

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life in a community cannot be measured by statistics. It can only be expressed in terms of the collective experiences enjoyed by the residents. It includes such things as a comfortable climate, recreational and entertainment opportunities, educational and cultural life, and an aesthetically pleasing living environment. York County is best defined by its quality of life. Mild temperatures, a low crime rate, hundreds of miles of coastline, and abundant flora and fauna contribute to the County's reputation as a pleasant place to live.

To preserve and enhance this high quality of life is the overriding purpose of the York County Comprehensive Plan, which is the long-range plan for the physical development of the County. Like all localities in Virginia, York County is required by Section 15.2-2223 of the *Code of Virginia* to adopt a comprehensive plan, but the reasons for developing the plan go well beyond fulfilling this mandate. The Comprehensive Plan is necessary to ensure the efficient use of land in recognition of environmental constraints and the capacity of the public infrastructure. It seeks to provide for an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development; to guide such development to appropriate areas of the County based on the carrying capacity of the land, the existing development character, and the presence of infrastructure and public facilities; to preserve the County's natural and historic resources and aesthetic quality; and to prevent the overburdening of the County's roads, utilities, facilities, and services.

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia spells out the general scope and purpose of comprehensive plans:

"The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.

In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

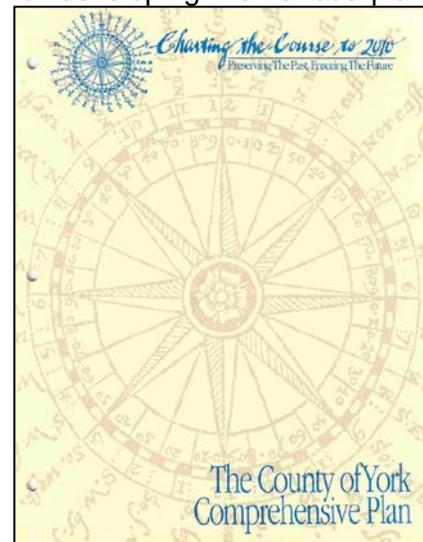
The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be..."

Although mandated by state law, comprehensive plans do not have the status of law. Rather, the Plan is a policy document intended to provide direction for present and future policy makers in making the laws and setting the policies to guide the County's development. The Comprehensive Plan is implemented by the County's various development ordinances – particularly the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances – as well as the Capital Improvements Program and the Six-Year Primary and Secondary Road Plans.

CHARTING THE COURSE TO 2010

On December 5, 1991 the York County Board of Supervisors adopted the first true Comprehensive Plan in the County's history, titled *Charting the Course to 2010: The County of York Comprehensive Plan*. Land use plans for the County had been developed in 1956 and 1964 by Virginia's Division of Industrial Development and Planning, and in 1967 by Harland Bartholomew and Associates. Although never formally adopted by the Board of Supervisors, these plans served as a basis for the development of land use controls until the adoption of a *Land Use Plan* in 1976. Subsequently, a *Schools Plan* (1978), *Major Thoroughfares Plan* (1979), and *Fire Protection Plan* (1979) were developed and adopted as elements of the comprehensive plan. A new *Land Use Plan* was developed in 1982 and adopted in 1983. Unlike previous plans, the 1983 plan was developed not by an outside consultant but by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and County staff.

The 1991 Plan was the product of over two years of work on the part of County planning staff, citizen volunteers, and elected and appointed officials. Public involvement was a key ingredient in the process, beginning in 1989 with the publication of a citizen questionnaire in the *Citizen News*, which is mailed to every home and business in the County. Four Comprehensive Plan Review committees were established and given responsibility for developing the various plan elements. A fifth committee was also created to coordinate all of the elements into a single unified plan. Citizen volunteers served on each of these committees, which also included members of the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, School Board, Industrial (now Economic) Development Authority, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. A staff liaison was assigned to each committee. Because of the County's special relationship to the water and the twenty-year horizon of the plan, "Charting the Course to 2010" was adopted as the Plan's theme.



The committees went to work in February 1990, holding meetings, field trips, and work sessions, which eventually numbered over 200. All of these meetings were open to the public, with meeting dates publicized on York County's cable channel, and several citizens regularly attended and participated. Two series of town meetings were conducted, first in May 1990 to invite the citizens to give the committees direction and again in May 1991 to present the draft recommendations to the citizens and get their reaction. The citizens' comments were then incorporated into the final plan where appropriate. The final product, *Charting the Course to 2010*, was adopted in December 1991 and was recognized in 1993 by the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association with its "Distinguished Professional Planning Project" award.

CHARTING THE COURSE TO 2015

Following the adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan*, the County's Zoning Ordinance underwent a thorough review by staff, the Planning Commission, an ad hoc Zoning Ordinance Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Board of Supervisors. The purpose of this effort was to revise the zoning regulations where necessary to implement the policies and land use designations set forth in the plan, and the results were a new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, adopted in June 1995.

Section 15.2-2230 of the *Code of Virginia* requires localities to review and if necessary update their comprehensive plans at least once every five years. After the Plan's adoption in 1991, the Board of Supervisors adopted amendments to the Comprehensive Plan both to update the school enrollment and capacity figures and to incorporate the *Regional Bikeways Plan*, the

Yorktown Master Plan, and the *County Sidewalk Plan*. The first comprehensive review of the entire Plan began in 1996 with an extensive public input process that was recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) in 1997. The review process was led by a 16-member citizens review committee and culminated in the Board of Supervisors' adoption of the updated plan, titled *Charting the Course to 2015*, on October 6, 1999.

