

Powhatan County Comprehensive Plan Update

Vision, Goals and Objectives

DRAFT

Prepared for the County by
McBride **DALE**
C L A R I O N

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I. VISION¹

Powhatan County will be a place where people can see the stars at night, be in touch with the land, and yet be able to work, live, play, shop, and learn without leaving the county.*

Powhatan County will be a friendly, safe, and healthy place for people to live and work. It will have a good balance between growth and preservation. It will be primarily rural in character with a preserved natural environment and ample open spaces. The dominant rural character will be supplemented by mixed residential and business uses situated at defined locations primarily along the Route 60 corridor and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange.

These mixed use clusters will provide sustainable and clean economic development opportunities. They will provide employment opportunities for local residents to keep them from having to travel out of the county for jobs, and they will attract residents from outside the county to further help fund fiscally responsible county services, including infrastructure and community facilities. They will also provide diverse housing options to complement the single family uses that will continue to be the prevalent in the rural areas.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Land Use

Land Use Goal

Powhatan County will have a land use pattern dominated by preserved rural character, with high quality and economically productive mixed use development at clearly defined locations served or planned to be served by utilities and adjacent to transportation facilities.

Land Use Objectives

- 1) Maintain the rural character of the county as defined by existing features such as the feeling of personal safety and privacy, quiet, natural habitats, forested land, rivers, streams and creeks, and un-crowded conditions.*
- 2) When development occurs in rural areas, the preferred form of development is conservation subdivisions, with smaller lots and preserved open space at an overall density consistent with R-5 density of one unit per five acres.
- 3) Define the characteristics of conservation subdivisions that best fit Powhatan County, and use these characteristics to develop standards and criteria in the zoning regulations. Focus on environmental preservation, agricultural land preservation, and minimizing the visual appearance from public roads.

¹ This document is a synthesis of existing planning policies and new direction. Language with an * following it was taken from, or heavily inspired by the current comprehensive plan. Language with a # following it was taken from, or heavily inspired by the reports of the various Citizen Working Groups.

- 4) Establish and maintain a compact pattern of mixed uses, including residential and business development, at specific focal points along the Route 60 corridor and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange.
- 5) Accommodate new and diverse residential growth in either a compact and mixed use pattern along the Route 60 corridor and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange, on large parcels in rural areas, or in a conservation subdivision format that preserves open space and rural character.
- 6) Implement improved rural and mixed use design standards that further enhance the quality of development.
- 7) Preserve and respect existing historic village patterns in rural areas as new development occurs.
- 8) Identify hamlets as areas that can accommodate small amounts of residential, commercial, and institutional uses in a manner that is compatible with the surrounding rural area.
- 9) Protect the rural character of the area around existing wildlife management areas, the county park, the new state park in order to discourage incompatible land uses that would conflict with the park.
- 10) Coordinate land use planning with the provision transportation facilities, infrastructure and community facilities, and economic development goals.
- 11) Promote sustainable growth that promotes “green” practices and the conservation of energy.

Key Land Use Policy Questions

- 1) Should the base density of 1 unit per 5 acres that applies throughout most of the rural areas be revisited?
 - a) If so, should densities vary according to location of man-made boundaries (e.g., Route 522 as a dividing line between residential densities) or based on the location of natural land features (e.g., natural resource areas identified by the Land Use & Preservation CWG)?
- 2) Is there consensus that whatever the underlying density in rural areas, that improved conservation subdivision policies and criteria are needed, with conservation subdivisions being the primary form of development in rural areas?
- 3) Is there consensus that mixed business and residential uses should be targeted for specific nodes along Route 60 and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange?
 - a) If so, how and where should those nodes be designed and located?
 - b) What should be done about the strip mixed use zoning along Route 60?
- 4) There seems to be consensus that the current scenic and rural character of Huguenot Trail should be preserved. How do transportation improvements get made while protecting that character?
 - a) Is there consensus that mixed business and residential uses can occur if limited to the area along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange?
- 5) As regional development pressures continue from the east, should there be a transition of land uses and intensities inside Powhatan County? If so, we will need to address where and how that transition occurs.
- 6) Should Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) be explored as a way to preserve rural densities and character?

