSC below the starred points .

Revised Zoning Ordinance Language

Staff proposes the following changes to the Zoning Ordinance:

- 1) Add a phrase to the end of the "Ridgeline Scenic Corridors" definition in Section 17.050.020 that reads "...within 150 feet horizontal distance *or 100 feet vertical distance from the designated ridgeline*, as located on *the following maps: Visual Resources Map No. 9/Visual Resources Map, Georeferenced Visual Resources Map, 150-Foot Horizontal Distances Map, and 100-Foot Vertical Distances Map. Said maps are hereby added to Chapter 17.060 as Appendix A. Further detail on the boundaries of the Ridgeline Scenic Corridor can be found by the 100 feet vertical distance map can be are determined can be found in Appendix B to this chapter.*

Appendix B

The boundaries of the 100-foot vertical Ridgeline Scenic Corridor shall be based upon the following:

- a. *The downhill end of the of the RSC shall not extend beyond the point where the bottom of the ridge meets the flatlands portion.*
- b. *The 100-foot vertical distance shall be measured perpendicular to the ridgeline*

- c. *The outer boundary shall also occur if anywhere in the measured RSC distance an appreciable uphill slope is encountered*
- d. *The 100-foot vertical RSC shall be located on Fairfax and Bald Hill Ridges at lowest point where 150-foot horizontal RSC and 100-foot vertical RSC boundaries coincide, as shown on the cumulative Ridgeline Scenic Corridor map (see Appendix C),*

Recommendations

Review the attached staff report and materials and provide direction on the following:

- 1) Should the 100-foot vertical distance Ridgeline Scenic Corridor map be defined as recommended by staff?
- 2) Do the attached diagrams provide sufficient clarity on proposed Ridgeline Scenic Corridor boundaries?
- 3) Are the draft language amendments to Chapter 17.060 acceptable, or are further changes desired?

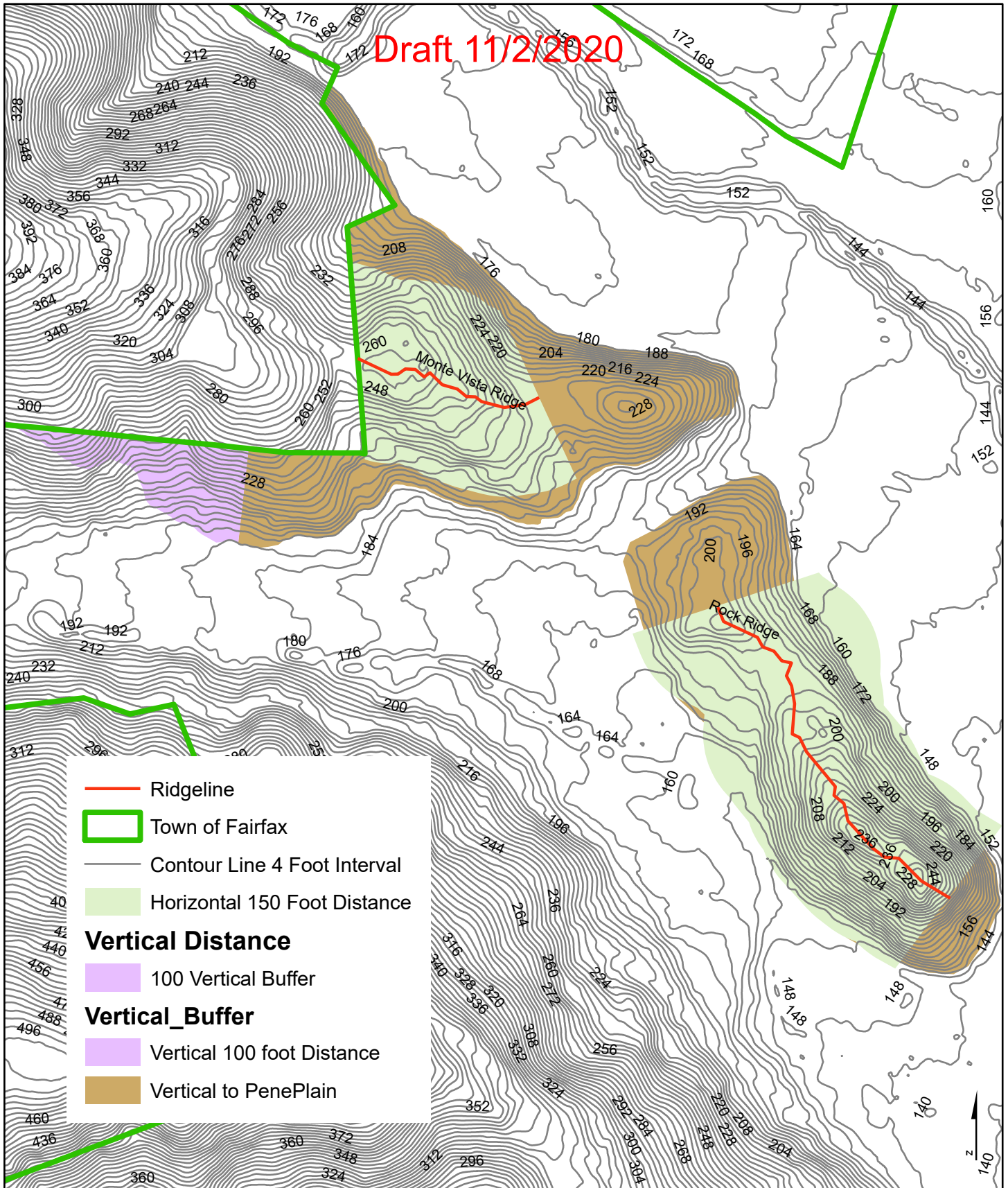
Staff will gather the Commission's comments and return at the December meeting with final versions of the maps and ordinance text amendments for recommendation by the Planning Commission to the Town Council.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A1-6 Diagrams of the six circumscribed 100 feet vertical distance Ridgeline Scenic Corridors
- Attachment B Comparison of 1974 Map and 150 feet horizontal Ridgeline Scenic Corridors
- Attachment C1-2 Profile showing Fairfax Ridge and Bald Hill Ridge cross-sections

