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## PLANNING HISTORY

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VIRGINIA CONSERVATION

COMMISSION 1946

## CHAPTER 2 – *PLANNING HISTORY*

### INTRODUCTION

Caroline County is in the enviable position of being one of the few counties along the I-95 corridor that has not yet experienced rapid, largely uncontrolled development. While growth pressures up and down I-95 have spawned a great deal of unplanned growth, additional public facility and service deficiencies in other governmental jurisdictions, the leaders of Caroline County have carefully avoided the many financial and social problems associated with unplanned and unmanaged growth.

Much of this can be attributed to the planning efforts of the County's elected leaders. The basis for their decisions and actions, as it relates to development, is the Comprehensive Plan. The Caroline County Comprehensive Plan provides a strong vision for the County's future and identifies specific actions to fulfill that Vision.

This chapter discusses in detail, the comprehensive planning process, including the legal requirements for planning, planning history, the benefits of planning, and the purposes of the comprehensive plan. It also discusses recent planning legislation adopted by the General Assembly and how it affects the County.

### THE HISTORY OF PLANNING IN CAROLINE COUNTY

The first Comprehensive Plan for Caroline County was adopted in 1977. The plan was primarily a survey of existing conditions determined by natural features such as topography, flood plain, and soil suitability for drain fields, as these features were the limiting factors to development outside of Bowling Green due to lack of public water and sewer.

The plan designated the areas around Bowling Green and Carmel Church as Primary Growth Areas, where development was encouraged. Secondary Growth Areas, with less intensive development, were also designated, including: Dawn, Sparta, Ladysmith, and Port Royal. The area from 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. Map 2.1 shows the 1977 Land Use Map.

The Board of Supervisors adopted the first update to the Comprehensive Plan in 1987. Many changes occurred from 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.



Additional Secondary Growth Areas were added, including: Chilesburg, Guinea, and Woodford. Rural Residential areas were expanded to the entire area west of I-95 and south of Route 30, and the Port Royal Secondary Growth Area to Essex County. Most of the area north of the South River originally planned for rural residential was removed. Map 2.2 shows the Land Use Plan adopted in 1987 with the plan.

The Board of Supervisors significantly revised the plan in 1995. Many changes occurred

MAP A

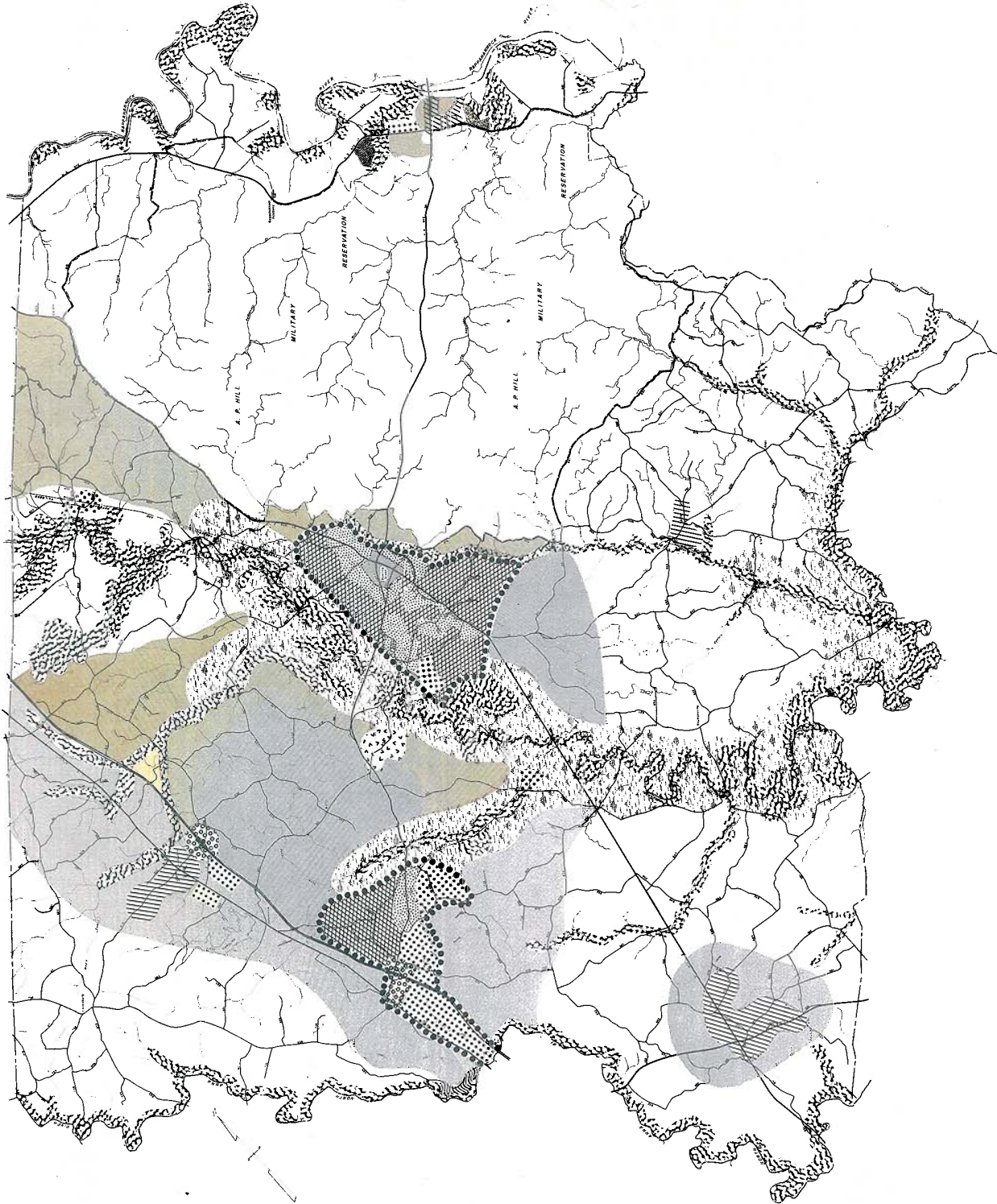
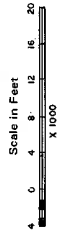
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

