

## Chapter 7 – Land Use and the Economy

In January of 2012 Lancaster County initiated the update of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the update is two-fold. The first is to meet the statutory requirement (Title 15.2-2223 of Virginia Code) that localities review their Comprehensive Plan at least every five years and second, to review and update guidance and tools to manage land use to preserve the County's natural beauty and rural character. Recently cited as "One of the Best Places to Live" in *Progressive Farmer* magazine, the County can expect to receive increasing interest from retirees and others attracted to its unique scenic resources, extensive waterfront and high quality of life. Many would agree with Captain John Smith's assessment, made over four hundred years ago in 1608, that the County is "a place where heaven and earth never agreed better to frame man's habitation."

The following primary issues emerged through the course of the review:

- Preserve the County's rural character
- Preserve the quality of the County's waterfront
- Manage the quality and character of future development (i.e. prevent sprawl and 'checker board' development).
- Preserve and increase public access to the county's waterfront
- Preserve historic character, buildings and sites
- Increase the supply of affordable housing
- Pursue economic development and increase jobs, particularly for young people and working-age adults
- Protect the watershed, groundwater, aquifers, drinking water, and waterways and ensure the adequate supply of potable water
- Concentrate higher-density commercial and residential development in appropriate areas, particularly around existing villages and towns
- Increase recreational opportunities including parks, hiking/biking trails and public access to water.

The issue of protection of water resources is primarily addressed in Chapter 3. The remaining land use and subdivision issues have been organized into six major themes or elements:

- I. Land Use Tools
- II. Quality Growth
- III. Rural Character and Maritime Heritage
- IV. Recreational Opportunities
- V. Quality Housing and Diverse Communities
- VI. Economic Development

## I. LAND USE TOOLS - Discussion and Objectives

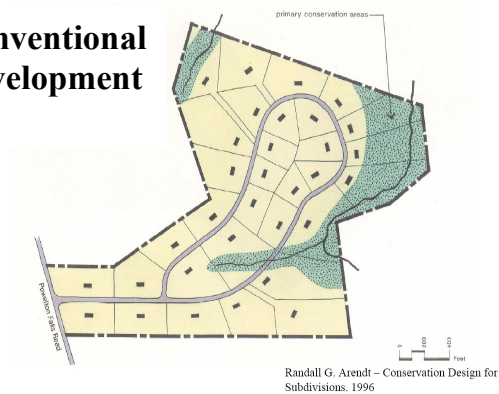
The following pages describe selected programs and approaches that have been or will be considered by Lancaster County for implementation.

### Conservation Development/Design

The terms ‘cluster development,’ ‘conservation subdivision or design,’ and ‘open space design’ are often used interchangeably to refer to a form of land development in which new homes are grouped together with the remaining land preserved as open space. The primary purpose of conservation development is to protect farmland and/or natural resources while allowing the same number of residences under existing zoning and conventional subdivision regulations. Some communities allow a greater density in their local ordinances to encourage this approach to open space planning.

The following graphic indicates a ‘conventional’ approach to site design, where the maximum amount of open space is allocated on a per-parcel basis. The other graphic illustrates a ‘conservation’ based approach.

#### Conventional Development



#### Conservation Development



*Randal G. Arendt- Conservation Design  
for Subdivisions 1996*

Both concepts propose 32 building lots, however the second graphic preserves a much larger portion of the site in common open space. The grouping of homes on one part of a tract is the primary difference between conservation development and conventional subdivisions.

Conservation development is an option for subdivisions containing six or more lots. The

requirements for the amount of open space varies from 30 percent in the R-4, Residential Community District to 70 percent in the A-1 Agricultural Limited District. Even conventional subdivision requires 10 percent open space for subdivisions of six or more lots.

**Development Approval Process/Expedited Permitting**

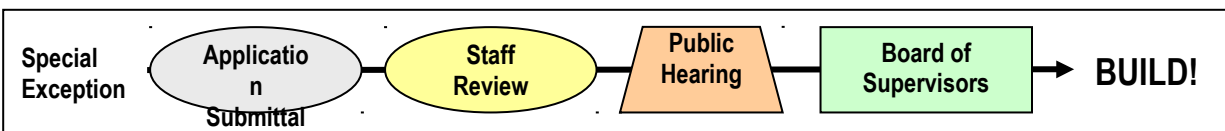
By Right

Most development that occurs is “by-right.” This means that the project meets all zoning requirements and is allowed to proceed with only administrative approval. In the case of Lancaster County, the Zoning Administrator is charged with approving all by-right applications and in many cases, all that may be required is a permit indicating compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.