CHARTING THE COURSE TO 2025

Unlike the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, the 1999 Plan update did not recommend significant changes in policy, and its adoption did not require major revisions to the development ordinances. However, the plan was amended in 2001 for compliance with the provisions of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. A minor amendment was also made in 2002 to change the land use designation of various properties in Lackey to recognize the potential for the wider range of business that might be attracted to the area because of the federal HUBZone designation that applies to the Census Tract in which Lackey is located.

In 2004, the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission formed a Steering Committee to oversee the process of reviewing and updating the plan and a Communications and Outreach Group to assist the Steering Committee and staff in promoting and publicizing the Comprehensive Plan review and the various opportunities for citizen input. Fifteen Neighborhood Open Houses were conducted all across the County to give County residents and property owners an opportunity to review the designations and policies expressed in the current plan and offer comments to the Steering Committee and staff. In addition, a telephone survey of County residents was conducted to help the Steering Committee identify the goals and priorities that should guide County plans for the next 20 years. The survey results, along with the various oral and written comments and suggestions received from the citizens through the various public input opportunities that were available, provided valuable insight to the Steering Committee as it conducted its review of the Plan and prepared its recommended changes, most of which were accepted by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, which adopted the updated Comprehensive Plan on December 6, 2005.

CHARTING THE COURSE TO 2035

In 2006, the Board of Supervisors joined the James City County Board of Supervisors and the Williamsburg City Council in adopting a resolution to coordinate the timing of their next comprehensive plan reviews. The purpose of this coordination, as stated in the resolution, was to promote closer inter-jurisdictional discussion of planning issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The Historic Triangle Coordinated Comprehensive Plan Review officially kicked off in early 2012 with a series of joint community forums throughout the Historic Triangle at which citizens of all three localities came together both to learn about the three comprehensive plans and to share their visions and goals for the future of the Historic Triangle.



Planning Commissioners and planning staff from the three jurisdictions were present at all four forums to hear the citizens' ideas and comments. The forums were followed on April 30 by a joint work session of the three Planning Commissions to review and discuss the citizen comments made at the forums and issues of common concern, such as housing affordability, transportation, economic development, and land use compatibility along jurisdictional borders.

In addition to the joint forums, York County conducted public meetings of its own that focused specifically on the County's Comprehensive Plan and were targeted to County residents. These two public meetings – one on May 31, 2012 at York High School and another on June 6, 2012 at Waller Mill Elementary School – included an informational presentation and an opportunity for citizens to review planning maps and talk one-on-one with Planning Commission members and staff about land use, housing, transportation, and other planning issues facing York County.

The County engaged the services of its marketing research firm, Responsive Management, to conduct a statistically valid telephone survey of County residents' opinions about the County and how they want it to grow and develop in the future. The survey was conducted in August 2012 and consisted of 401 separate interviews, yielding a margin of sampling error of $\pm 4.87\%$. The results were tabulated by Responsive Management in a report titled *York County, Virginia, Residents' Opinions on Comprehensive Community Planning* and are discussed in detail in the "Citizen Input" chapter of this Plan.

The Planning Commission held a series of work sessions from June through October to discuss the various topic areas of the Comprehensive Plan. The draft updated Plan was provided to the Commission and posted on the County web site on December 18, 2012, and notices were mailed to all 65 owners of property that was being considered for a change in land use designation. The Commission held a public hearing on February 13, 2013, at which 15 people spoke. In addition, many other comments were received via mail, email, telephone, and in person. The Planning Commission conducted work sessions on February 27 and April 24 for the purpose of discussing the public comments and the draft Plan and making changes where necessary. Citizen comments were incorporated into the plan where appropriate, and the Planning Commission officially certified the draft plan on June 12 and transmitted it to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation of adoption.

The Board of Supervisors conducted a public hearing on August 20 to receive public comment on the draft Plan. Once again, letters were mailed to all affected property owners. Comments were received from 27 citizens and non-resident property owners. In addition to the opportunities for public comment, the Board reviewed and discussed the draft updated Plan at its September 3, 2013 meeting before officially adopting it with minor revisions.

The updated Plan is divided into chapters or elements dealing with various aspects of the County's physical development: community facilities, economic development, environment, historic resources, housing, transportation, and land use. There are also an Introduction, a Glossary, and chapters dealing with demographics and the citizen input that was collected in the preparation of this plan. The elements are ordered alphabetically except for the Land Use element, which is presented last since it incorporates information from all the other elements. Each plan element consists of a brief introduction followed by a summary of existing conditions and trends, a section summarizing the citizen input pertaining to that element, and an analysis of the County's future needs. Each element then concludes with a series of policy recommendations divided into a broad goal, more specific objectives, and implementation strategies for achieving those objectives. For each implementation strategy, the estimated time-frame for action or completion is indicated with either an "S" for short-term (0 to 5 years), an "M" for medium-term (between 5 and 15 years), or an "L" for long-term (more than 15 years).

This updated Comprehensive Plan, like the original 1991 Plan and the 1999 and 2005 updates, represents the combined efforts of York County's citizens, elected and appointed officials, and staff to analyze present conditions in the County, identify present and future needs, and devise strategies for meeting these needs consistent with shared community goals and objectives. It is the County's vision for its future, specific enough to provide clear guidance to present and future policy makers yet broad and flexible enough to be adapted to account for changing circumstances.