

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **PLANNING HISTORY AND PURPOSES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1977, the Caroline County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's first Comprehensive Plan. The 1977 Plan designated the areas around Bowling Green and Carmel Church as the Primary Growth Areas. Dawn, Sparta, Ladysmith, and Port Royal were designated as Secondary Growth Areas. Most of the area between A.P. Hill to west of Route 1 was designated for Rural Residential development. The remainder of the County was designated for Agricultural, Forestal, Open Space, or Conservation uses.

The 1977 plan was predominantly determined by natural features such as topography, flood plain, and soil suitability for drainfields. These features were the limiting factors to development outside of Bowling Green due to lack of public water and sewer.

The Board of Supervisors adopted the first update to the Comprehensive Plan in 1987. Many changes had occurred since the adoption of the initial plan which were incorporated into the update. The 1987 Update included the expansion of the Primary Growth Areas into one large growth area inclusive of Ladysmith, Carmel Church, and Bowling Green. The number of Secondary Growth Areas increased to include Chilesburg, Guinea, and Woodford. Areas planned for Rural Residential development expanded to the entire area west of I-95 but not in the Primary Growth Area, south of Route 30, and the Port Royal Secondary Growth Area to Essex County. Most of the area north of the South River planned for rural residential was deleted.

In 1992, the Board of Supervisors adopted the most recent update of the Comprehensive Plan by

designating the Rappahannock River Valley area as a Resource Sensitive Area. This designation was designed to recognize the Rappahannock River Valley for the resources within the valley while establishing stringent development standards for developments within the corridor.

The Planning Commission undertook a complete rewrite of the plan in 1994. Many changes had occurred since the 1987 update that necessitated a complete review of the plan. Census data became available after 1990 that provided new information of growth and development trends in the county. A public utility system was being developed with significant development implications. The Board of Supervisors adopted the updated plan in June of 1995.

Since the plan update in 1994, several changes have occurred necessitating the need for another update to the Plan including the completion of the first citizen driven subarea plan.

#### **LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Comprehensive Plans are authorized under Title 15.2, Chapter 22, Article 3 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended. All localities were required to have adopted Comprehensive Plans by 1980. As stated earlier, Caroline County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1977.

The Comprehensive Plan, is required by law, to be reviewed every five years. This ensures that localities continue to evaluate factors which may influence the locality. The five year review period is a maximum. There is nothing in the Code of Virginia which restricts a locality from utilizing a more frequent review period. In fact, such a review process may benefit the County.

Because comprehensive plans are required by law, plans are

required to be general in nature. Comprehensive Plans are general programs for the physical development of the locality and are intended to provide for fair and equal advance planning. The Plan identifies the approximate location features shown in the plan.

#### **PURPOSES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan is designed with the purpose of providing for coordinated and harmonious development of a locality which best promotes the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the inhabitants (Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia). The Comprehensive Plan designates the general or approximate location, character and extent of any features identified in the plan, as well as proposed or future changes or expansions of those features. The Comprehensive Plan may include but is not limited to the following features:

- The designation of areas of various types of public and private development and use, such as different types of residential, business, industrial, agricultural, conservation, recreation, public service, floodplain and drainage, and other areas;
- The designation of a system of transportation facilities such as streets, roads, highways, parkways, railways, bridges, viaducts, waterways, airports, ports, terminals, and other similar facilities;
- The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and other similar facilities;

- The designation of historical areas and areas of urban renewal or other treatment;
- The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable groundwater protection measures;
- An official map, a capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance, and zoning district maps; and
- The designation of areas for the implementation of measures to promote construction and maintenance of affordable housing. (Section 15.1-466.1 of the Code of Virginia).

#### **SURVEYS AND STUDIES FOR PLAN PREPARATION**

In conjunction with updating the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission conducts ongoing surveys and studies of past and present conditions and future projections of growth. The factors which will be considered include: use of land, preservation of agricultural and forestal land, production of food and fiber, characteristics and conditions of existing development, trends of growth or change, natural resources, groundwater, surface water, geologic factors, population factors, employment, environmental and economic factors, existing public facilities, drainage, flood control and flood damage prevention measures, transportation facilities, and the need for affordable housing, as well as, other factors which may affect the development of the jurisdiction.

As these issues are evaluated, the future projections of these factors can be evaluated and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

**BENEFITS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan is the single most important document available to the County in terms of making land use decisions. However, adherence to the Comprehensive Plan is not mandatory. The importance of the Comprehensive Plan is signified by the requirement of the General Assembly that all localities are required to have a Comprehensive Plan. There are several benefits that are attributable to adopting and following a Comprehensive Plan.

First, the Comprehensive Plan is the guide for decision-making in land use issues. In rendering its land use decision, conformance with the Comprehensive Plan provides the governing body with the strongest and most defensible basis for its decision. By consistently following the Comprehensive Plan, the governing body removes the potential of discrimination against individual land owners and eliminates any claims of any arbitrary and capricious actions.

A second benefit of the Comprehensive Plan is the identification of public goals. By clearly stating goals for the future of the County, the Board of Supervisors strives to define the type and quality of community toward which their decisions will be aimed. In this manner, the Board assures that each action may be carefully considered, and coordinated with other actions to achieve the highest possible quality of life for the community. Adherence to a sound Comprehensive Plan often supports a locality's claim of reasonableness in achieving legitimate public goals.

A third benefit of the Comprehensive Plan is that it may provide a basis for economic investment. Adherence to the Comprehensive Plan allows property owners to make investment decisions in a stable atmosphere.

This, in turn, maximizes the owner's returns consistent with the public goals articulated by the governing body. Both residents and businesses can anticipate which actions will be supported by the Board of Supervisors.