Special Exception

Some uses and developments require “special exception” from the Board of Supervisors. This is typically because the nature of the use or development is such that more intense scrutiny and discourse is required. For example, *special exception* approval is required to open an equestrian academy in the A-1 zoning district. In this case, the Zoning Administrator would review the application, make a recommendation for approval or denial, and pass it to the Board of Supervisors for final decision. The Administrator would also advertise that a public hearing is scheduled for the Board of Supervisors. At the hearing, the community would be provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed application. At this time, the Board may (or may not) approve the application. Alternatively, the Board may approve the application but impose conditions and restrictions on the project.



Tailoring the development approval process to achieve desired goals can be a relatively simple and low cost task. Certain standards may have to be modified and clarified to ensure that adequate protection is provided and that the rules themselves are easy to interpret.

Other land use tools that may be considered:

**Exclusive Use Zoning/Agricultural Conservation Zoning Districts**

Some communities establish agricultural conservation zoning districts that are very restrictive in the range of uses that they

- Permitted Uses in an Agricultural Conservation District:**
- Farming
  - Forestry
  - One household per farm
  - Hunting/Fishing

allow. In many agricultural conservation zoning districts, only farming or forestry (and other similar uses that have minimal development impact) are allowed. Other types of development, such as residential subdivisions or commercial development would not be allowed. This means that a rezoning to a residential or commercial zoning district would be required for anything but farming or forestry.

### **Purchase of Development Rights/Transfer of Development Rights**

---

In the fall of 2001, the Virginia General Assembly appointed a Farmland Preservation Task Force through the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to address growing concerns over the loss of agricultural land in the Commonwealth. The task force developed a report, *A Model Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program for Virginia*, after numerous meetings with representatives of jurisdictions with PDR programs within Virginia and in other states. According to the report, Virginia lost over 23,000 acres of agricultural land to development each year between 1992 and 1997, of which more than 10,000 acres (annually) was prime farmland.

Under a PDR program, a landowner voluntarily sells his or her rights to develop a parcel of land to a public agency or a charitable organization charged with the preservation of farmland. The landowner retains all other ownership rights attached to the land, and a conservation easement is placed on the land and recorded on the title. The buyer (often a local unit of government) essentially purchased the right to develop the land and retires that right permanently, thereby assuring that development will not occur on that particular property. In placing such an easement on their farmland, participating landowners often take the proceeds from sale of the development rights to invest in their farming operations or retire from the business, allowing another farmer to purchase the land at lower rates.

Virginia Code provides even broader possibilities for purchasing development rights. Part of the Virginia Land Conservation Fund's purpose is to acquire property for the protection or reservation of ecological, historical or cultural resources. The criteria include provision for grants to localities for PDR programs. (§10.1-1020 Virginia Land Conservation Fund. Purposes of Foundation. Code of Virginia. Title 10.1 CONSERVATION. Chapter 10.2 Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. §10.1-1020 Virginia Land Conservation Fund. Purposes of Foundation).

While a PDR program is another tool for farmland protection, a main concern is the County's ability to administer the program given its current limited staff resources, especially over extended periods of time (10 – 20 years). Provided the County can fund a PDR program in an amount sufficient to make significant land preservation possible, a PDR program could be successfully used in Lancaster County to preserve large amounts of farmland and open space. Under a typical PDR program, the land can continue being farmed or harvested, thus maintaining the 'rural character' of the County. By compensating the property owner for the right to develop his or her land, the County mitigates any economic hardship that may befall someone who is "land rich but cash poor." However, the challenge is to develop a consistent and continuing funding mechanism for the program.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) have much the same objective as PDRs in that they are designed to protect sensitive areas from development by permitting or requiring the transfer of development from a location deemed unsuitable to a location considered more appropriate. The **sending zone** is an area where development is discouraged, or the area from which development rights are sent. The **receiving zone** is an area where land use planning would dictate that development should occur, or the area that receives the development rights. Landowners in the receiving zones can purchase development rights from landowners in the sending zones with strict development restrictions then being placed on the landowners in the sending zones. Successful TDR programs such as the one in Montgomery County, Maryland are exceptionally rare throughout the country with the designation of sending and receiving zones cited as the primary obstacle.