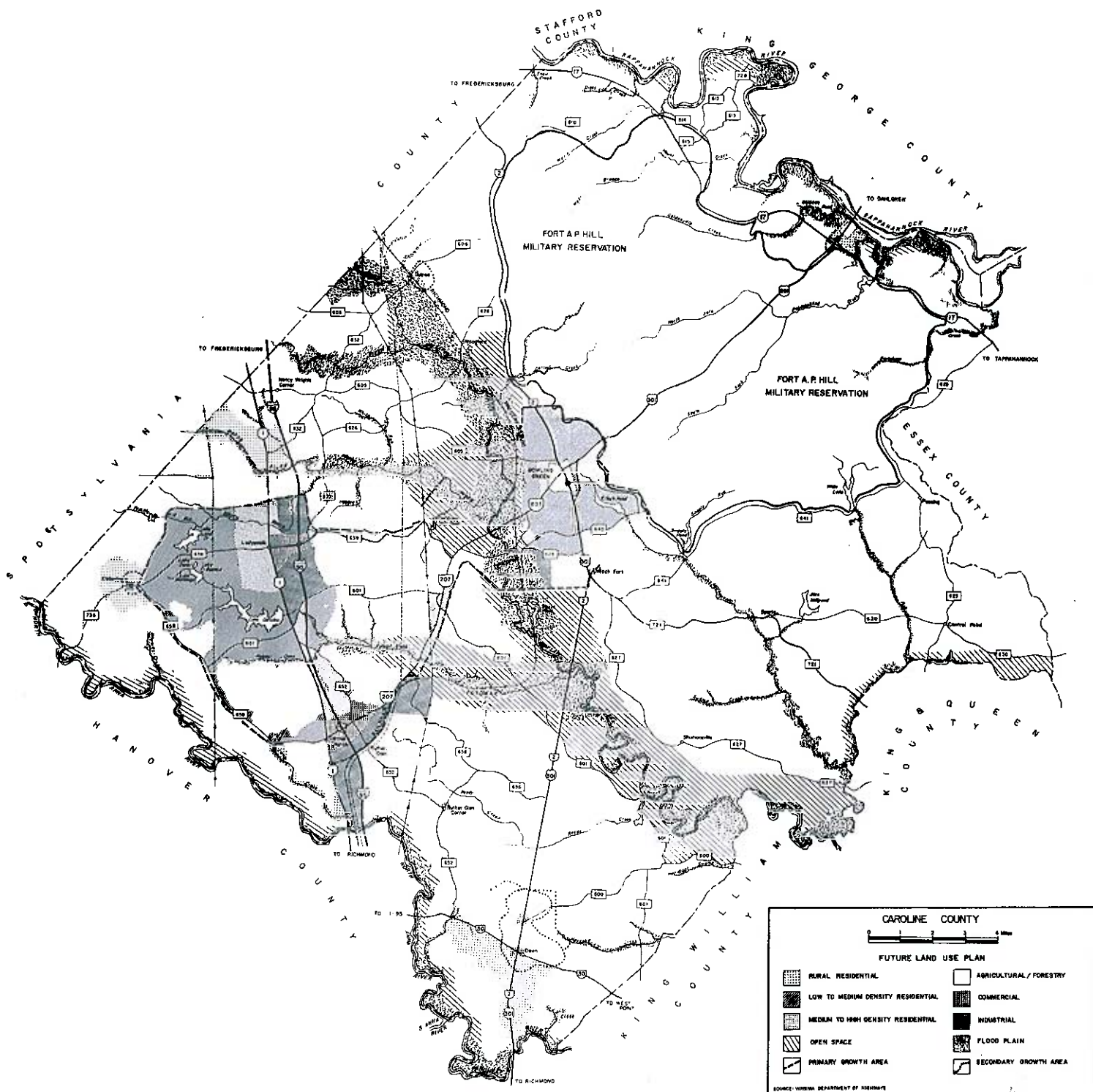
- AGRICULTURAL / FORESTRY
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL
- SECONDARY GROWTH AREA
- PRIMARY GROWTH AREA
- Neighborhood
- Low Density
- Commercial
- INDUSTRY
- PUBLIC LAND
- CONSERVATION
- OPEN SPACE
- PARK