Monte Vista and Rockridge Ridges 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgeline

Draft 11/2/2020

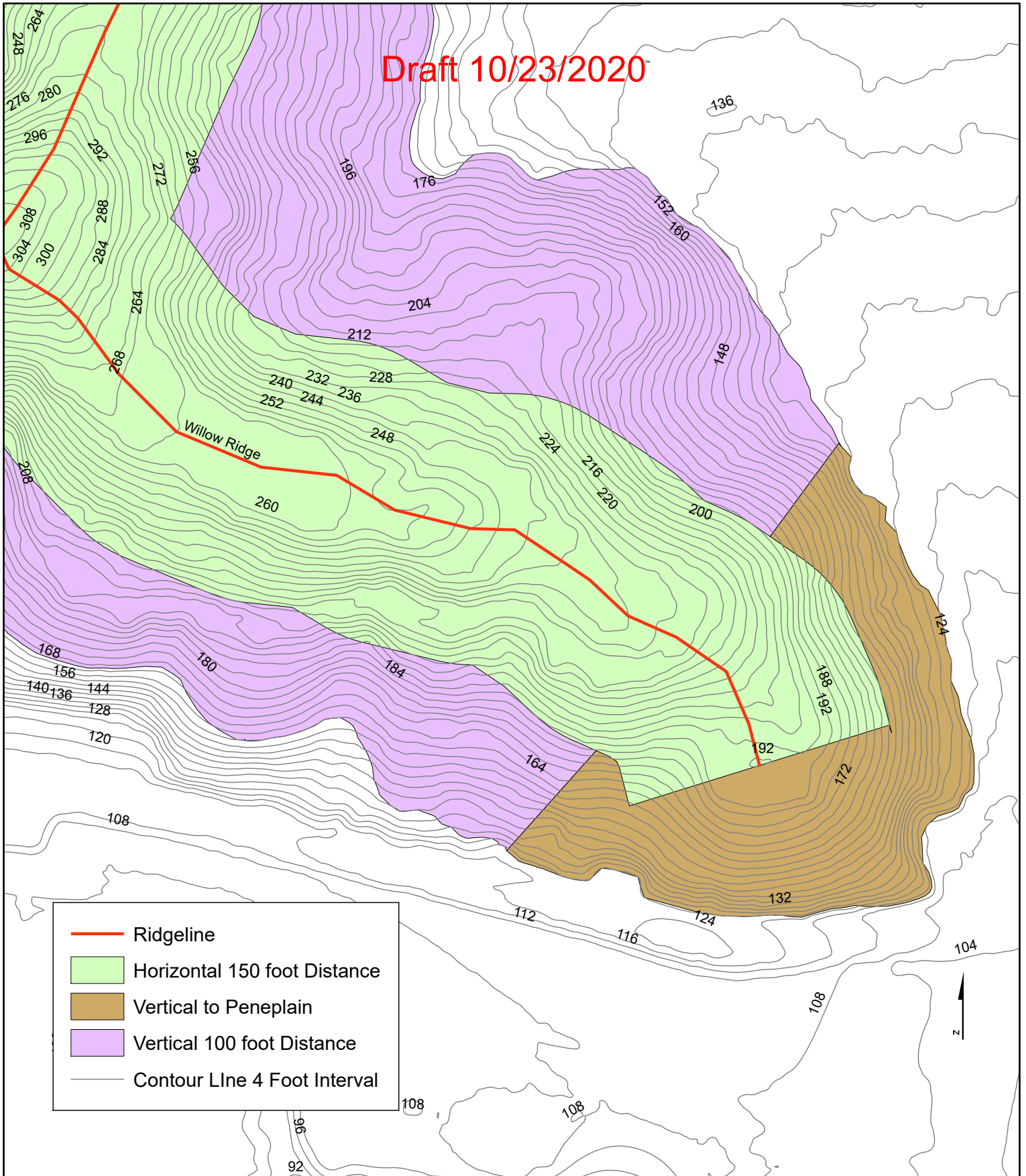


- Ridgeline
- Town of Fairfax
- Contour Line 4 Foot Interval
- Horizontal 150 Foot Distance
- Vertical Distance**