### **Conservation Easements/Land Trusts**

---

A conservation or open space easement is a legal contract made between a landowner and a public body or qualified conservation organization. Generally the conservation organization buys the development rights for the property. The easement limits present and future property development rights. It allows you to live on the property and use it for its traditional use (e.g., as a farm, forest, open space, and/or natural area) but protects it as well. The easement is legally recorded and bound to the deed of the property permanently.

Each easement is tailored to the specific characteristics and uses of the given property. Timber harvesting, farming, primary residences and other uses may continue while the land's unique characteristics - prime soils, endangered species habitat, wetlands, etc. - are protected. The easement protects the property's natural or open space values, assuring the land's availability for agriculture, forestry, recreation, or open-space use, thus protecting natural resources, maintaining or enhancing air or water quality, or preserving historical, architectural or archaeological aspects of the property.

Easements rarely allow public use of the property. The "holder" of the easement, i.e., the land conservation organization with whom the landowner entered into the easement, is responsible for enforcing the protective covenants of the easement and is therefore allowed to conduct periodic inspections of the property. The landowner retains all rights to the property except for restrictions on future development rights specified in the easement.

**Natural Area Dedications** are a conservation option available to landowners of highly significant natural areas. The landowner retains ownership and transfer rights of the land while voluntarily restricting land uses that are incompatible with the conservation needs of the natural area.

To be eligible for this program, a property must include one or more of these natural values: habitat for rare, threatened or endangered plant or animal species; rare or state significant natural communities; and rare or state significant geologic sites.

There may be financial incentives for dedicating land. Examples include possible reduced

assessment for real estate purposes, reduction of federal estate and Virginia inheritance taxes, and a charitable deduction for state and federal income tax purposes.

**Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas** program encourages voluntary conservation of significant lands in private and public ownership. To be eligible for placement on the registry, a property must also support significant natural heritage resources for Virginia. The decision to register is entirely the landowner's. There is a voluntary, non-binding agreement that may be terminated by either party at any time.

For more information see:

[www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/registry.htm](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/registry.htm).

### *Land Trusts in Virginia*

Virginia land trusts include The Virginia Outdoors Foundation, The Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Northern Neck Land Conservancy, and the Lower James River Association. As of 2012, approximately 2,335 acres have been preserved in Lancaster County through conservation easements with these organizations.

Lancaster County has adopted its own Conservation Easement Ordinance (Article 27 of the Zoning Ordinance) which creates a program for the County to co-hold (with qualified non-public bodies) conservation easements voluntarily offered by landowners. This program will serve as one means of assuring that the County's resources are protected and efficiently used and will help in preserving open-space, farmland and the rural character of the County.

## **Buffering**

In rural areas, buffers are most commonly used for two primary reasons – to minimize the visual impact of a development – and to reduce the potential conflicts between residences and adjacent uses (i.e., farmers spreading manure, operating loud machinery, etc.). Seventy-five feet of native vegetation is a fairly typical requirement. The native vegetation helps to avoid the appearance of a suburban, homogenous development and helps to achieve the goal of retaining a community's rural character.

Buffers can make an area appear relatively undeveloped by screening buildings from the roadway. One of the most famous, and effective, examples of roadway buffers is in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park. Seen from the roadway, the Park seems like a densely wooded



**Research Triangle Park, NC**

forest. However, as the photo to the right shows, large tracts of the Park are occupied by very intense development.

Buffers can maintain a rural setting but do relatively little to actually preserve a rural, agrarian lifestyle or protect the environment. The area behind a thick buffer may be 100% cleared and this would be unknown to the casual passer by.

In order for a buffer to be effective at maintaining an undeveloped appearance, it has to be thick enough (have enough opacity) to effectively screen the buildings. Depending on the maturity, type and spacing of the vegetation, fairly deep buffers may be required. This may impose a hardship on landowners and business owners who may be forfeiting large portions of their land to buffer area or are struggling to attract customers because their businesses are hard to see.

In many parts of the County, lands have been cleared for farming and there is little existing vegetation that would serve to screen new buildings. In these cases, berms must be erected and new plantings installed. Until these plantings achieve maturity (which may take up to 10 years), much of the new buildings may be visible.

### **Right-to-Farm Ordinance**

A *right-to-farm* ordinance is not directly related to land use and may be considered more of a statement of intent and an educational piece regarding a locality's prioritization of the rural farmer.