(SEE TEXT FOR DENSITY FIGURES)

Map 2.1

CAROLINE COUNTY  
VIRGINIA  
1977





Map 2.2

since the 1987 update necessitating a complete revision of the plan. Data from the 1990 Census became available that provided new information on growth and development trends in the county. The public utility system was expanding, bringing with it significant development implications. "Future Development Areas" were designated within the primary growth area to give the Board an additional growth management tool to regulate the timing and location of development. The Rappahannock River Valley area was designated a Resource Sensitive Area, designed to recognize the important environmental resources in the valley, while establishing stringent development standards within the corridor.

In 2005, the Board adopted the most recent major revision to the Comprehensive Plan, excluding updates solely to incorporate Area Plans. The Board eliminated the Future Development Areas adopted with the 1995 update, and split the single primary growth area into three separate growth areas. The Board recognized that even with the most optimistic of growth scenarios, sufficient land area existed within the designated growth areas to accommodate residential development needs for the foreseeable future. The retention of Future Development Areas would only have encouraged needless speculation on the periphery of the growth areas during subsequent updates to the plan. The establishment of three separate growth areas also allowed each area to establish its own distinct identity.

### AREA PLANS

Beginning in 1998, the County initiated a series of citizen driven planning efforts focusing on the sub-areas of the Primary Growth Area, as well as the Secondary Growth Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan. These area plans, also known as Community or Village Plans, are adopted by the Board to translate the general provisions of the comprehensive plan into greater detail at the community level. While the comprehensive plan takes a broad, countywide perspective for guiding growth, the area plans take the general concepts and apply them at the community level.

These area plans recognize the unique character or attributes of each community, and allow land use planning in greater detail for each area. These area plans serve as a guide for land use, zoning, transportation and design standards specific to each community.

Each area plan is developed by a citizen committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The committees are comprised of residents that represent a cross section of the community. The committees held monthly meetings to evaluate the issues and needs facing the community. Each committee developed a unique survey form, which was mailed to each household in the community. The results of the survey were analyzed by the committees and used in the preparation of the area plans. The County adopted its first area plan in 2001, Lady-smith 2010; A Vision, Goals and Community Plan.



Port Royal & Rappahannock River

Since 2004 the County has developed or updated the following Area Plans;

#### ADOPTED COMMUNITY PLANS

<b>Community</b>	<b>Year of Adoption</b>
Port Royal	2004
Bowling Green - Milford	2005
Carmel Church	2007
Ladysmith	2008
Dawn	2008

These area plans have a planning horizon of 20 to 30 years, depending on the issues identified and visions articulated by the citizen committees.

The area plans are discussed in greater detail in the Land Use Chapter, as well as the specific adopted plan contained in the appendices. At the time of the adoption of this plan, an additional area planning process is underway in the Cedon, Chilesburg, and Guinea (northwest) areas of the County. The results of this planning process will be incorporated into the plan as part of a future update.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### THE LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Comprehensive Plans are authorized under Title 15.2, Chapter 22, Article 3 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended. The Commonwealth of Virginia required all localities to adopt comprehensive plans by 1980. The Comprehensive Plan is required by law, to be reviewed every five years. This ensures that localities continue to evaluate factors that may influence the locality.

### THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The required five year review period is the maximum authorized by code, but there is no restriction to a more frequent review period. In fact, such a review process benefits the County by ensuring the plan is updated as relevant information, such as the area plans, becomes available.

The Code also requires comprehensive plans 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 of features shown in the plan. This is different from a number of other states, where comprehensive plans are required to be much more detailed and where zoning actions must be consistent with the plan.