- 100 Vertical Buffer
- Vertical_Buffer**
- Vertical 100 foot Distance
- Vertical to PenePlain

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

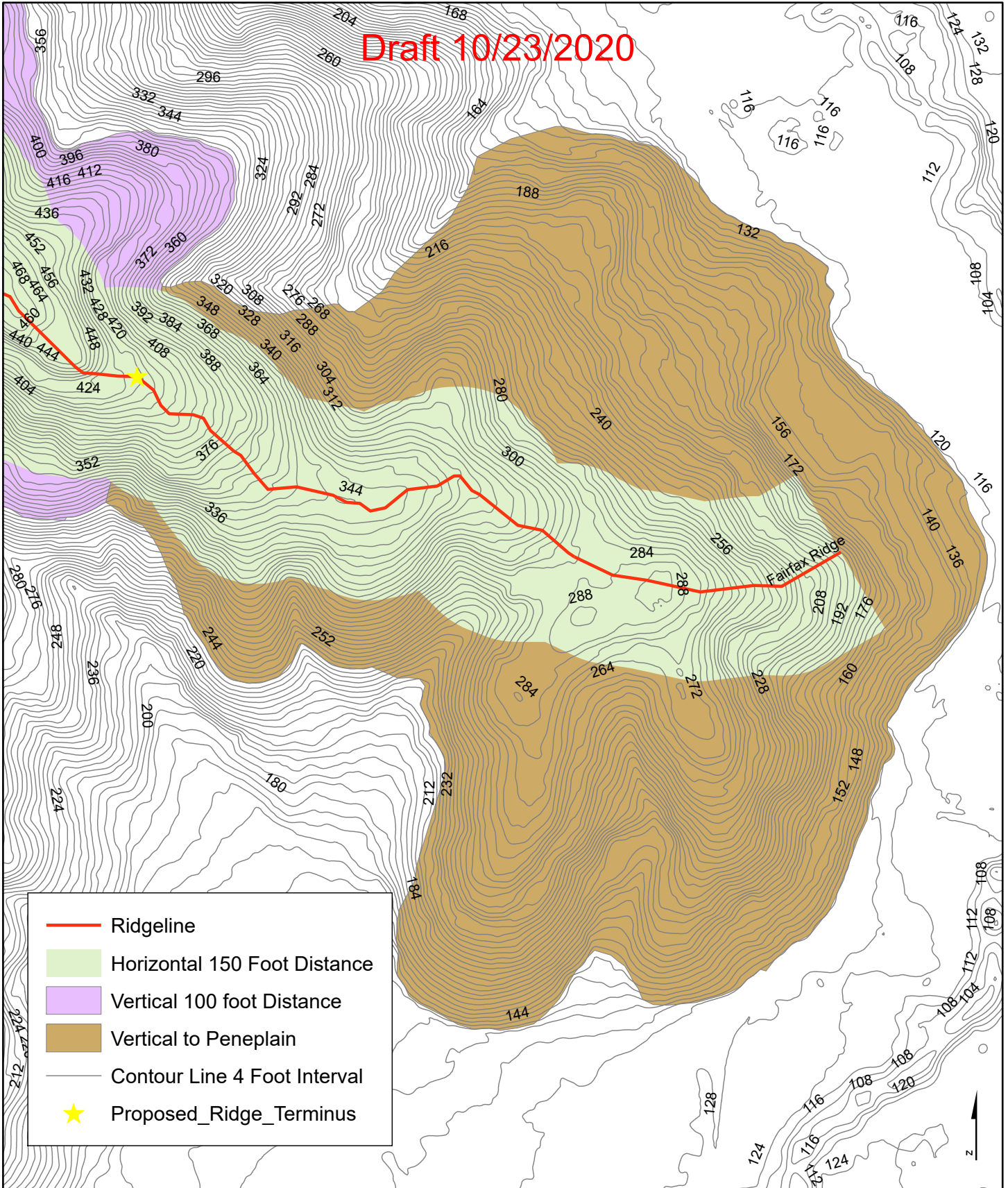
Willow Ridge 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgeline

Draft 10/23/2020



Fairfax Ridge 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgeline

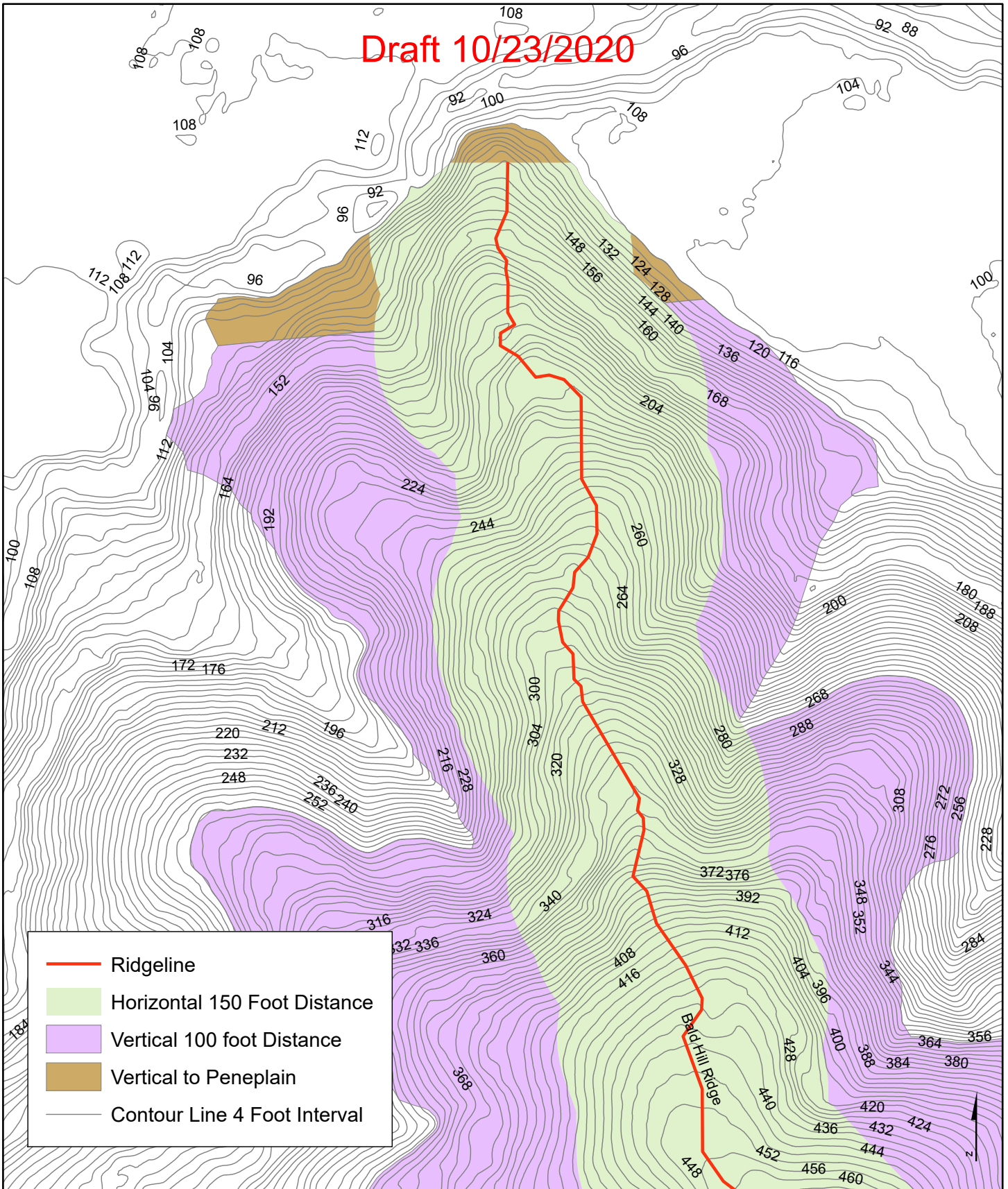
Draft 10/23/2020



0 250 500 1,000 Feet

Bald Hill Ridge 