Such measures generally have little regulatory effect, but seek to reduce the opposition of urban neighbors to commercial agriculture as a nuisance generator. Many ordinances require that homebuyers who move to parcels adjacent to or near working farms be notified about the possible negative impacts of agricultural activities. In this way, the theory goes, new residents- especially those unfamiliar with rural living- would effectively learn about the realities of modern farming and would be less inclined to complain, or even go to court, about sprays, dust, odors, noise and other aspects of agricultural activities. The normal practices of farmers would thus be protected.



Right-to-farm ordinances can supplement the statutory protections that are provided by Section 3.1-22.28 of the Virginia Code that guarantee the right to farm and provide additional protection from nuisance lawsuits by individuals seeking to interrupt the operation of a farm or logging operation. Lancaster County does not currently have a separate *right to farm* ordinance.

A *right to farm* ordinance would allow the County to emphasize and very publicly

declare its commitment to preserving its farmland intent and its farming heritage. It may create some additional work for the County as it goes about the process of notifying landowners moving into properties near farms, but the costs or effort are not great. Another approach may be to develop flyers or notices that are distributed to all real estate agents practicing in the County that they may deliver to prospective homebuyers.

### **Mixed Housing Types**

---

Residences within a conventional residential subdivision typically have one type of construction, parcel size and subsequent purchase price. Unfortunately, this lack of diversity in housing type and cost often means that most new homes are out of the price range of many County residents. Housing can often be made more affordable by allowing for higher densities and a mix of housing types and income levels.

Developments with mixed housing types are becoming more commonplace as this segment of the market matures, and some communities are even mandating a mixture of different densities (this is still relatively rare). Design and performance standards can ensure compatibility between the different types of housing and buffering around the development can provide transitions to adjoining properties.

One approach that could be considered would be to allow housing type mixtures in a conservation development. With appropriate development standards, different styles of housing could be incorporated into a project that is almost invisible from the public roadway and adjoining properties. Furthermore, a reduction in the amount of infrastructure and site preparation needed to develop a more compact site could reduce overall construction costs and the corresponding price of homes.

Lancaster County's R-4, Residential Community District, allows mixed housing types with density bonuses to help create more affordable housing.

### **Lot Standard Reductions**

---

Garden homes and zero-lot line developments are examples of development types where reduced setbacks can result in a more affordable housing product, while still maintaining privacy and adequate separation between homes.

Reducing lot size and setbacks can also allow more dwelling units on a more compact portion of a project which in turn can decrease the cost of housing in a development and provide more common open space.

When used in combination with enhanced project buffering standards, a reduction in development standards for properties located on the interior of a housing project may be unnoticeable to passersby.

Lancaster County's Subdivision Ordinance, Section 5-26, allows reduced lot sizes and setbacks in exchange for increased open space under the conservation/cluster design.



## II. QUALITY GROWTH - Discussion and Objectives

The County desires to encourage well-managed growth that is consistent with the rural nature of the County, preserves the natural beauty of the County's land areas and shoreline, and ensures careful development of waterfront areas. Character areas have been identified to describe the desired land use patterns and characteristics and to serve as a guide for future land use decisions. The Character areas are shown on the County's Future Land Use Map and illustrate the desired location and pattern of future land use, including the type and intensity of new residential, commercial or industrial development.