### THE BENEFITS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is the single most important document available to the County in making land use decisions. While adherence to the Comprehensive Plan is not mandatory, the importance of the it is signified by the requirement of the Code of Virginia that all localities must have and update a Comprehensive Plan.

There are several benefits 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 Board of Supervisors with the strongest and most defensible basis for its decision. By consistently following the Comprehensive Plan, the Board 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 is that the Comprehensive Plan provides 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 set forth by the Board of Supervisors. Both residents and businesses can anticipate which actions will be supported by the Board.

Finally, the Comprehensive Plan is a valuable source of general information about the County for citizens, businesses and those who are interested in the County.



Caroline County Visitors Center

#### PURPOSES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is designed with the purpose of providing for coordinated and harmonious development that best promotes the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the County's residents, including the elderly and persons with disabilities (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, including age-restricted housing, 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;
- The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;
- The location of military bases, military installations and military airports and their adjacent safety areas;
- The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more;
- 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; and
- A map that shows road improvements and transportation improvements, including the cost estimates of such road and transportation improvements as available from the Virginia Department of Transportation, The plan shall take 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.

#### SURVEYS AND STUDIES IN PREPARATION OF A PLAN

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. Factors which are 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, or any other factors which may affect the development of the jurisdiction.

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

#### **OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS**

The following documents by reference, are hereby incorporated as part of the Caroline County Comprehensive Plan: *Water Master Plan and Report*, adopted June of 2002, *Sewer Master Plan and Report* adopted July 2003, *Standard Specifications and Details for Water and Sewer Construction* adopted August 1999, *IT Needs Assessment*, Virginia Department of Transportation planning model - *Ladysmith Transportation Plan*, and the *Caroline County Strategic Plan* which includes Six Month Goals and Analysis. The Strategic Plan also contains a Benchmarks for Customer Service and communication.

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The County has established an online quarterly newsletter. Through the newsletter several citizen surveys have been conducted as well as timely articles relating to services and regulations of the County. Recently the County produced a pamphlet to provide guidelines for waterfront living. This pamphlet outlines requirements and regulations concerning environmental issues for people who live adjacent to the waterfront. The County has also used its web page as a communication tool with the residents for surveys and announcements of events and programs.

## RECENT PLANNING LEGISLATION: 2006 and 2007 Virginia Code Amendments

Roads are a critical public resource and constitute a major investment of the public's money. As a result, over the years, VDOT has become more and more involved in the local land development process assisting communities at their request in the review of the transportation portion of comprehensive plans, rezoning requests, site plans and subdivision plans. In 2006, the General Assembly approved legislation (Senate Bill 699, Chapter 527 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly) to enhance the coordination of land use and transportation planning. §15.2-222.1 was added to the Code of Virginia to expand the role of VDOT in land planning and development review process. The legislation, however, does not affect local government authority to adopt plans and make decisions on proposed land uses. Instead, §15.2-222.1 of the Code of Virginia instructs VDOT to analyze and provide comment on the impacts of Comprehensive Plans and land development proposals that will have a significant impact on state controlled highways. The results of this analysis can then be used by local governments in their planning and land use decision making processes and are intended to be advisory in nature.



Route 30 Expansion

The 2006 session also amended the comprehensive plan to require additional transportation planning information. Section 15.2-2223 requires a transportation map, which identifies improvements and cost estimates, if available from VDOT.

In 2007, the General Assembly further strengthened the connection between transportation and land use planning. This time however, the General Assembly wanted to reduce the type of low density development that encourages sprawl. This type of development tends to require more and longer roads between destinations such as home, work and shopping, consumes sensitive environmental areas and agricultural lands. As a result, the General Assembly passed HB 3202, using Caroline County as a pilot county.

This bill requires that all localities with a growth rate of 15% or a growth rate of 5% and a population of at least 20,000 designate at least one Urban Development Area in the Comprehensive Plan by the year 2011.

The Urban Development Area or areas are required to accommodate at least 10 years but no more than 20 years worth of growth based on official estimates and projections of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia or other official government sources. The size necessary to accommodate such growth will vary based on the residential and commercial densities provided for in the localities comprehensive plan.

Between 1990 and 2000, Caroline County had a population growth rate of 15.11% and with a 2000 population of 22,121; Caroline County exceeded the thresholds identified in the General Assembly legislation. Thus, Caroline is subject to the planning provisions of these laws.

<http://www.hb3202.virginia.gov/urbandevelopment>. US Census- Data for 1990 and 2000 are the unadjusted census number for Virginia localities. Those unadjusted numbers are used pursuant to §1-235, Code of Virginia.