Economy

Economy Goal

Powhatan will have a diverse and balanced economy that supports sustained business and employment opportunities for its citizens and attracts people from outside the county to further generate revenues to fund high quality county government services.

Economy Objectives

- 1) Work with other agencies in a cooperative manner to develop a comprehensive economic development plan for the county that identifies potential opportunities and strategies along with the role that the county should play in furthering the economic development vision, goals, and objectives of this plan.
- 2) Establish targeted geographic areas for economic development along the Route 60 corridor and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange that call for targeted infrastructure and take advantage of close proximity of workforce housing both inside and outside the county.
- 3) Increase the number and variety of jobs in the county through the retention and attraction of clean, small and medium sized industrial, office, and commercial enterprises.*
- 4) Encourage and support initiatives to target economic sectors that capitalize on local and regional strengths through a systematic approach based on an economic development plan. #
- 5) Strive to move closer to a commercial/residential tax base valuation of at least 30:70% in order to be able to fund infrastructure and community facilities in a fiscally sustainable manner. #
- 6) Allocate the costs of growth fairly between the county and the development community. New development should be generally expected to pay its own way and the County should provide clear guidance as to the appropriate level of public improvements and facilities needed to meet new growth demands.
- 7) Promote environmentally sensitive tourism that attracts visitors from outside the county.
- 8) Implement development regulations that balance the desire to attract new investment in the county with the desire to promote high quality development that promotes long term sustainability of new investment.

Key Economic Policy Questions

The Economic Development Citizen Working Group identified extensive needs and recommendations for enhanced economic development. However, they recognized that the core need is for an economic development plan and strategy that identifies the best economic niche for the county to be pursuing given its location and attributes. Further, the relationship between land use and the fiscal health of the county is acknowledged. A ratio of tax valuation between residential and business (30:70%) is targeted, yet this is merely an industry rule of thumb that would need to be validated by a fiscal impact analysis. These two issues raise questions about prioritization of county resources. Our experience

is that the 30:70% ratio is common (Henrico County uses the same target), but the ratio can vary from one locality to another based on local government financing issues.

- 1) What is the relative priority of economic development for the county?
 - a) How should the County participate in directing, facilitating, and enhancing economic development?
- 2) What steps should the County take to prioritize the development and implementation of a sound economic development strategy?
- 3) Should the County invest in a fiscal impact analysis/model as a means of quantifying our economic resources to best determine which strategies to select and how to implement them?

Housing

Housing Goal

Powhatan will have a diverse range of housing that provides living opportunities for Powhatan County residents at all stages of their life.

Housing Objectives

- 1) Foster the development of an adequate supply and variety of housing that will meet the needs of all of the county's population in a manner that is consistent with the land use vision, goals and objectives.*
- 2) Pursue diverse housing types within the framework of mixed use nodes located along the Route 60 corridor and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange.
- 3) Forecast and plan for a population growth rate, and monitor growth relative to that forecast.

Key Housing Policy Questions

- 1) Is there consensus that more diverse housing opportunities are needed, and that they should be met in mixed use nodes along Route 60 and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange?

Transportation

Transportation Goal

Powhatan County will have a transportation system that is coordinated with land use patterns and community character, with an acceptable level-of-service that supports economic development and maintains a high quality of life.

Transportation Objectives

- 1) Maintain the long term safety and capacity of the county's major road corridors to preserve the quality of life and enhance economic well-being.*
- 2) Foster an interconnected road network that provides all citizens with safe and convenient access and mobility.*
- 3) Achieve a functional road network with a context sensitive design that reinforces the county's rural character and helps to preserve natural and historic resources.*

- 4) Promote improved access management along high travel corridors and areas.
- 5) Promote “complete street” designs that promote pedestrian and bicycle friendly facilities with design that is compatible with land use quality objectives, including distinctions between rural character and strategically located mixed uses nodes. Complete street designs should address not just vehicular safety and efficiency, but pedestrian and bicycle use with features such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, wide shoulders, crosswalks, adequate and compatible lighting, street trees, and other features that result in streets being more compatible with non vehicular use.