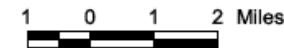
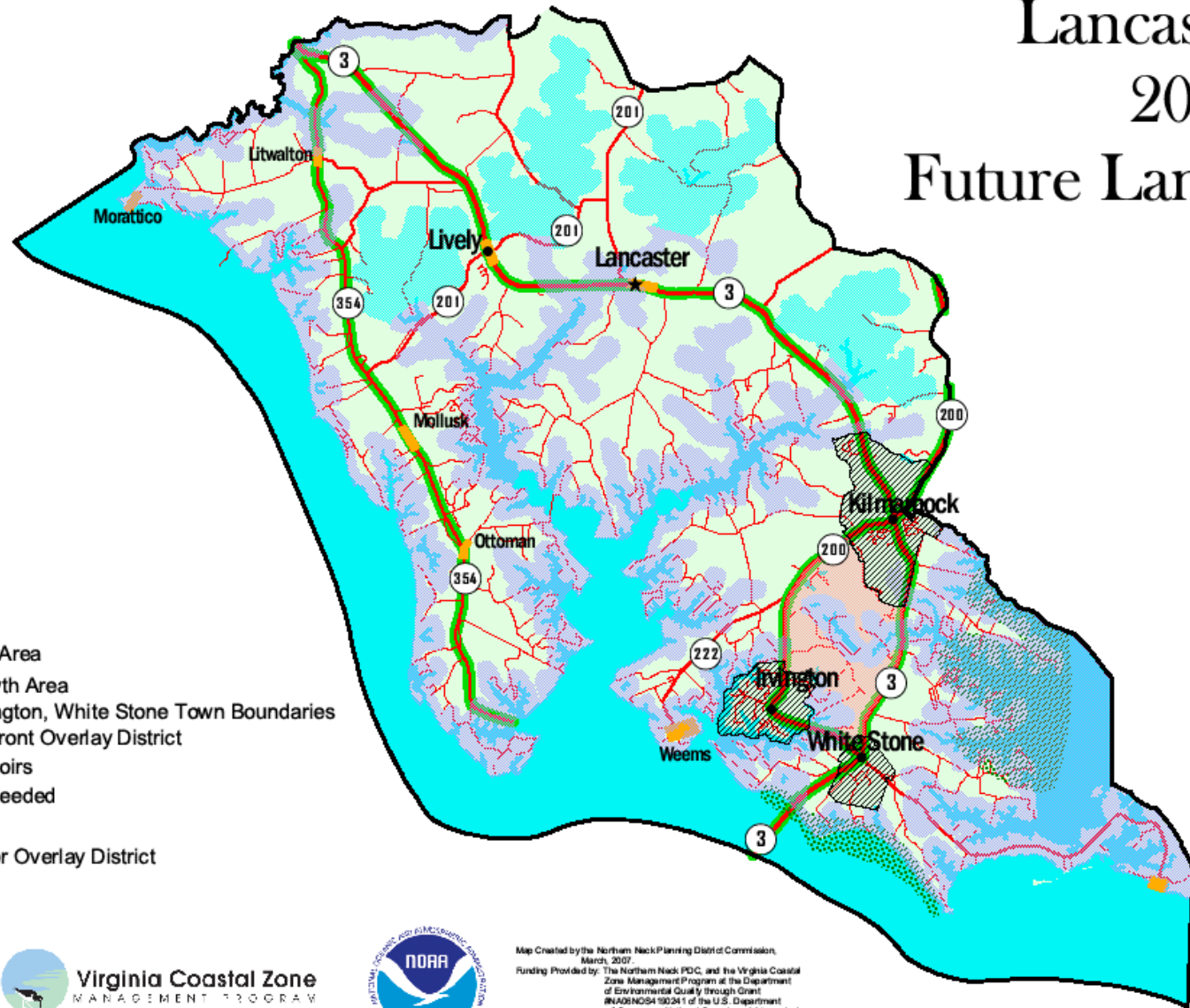
***Goal: Ensure orderly and well-managed land use that protects the County's natural beauty, quality of life and its communities.***

A **Planned Growth Area (PGA)** includes existing locations of the highest level of residential, commercial, employment, and industrial activity with the highest level of existing public infrastructure, including public water and sewer. Most community services, such as hospitals and places of higher education, are located in the PGA. The primary centers of commercial and development activity in the County are the three incorporated towns of Kilmarnock, White Stone and Irvington as well as designated rural villages. The unincorporated area located between the towns, in a roughly triangular shape, as depicted in the following map, along with areas located in close proximity to but not necessarily contiguous with this roughly triangular shape, is designated as the PGA for the County.

***Heavy industrial and manufacturing activities with significant noise, air quality and water quality impacts, are not considered appropriate for Lancaster County.***

- Higher density residential and commercial activity will be directed to the PGA.
- Incorporated towns are not prohibited from proposing contiguous expansion of their boundaries to areas within and outside the PGA consistent with state law for such a process.
- Investments in new or improved public infrastructure and community services will be first directed to the PGA.
- The extension of municipal water and wastewater treatment lines to all areas of the defined PGA is permitted.
- Generally, appropriate development in the PGA includes medium-density single-family and multi-family housing.
- Existing agricultural activities will be allowed to continue.

