

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND VISION

INTRODUCTION

The Spotsylvania County Comprehensive Plan presents a long range land use vision for the County. The Comprehensive Plan sets forth principles, goals, policies, and implementation techniques that will guide the development activity within the County and promote, preserve, and protect the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens. Specifically, the Plan provides data and analysis on land use, transportation, housing, natural and historic resources, and public facilities and utilities. The purpose of this document is not to regulate, but rather guide land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions. This guidance seeks to ensure continued economic and community vitality while ensuring necessary policies and infrastructure are in place to provide for the continuation of quality services to Spotsylvania's residents and businesses.

The majority of the Comprehensive Plan's policies focus on the next 20 years and provide guidance for development decisions. These policies can be amended as new information is available, or to address a change in circumstances, without straying from the basic vision and goals of the Plan. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan is not a static document and should be changed if deemed appropriate.

Legal Basis for the Plan

The County's Planning Commission is responsible for preparing the elements of the Comprehensive Plan under the Virginia Code, Section 15.2-2223 which states in the pertinent parts:

"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." The Code states that the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to achieve "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 establishes goals, objectives, policies and implementation techniques that will provide the tools to help the decision makers guide the County's future development.

Section 15.2-2223 further states:

"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 improvements 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 that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not limited to roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities."

Section 15.2-2224 states in part that, “The Comprehensive Plan shall recommend methods of implementation and shall include a current map of the area covered by the Comprehensive Plan.”

Amendment Process

Under Section 15.2-2229 the County Board of Supervisors may consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the document by which the County will evaluate rezoning and special use applications, public facility locations, and capital improvements for consistency with its development policies. If an application is determined to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan may be considered. The application will be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with the elements contained within the Plan.

The applicant should demonstrate that any change in land use designation or density/intensity:

- would benefit the public health, safety and welfare;
- is consistent with the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate Development Districts (i.e., Primary Settlement);
- will not be detrimental to uses of property in the immediate vicinity of the subject property;
- has merit and value for the community as a whole; and
- will result in benefits (fiscal, aesthetic, employment, etc.) that will outweigh any significant impact of the change.

Growth Rates and Projections

In 1990, the U. S. Census Bureau indicated that the County population totaled 57,403. By 2000, the population had increased to 90,395. This represented a 57.5 percent increase since 1990 or an average annual growth rate of 4.6 percent. The Census Bureau reported the County population to be 122,397 in 2010, a 35.4 percent increase since 2000, making Spotsylvania County one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Population estimates as of July 1, 2012 are 125,684. This growth is principally due to the County’s location along Interstate 95 midway between Washington, D.C. and Richmond as well as the high quality of life available. Weldon Cooper’s population projections suggest that the County will add 101,520 residents or an 83 percent increase between 2010 and 2030. This projection assumes an average growth rate of approximately 3 percent per year, similar to a historic rate of approximately 3 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Vision Statement

“Spotsylvania families will enjoy a community that remembers and respects its place in our nation’s history and builds on the principles of our founding fathers to provide freedom and prosperity through limited government, respect for property rights, low taxes and pro-business policies for the 21st Century.”

Guiding Principles and Policies:

A. Spotsylvania County is a “business friendly” community and local job creation is a priority.

1. Encourage business investment in the County and promote the relocation of federal and state agencies to the County, providing more opportunities for Spotsylvania County residents to work in the County.
2. Support the installation of broadband internet, telecommunications infrastructure, microwave towers, fiber optics, and similar communications systems that meet an identified need for communications support for businesses throughout the County.
3. Encourage the rezoning of land to industrial/office uses in areas designated for Employment Center uses and the revitalization of older, underperforming commercial, office, and industrial developments.
4. Encourage innovative land uses such as renewable energy generation, data processing centers, and other industries leveraging technology in fields such as information technology, medicine, logistics, etc.
5. Promote gateway signage and landscaping to encourage visitation, business, and tourism and consider establishing an I-95 overlay that sets a development standard that promotes Spotsylvania County as an attractive, orderly, and business friendly location.
6. Review and modify the Subdivision Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance, and Design Standards Manual to ensure they implement the Comprehensive Plan and to streamline development review and approval procedures.