Key Transportation Policy Questions

To be addressed through Transportation CWG.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

Infrastructure and Community Facilities Goal

Powhatan County will provide infrastructure and community facilities in a fiscally responsible manner with adequate levels of service, consistent with the proposed future land use plan.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities Objectives

- 1) Achieve a balance between the quality and cost of infrastructure and community facilities.*
- 2) Create a stronger link between land use planning and infrastructure/community facilities through a capital improvement plan that identifies capital improvement needs in relation to anticipated growth.
- 3) Link land use planning and development decisions so that infrastructure and community facilities have capacity for expected growth and are in place when needed.
- 4) Plan for rural densities in areas not planned to be provided with infrastructure.
- 5) Promote the public expectation that rural areas will receive only rural level of infrastructure.
- 6) Plan for compatible higher density mixes of uses in areas where infrastructure is planned.
- 7) Establish and maintain adequate level-of-service standards for infrastructure and community facilities and services, consistent with other county goals.*
- 8) Develop a system for benchmarking level-of-service of facilities to monitor substantial accord with the comprehensive plan.
- 9) Locate new infrastructure and community facilities and services so as to promote a compact development pattern at focused locations along Route 60 and along Route 711 east of the Route 288 interchange.*
- 10) Focus infrastructure in the three planned service areas with the eastern and village service areas being targeted for infrastructure services in the near term future (i.e. five years). The “middle” service area will not be targeted for utilities until the eastern and village service areas near build out.
- 11) Consider a fourth service area at the western end of the county along Route 60, but only as a very long term (i.e. at least ten years) possible growth area.

- 12) Coordinate land use planning with other county sewer and water planning efforts, recognizing that separate utility planning efforts will be ongoing.
- 13) Coordinate land use planning and growth forecasts with school facility planning that is conducted by the school district, recognizing that the school district is responsible for actual facility planning.

Key Infrastructure and Community Facilities Questions

- 1) Is there consensus that sewer and water facilities should be targeted (and limited) to the three service areas that are currently in county plans?
- 2) How should the county approach the long term water supply and sewer capacity?
- 3) What role should this plan play in planning for school facilities in light of the fact that the school system already has a facilities plan? Should the school and county facility plans be unified, or the school plan incorporated into the comp plan?
- 4) The Infrastructure Citizen Working Group identified many detailed recommendations for the full range of infrastructure and facilities. For example, recommendations are made about computer software platforms in county government. Should these be included in the comprehensive plan?
- 5) What level of infrastructure and community facilities detail is appropriate for this plan?

Natural Resources and Open Spaces

Natural Resource and Open Space Goal

Powhatan County natural resources and open spaces such as rivers, streams, creeks, forested and wooded areas, wildlife habitat, wetlands, floodplains, and soil resources will be preserved and protected.

Natural Resource and Open Space Objectives

- 1) Protect the function, quality, and integrity of ground water resources.*
- 2) Preserve open land and green space with special emphasis on the protection of environmentally sensitive lands; prime farmland; inland game and fishery lands; wildlife management land; natural corridors such as rivers, streams, and creeks that provide habitat linkages throughout the county; and timberland that are essential to the maintenance of the county's biodiversity and overall economic health. #
- 3) Incorporate open space in individual developments through conservation subdivision design pursuant to quality design standards. Promote linkage of open space between developments where feasible in an effort to establish larger greenways.
- 4) Monitor and track open space and greenways in order to promote systematic linkages and connections.
- 5) Promote sustainable development practices including but not limited to storm water management, maintenance of vegetative cover and agricultural uses, maintenance of non-disturbance zones in critical areas, conservation set-asides in development plans, low impact development methods, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, and others.

Key Natural Resource and Open Space Policy Questions

Historic Resources

Historic Resource Goal

Powhatan County historic resources will be preserved and protected.

Historic Resource Objectives

- 1) Conserve the county's historically significant sites and structures for the cultural and educational benefits they provide to county residents.*
- 2) Maintain a data base of historic resources.
- 3) Protect historic landscapes from development that may be out of character with their inherent rural attributes.
- 4) Consider the adoption of historic preservation provisions to the zoning ordinance in order to assure that new development is compatible with historic resources.

Key Historic Resources Policy Questions

- 1) How high a priority is this for the county?
- 2) Should land use decisions be evaluated based on their degree of preservation/compatibility with nearby historic resources?
- 3) Should adaptive reuse of historic structures be encouraged and to what degree should use changes be permitted?