# Lancaster County: 2007 DRAFT Future Land Use Map



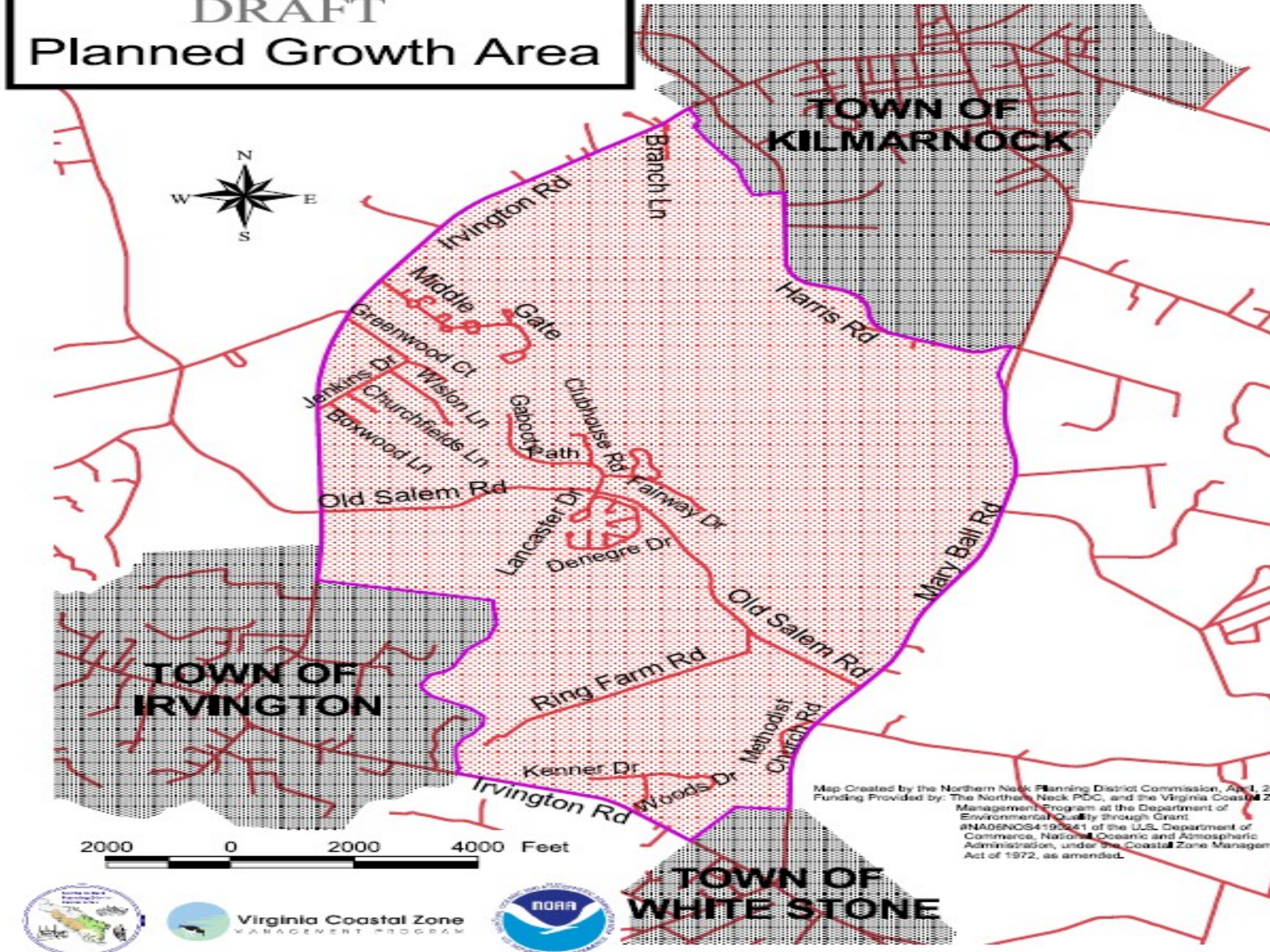
## LEGEND

- Primary Growth Area
- Secondary Growth Area
- Kilmarnock, Irvington, White Stone Town Boundaries
- 800 Foot Waterfront Overlay District
- Possible Reservoirs
- Water Access Needed
- Roads
- Highway Corridor Overlay District



Map Created by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission,  
March, 2007.  
Funding Provided by: The Northern Neck PDC, and the Virginia Coastal  
Zone Management Program of the Department  
of Environmental Quality through Grant  
#NA06N0541002411 of the U.S. Department  
of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management  
Act of 1972, as amended.