B. Spotsylvania County is fiscally sustainable.

1. Achieve a 70/30 mix of residential to commercial/industrial development (based on assessed value), and the annual growth of the industrial and commercial tax base at a rate greater than 2%.
 - a. The County should identify priorities to achieve this goal through incentives, infrastructure improvements and extensions, etc.
 - b. Consider proactively rezoning certain areas to promote business development.
 - c. Diversify the non-residential tax base by encouraging a wide variety of businesses to locate in the County.
2. Development projects seeking increased residential density and/or non-residential intensity should address impacts that are specifically attributable to the proposed development.
 - a. Each development proposal should include sufficient information to fully evaluate its impacts.
 - b. Active adult communities, with their diminished impact on County services, should be supported.
3. Development projects seeking increased residential density and/or non-residential intensity should address its impacts on the infrastructure of the county.

- a. The County should support alternative onsite transportation alternatives and recreational options such as transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are able to, or will, connect to neighboring properties.
 - b. Support the expansion of transit systems to link employment centers with residential areas and transportation nodes.
 - c. "Access management" in the form of systematic control of the location, spacing, design, and operation of entrances, median openings, traffic signals and interchanges should be utilized for arterial and major collector roads in order to minimize the vehicular traffic impacts of new development.
4. Preserve significant natural, historic, and cultural resources of the County to ensure the continued allure of the County as a tourism destination.
 5. Diversify and enhance the tourism opportunities in the County.

C. Spotsylvania County is a family friendly community.

1. The County should support a diverse housing inventory, providing a mix of units that can accommodate housing needs for all stages of life. This would involve a range of housing from affordable units for young families just entering the housing market in the form of condominiums, townhouses, and small single family homes to larger homes, and active adult and assisted care facilities.
2. The County should support mixed use communities with varied housing types, civic buildings, shops, and active and passive recreation opportunities.
3. Plan for and provide public facilities that meet the needs of the community as it grows.
4. Ensure that Spotsylvania County continues to provide excellent educational and recreational, and cultural opportunities.

D. Agriculture and silviculture are valued components of Spotsylvania County's economy.

1. Promote the expansion of Farmers Market(s).
2. Continue the Land Use Taxation Program.
3. Make greater utilization of Agricultural/Forestral Districts by way of: nutrient management planning; Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); urban Best Management Practices (BMP) programs; and other practices coordinated through the local Soil and Water Conservation District.
4. Identify and protect productive agricultural and silvicultural lands.
5. Do not extend public infrastructure (such as water and sewer) into productive agricultural and silvicultural lands except in those instances where those areas are designated for future commercial/industrial/office development.
6. Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow landowners to preserve farm and forested areas while providing by-right lot yields.
7. Encourage complementary land uses such as agritourism, agribusiness, and renewable energy generation in agricultural and rural areas.

E. Spotsylvania County values its environmental resources.

1. Protect environmental quality by promoting a comprehensive approach to air and water quality management. Examples of approaches to accomplish this could include: green space and tree preservation, stream restoration, and low impact development (LID).
2. The County should support integration of required onsite drainage and stormwater features as an amenity or landscape feature that is incorporated into the overall design of the site.

MAJOR INITIATIVES ACTION PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan contains many strategies. The Action Plan is not intended to repeat each strategy identified in the Plan, but rather to identify those major projects that are required to ensure implementation of the Plan.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Lead Department</u>	<u>Assisting Departments</u>
Review the Zoning Ordinance and recommend amendments to the Planning Commission that implement the Comprehensive Plan, including amendments that will streamline processes	Planning	County Attorney, Zoning, and Economic Development
Review the Subdivision Ordinance and recommend amendments to the Planning Commission that implement the Comprehensive Plan, including amendments that will streamline processes	Planning	County Attorney
Update the Water and Sewer Master Plan	Utilities	
Ensure annual update to the Capital Improvements Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan	Planning	
Develop an annual report that monitors the 70/30 residential to non-residential tax rate goal, population estimates, approved projects, and demographic shifts	Planning	Commissioner of Revenue
Develop and implement a financial plan for transportation that identifies all existing and new funding mechanisms, including private funding initiatives and public/private partnerships	Planning/Transportation	Finance
Provide an annual report to the Board of Supervisors on current Level of Service	Planning	Those with LOS
Develop periodic reports comparing built projects to the assumptions used during the application process (i.e. traffic impacts, school age children, assessment values, etc.)	Planning	