

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?**

Planning is an everyday occurrence for most of us: deciding what we must get accomplished in a day or how much we can afford to spend on a home, a car or groceries. Planning is important, not just for individuals, but for communities. The Code of Virginia requires planning in all counties and towns (§15.2-2223); the declaration of legislative intent (§ 15.2-2200) states:

*This chapter is intended to encourage localities to improve the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of its citizens and to plan for the future development of communities to the end that transportation systems be carefully planned; that new community centers be developed with adequate highway, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities; that the need for mineral resources and the needs of agriculture, industry and business be recognized in future growth; that residential areas be provided with healthy surroundings for family life; that agricultural and forestal land be preserved; and that the growth of the community be consonant with the efficient and economical use of public funds.*

See Early Planning in Virginia for information about how Jamestown was planned for the well-being of its inhabitants.

#### **Early Planning in Virginia: Jamestown**

*Adapted from the Managing Growth and Development in Virginia, 2010*

Planning is a dynamic process localities use to prepare for change. In Virginia, community planning is primarily the responsibility of local governments. The practice of land use planning in Virginia can be traced to the English settlement at Jamestown, 400 years ago. The fort that sprang up along the James River in 1607 was, in many respects, a planned community, though their foreknowledge of the New World and its dangers were limited. The schematic that became Jamestown featured principles long associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century planning technique known as PUDs, or Planned Unit Developments. Planning concerns influencing the Jamestown of 1607 included security issues, access and internal movement considerations, the use and preservation of indigenous natural resources, the procurement and storage of drinking water, the collection and disposal of waste, as well as discernment regarding the location of residential areas within the fort in relationship to needed processing and manufacturing enterprises. On this point, standards governing the minimum distance separating residential areas from processing and manufacturing operations, as well as outdoor privies, were established and strictly enforced. In short, the settlement at Jamestown was designed, constructed and managed with full consideration given, based on their limited knowledge, to the well-being and general welfare needs of its inhabitants.

This document updates the Floyd-Floyd County Comprehensive Plan, originally prepared in 1977 and last updated in 2002, into the Floyd County Comprehensive Plan. This update evaluates the County's recent development trends, captures the vision of the future based on community input, and provides a guide for achieving that vision. The Plan addresses the governmental actions which need to be undertaken to encourage preferred development patterns, to foster and protect private investments, and to best manage resources.

Again according to The Code of Virginia §15.2-2223, the purpose of the comprehensive plan shall be "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." Note the emphasis on balancing things that are often at odds: present and future, health and prosperity, convenience and order.

In short, the Comprehensive Plan is a framework for the long-range allocation of community resources to meet identified needs. It is general in nature and focuses on the physical development of the jurisdiction in light of the natural, social and economic factors unique to Floyd County. In combination with ordinances, policies and a capital improvement plan, the Comprehensive Plan charts a course for the well-being of the community, from citizens' opportunities to meet basic needs to local government's ability to meet its obligations and achieve fiscal balance.

**What the Comprehensive Plan MAY Include  
According to the Code of Virginia §15.2-2223**

The Plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. It may include, but need not be limited to:

1. The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, including age-restricted, housing; business; industrial; agricultural; mineral resources; conservation; active and passive recreation; public service; flood plain and drainage; and other areas;
2. The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;
3. The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;
4. The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable ground water protection measures;
5. A capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forestal district maps, where applicable;
6. The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;
7. The location of military bases, military installations, and military airports and their adjacent safety areas; and
8. The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more.

Also, the County may designate an "urban development area" means an area designated by a locality that is (i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development.

**What the Comprehensive Plan MUST Include,  
according to the Code of Virginia**

**§15.2-2223** *(continued)*

*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.*

*As part of the comprehensive plan, each locality shall develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that may include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The plan should recognize and differentiate among a hierarchy of roads such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. The Virginia Department of Transportation shall, upon request, provide localities with technical assistance in preparing such transportation plan.*

*The plan shall include: the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.*

*The plan shall include: a map that shall show road improvements and transportation improvements, including the cost estimates of such road and transportation improvements as available from the Virginia Department of Transportation, taking into account the current and future needs of residents in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.*

**§15.2-2224**

Studies or information on:

- *Use of land, preservation of agricultural and forestal land, production of food and fiber, characteristics and conditions of existing development, trends of growth or changes, natural resources, historic areas, ground water, surface water, geologic factors, population factors, employment, environmental and economic factors, existing public facilities, drainage, flood control and flood damage prevention measures, dam break inundation zones and potential impacts to downstream properties to the extent that information concerning such information exists and is available to the local planning authority, the transmission of electricity, road improvements, and any estimated cost thereof, transportation facilities, transportation improvements, and any cost thereof, the need for affordable housing in both the locality and planning district within which it is situated, and any other matters relating to the subject matter and general purposes of the comprehensive plan.*
  
- *Probable future economic and population growth of the territory and requirements therefor.*

This Comprehensive Plan Update is based on two foundations: (1) factual information about the County's present and past, and (2) attitudes and desires of the citizens concerning future development of their county as expressed ultimately through the elected officials and their appointees.

This Plan Update was drafted by the Planning Commission through citizen input and staff assistance. Final wording of the Plan is decided by the Board of Supervisors. The Plan strives to promote and protect agriculture and rural character, while encouraging other economic opportunities that fit the needs of the community. Specifically the plan seeks to prevent haphazard and incompatible land development, which have many high costs in the near and long term.

It further strives to respect private property rights. Private property rights include the right of the owner to use the property, exclude others from the property and sell the property. Private property rights also include fair protection from negative effects of certain potential changes to other properties in the community. That is to say, the right of one person to use their property extends only so far as it does not unduly inhibit the basic rights of other property owners. For example, the location of certain mining may be inappropriate near residences because of potential negative impacts on to the residences' wells.

In combination with future studies, policies, ordinances, and a capital improvement plan, the Comprehensive Plan will achieve the community priorities of:

- Protecting agriculture, forests, and water resources (by first identifying and classifying all areas of the County based on the physical landscape and natural resources; then identifying and evaluating all land policy tools available to help guide future growth to current or planned availability of services.)
- Promoting agriculture, including new opportunities for growth and value-added processing.
- Increasing job and income opportunities through strategic investments and policies (including protecting private investment), by supporting small businesses and increasing light industry, technology and innovation jobs.
- Exploring alternative energy systems as well as available resources for weatherizing homes in the County.
- Analyzing the various housing needs of the residents of the County and encourage collaboration to meet them, including supporting development of assisted living.
- Encouraging the development of pedestrian walkways, trails and bike lanes.
- Planning for cost-efficient and cost-effective provision of services, including study of waste collection options.

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Summary and Conclusion

- A Comprehensive Plan is required of Virginia localities. Its purpose is to improve the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of citizens through the planning of adequate land and resources for agriculture, forests, transportation, affordable housing, etc. and public facilities.
- Jamestown was in many ways a planned community, laid out to provide for the well-being of residents.
- A Comprehensive Plan can chart a course for accomplishing important community goals, including the efficient and economical use of public funds.