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgeline

Draft 10/23/2020

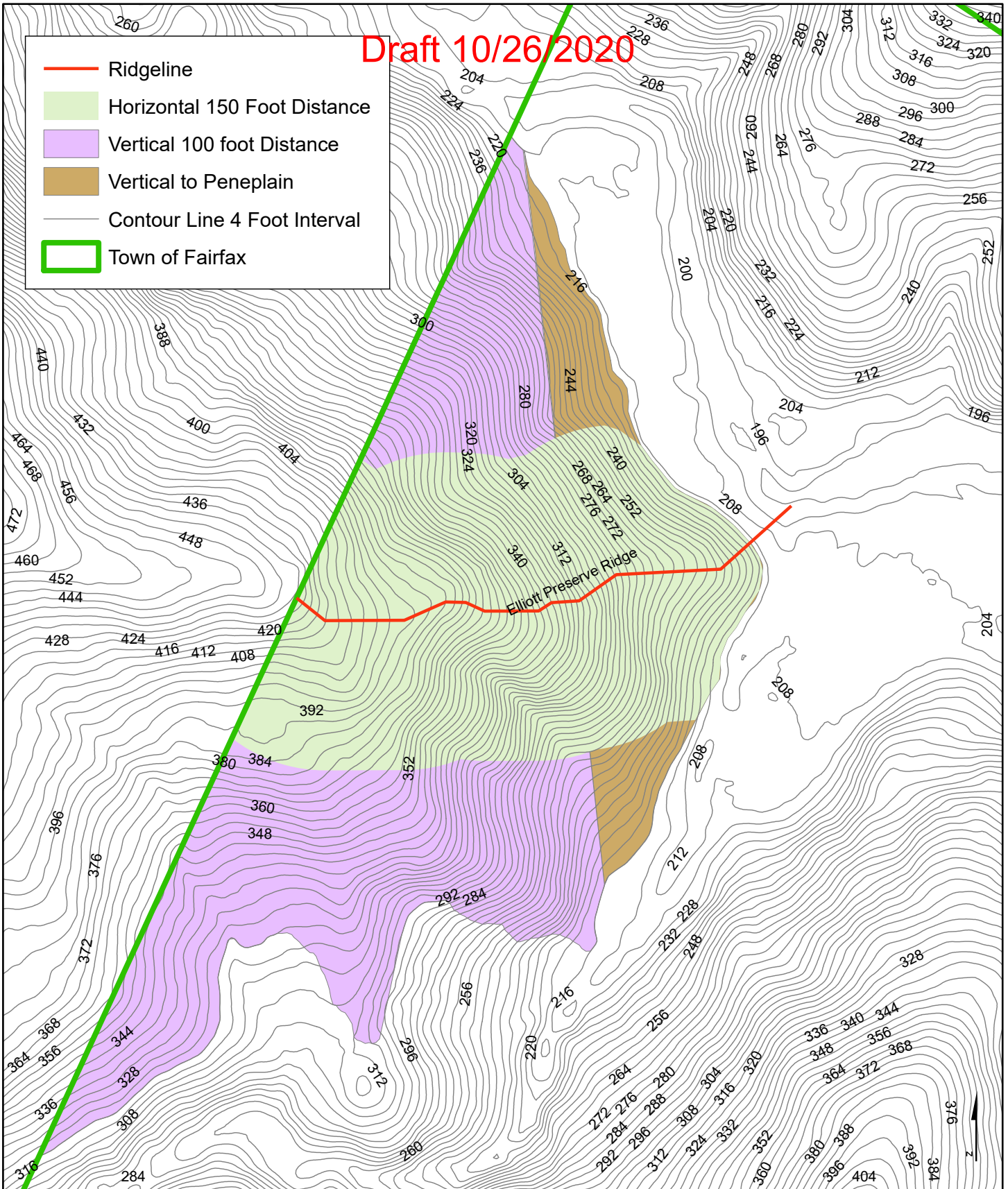


0 175 350 700 Feet

ATTACHMENT A5

Elliott Preserve Ridge 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgeline

Draft 10/26/2020



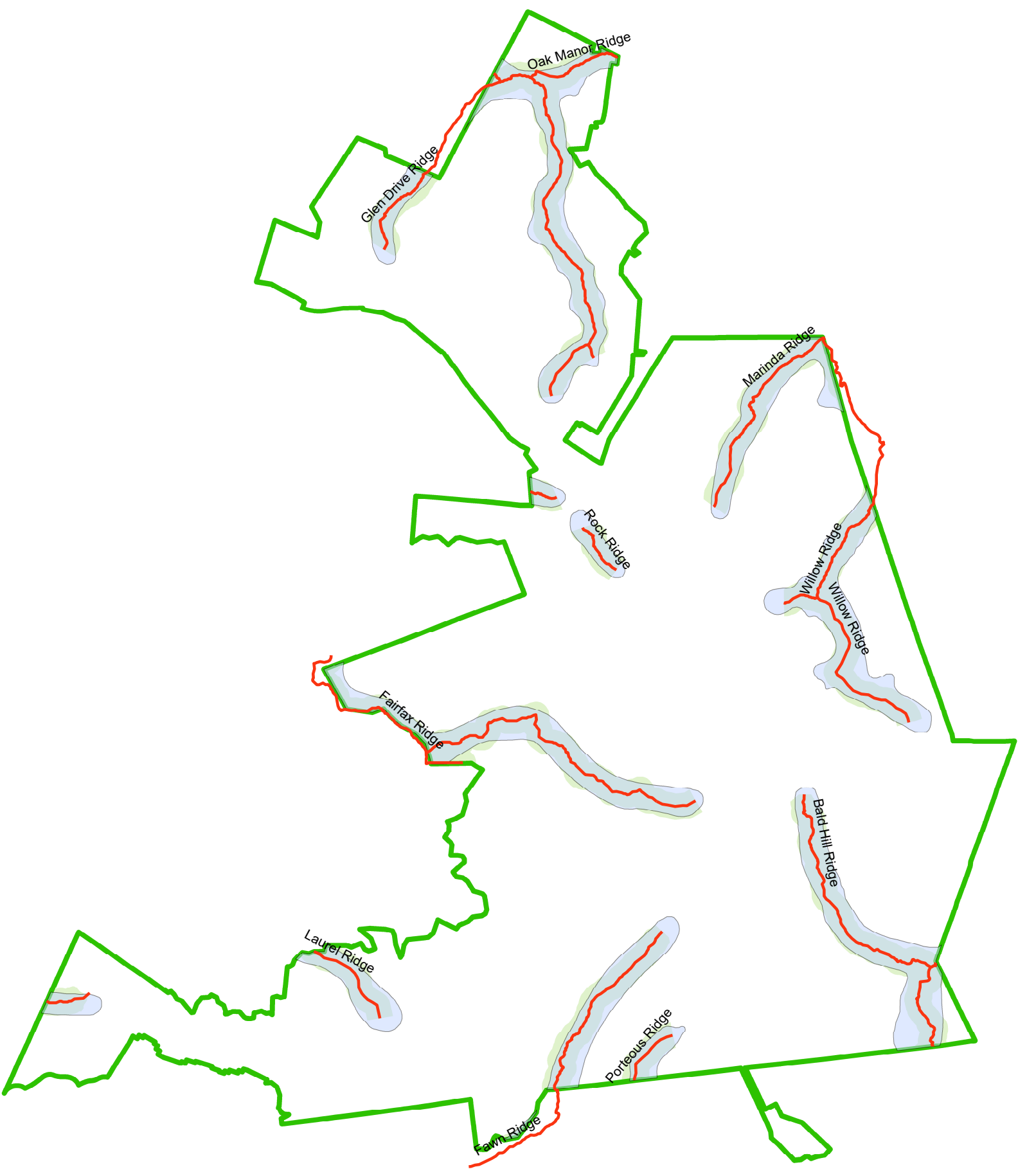
0 125 250 500 Feet

ATTACHMENT A6

Fairfax Ridges

1974 Ridgeline Scenic Corridors and 150 Foot Horizontal Distances

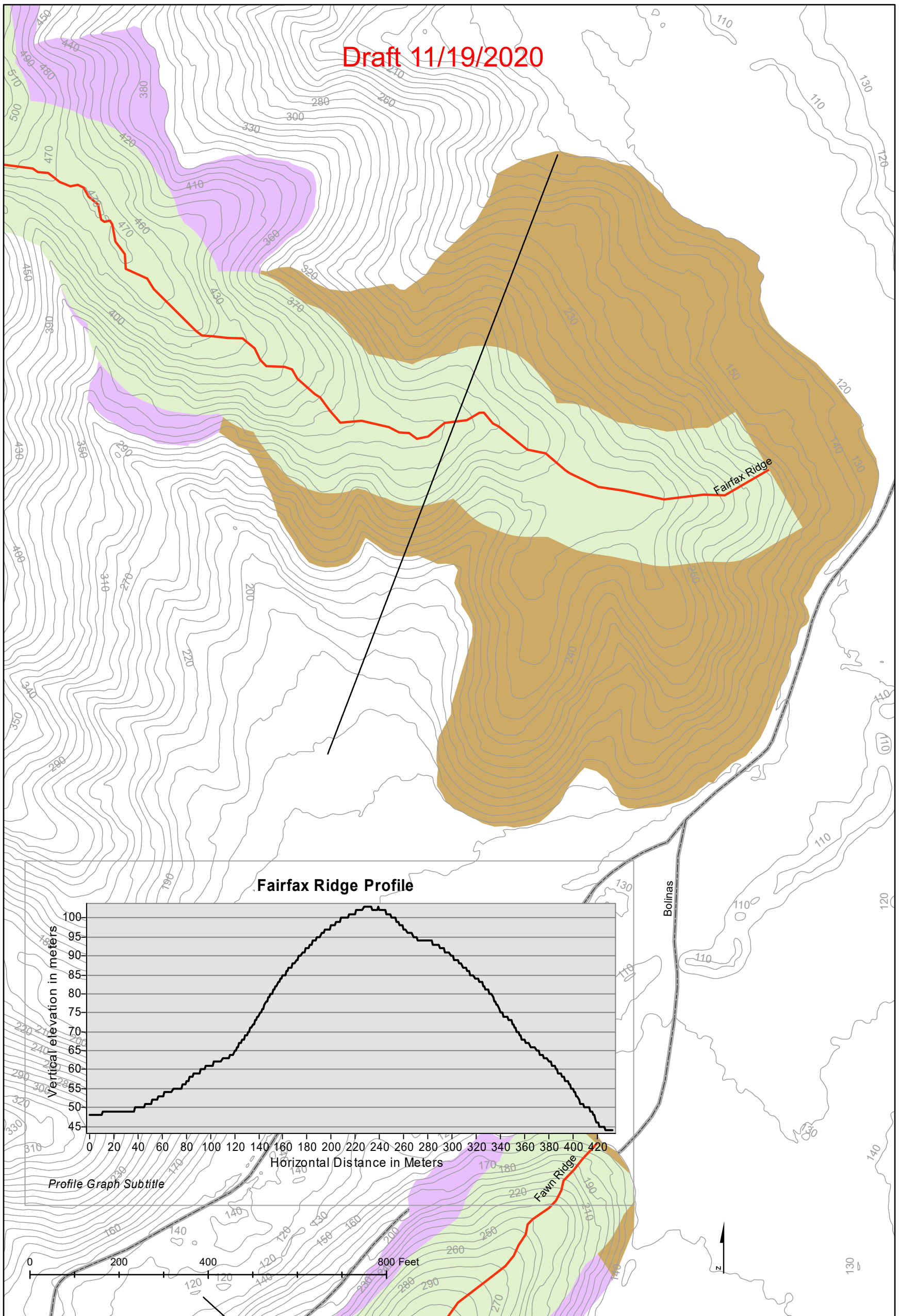
Draft 11/19/2020



Fairfax Ridge Profile

150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgelines

Draft 11/19/2020



Bald Hill Profile

150 Foot Horizontal Distance and 100 Foot Vertical Distance From Ridgelines

Draft 11/19/2020