**Lancaster County  
DRAFT  
Planned Growth Area**



Map Created by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission, April, 2007.  
Funding Provided by: The Northern Neck PDC, and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality through Grant #NA05NOS4193041 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

**Rural Villages** are appropriate for concentrating residential and commercial development and are therefore also designated Planned Growth Areas. There are several traditional village centers located at key crossroads throughout the County that were once centers of residential development and commercial activity.

Four of these villages - Lancaster, Lively, Morattico and Weems - are the most suitable locations with Lively being the only currently adopted rural village. Generally, appropriate development includes medium density single-family housing, multi-family housing, and small to medium-scale retail activity, offices, and light manufacturing uses with appropriate development standards to ensure compatibility.

**The Rural Villages of Lancaster County:**

Lancaster County is fortunate in that many of the historic crossroad communities remain relatively unchanged from their early days as points of trade or commercial development. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that preservation of this character is important to preserving the County's history. Furthermore, the Plan recognizes that no two rural villages are the same. Therefore, the County has developed the Rural Village Overlay District that is intended to be applied to the villages of Lancaster County.

The Rural Village Overlay ordinance contains two parts: A **guiding plan** that describes the various development characteristics and design guidelines for the overlay; and a set of overlay **district standards** that provides dimensional requirements, a schedule of permitted uses, and other development requirements that must be satisfied. The guiding plan and standards must be tailored to accommodate appropriate development patterns for the particular rural village or other area where it is being applied and reflect local community input.

**Rural areas** include those areas that the County wants to retain as farmland and open space. Locations include prime farmland areas and land that is unsuitable for development due to environmental constraints. Rural areas may also be appropriate for compact residential development occurring in conservation subdivisions. Well-designed conservation subdivisions offer far greater opportunity for significant open space than do conventional subdivisions. They also can help to mitigate or avoid the 'checkerboard' development or sprawl by allowing for efficient and creative residential development. They typically allow access to and enjoyment of open space over large-lot subdivisions where the benefit of the undeveloped area or 'open space' is primarily retained for the homeowners only. The retained open space can serve as active and/or passive recreation space for residents and the wider community. The increased design flexibility allows for septic systems to be placed on the best-suited soils on the individual parcels or to be located 'off-site' including in the open space area. Development intensity (density) in conservation subdivisions should not exceed allowed densities for the district, except through a design review process that allows community involvement such as those proposed as workforce housing. These areas are also suitable for forests and forestry, parks and recreational space.

**Residential** areas include primarily those areas in the County that have already been approved for residential development or have been developed for residential use. Recognizing that many of these areas have already been developed, new development in the vicinity should reflect existing defined development patterns and be sensitive to

established context. Residential areas are located in proximity to the larger towns and concentrations of development. These may also be located in the Planned Growth Area as previously stated.

**Reservoir overlay districts** include eight potential impoundment or reservoir sites identified in a 1973 study. These sites will be further studied, and decisions will be reached on which of these sites and their adjoining watersheds should be protected from intensive development. Ensuring an adequate supply of drinking water is important, as the County is entirely dependent on groundwater for its drinking supply. There are well-founded concerns that groundwater alone is insufficient to accommodate the County's needs. Appropriate activities in these areas are those with a relatively small "footprint" such as low-intensity agricultural and timbering uses, open air and low-polluting commercial and industrial uses including timber storage, and very low density residential development. Uses which have the potential to contaminate the ground (certain industrial and manufacturing uses) should be prohibited. Uses with high infrastructure and capital investment costs should be discouraged from locating within areas identified as potential reservoir sites.

**Historic Districts and Places** include sites and buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register and other identified areas of historic or archeological significance.

**Public Parks and Recreation** includes publicly owned or controlled parkland and recreational sites.

**Public Lands and Facilities**

This category includes all publicly owned lands such as County or State offices, schools, libraries and any publicly owned or controlled water access points.

**Towns/Incorporated Areas**

This category includes the three towns of Kilmarnock, White Stone and Irvington.

**Waterfront Overlay District**

The County wishes to encourage development that preserves the natural beauty of the shoreline and ensures careful development of waterfront areas in a manner that will reduce the risk of water quality degradation in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. To accomplish these goals, the County's Land Development Code includes the Waterfront Residential Overlay that applies to parcels, within all zoning districts, recorded on or after May 11, 1988, which are for residential use or residential development and lie within 800 feet of tidal waters and wetlands. The regulations apply to the first 800 feet landward from tidal shores and wetlands for large parcels having a depth of 800 feet or more as measured landward from the shores or wetlands. Wetlands include tidal and non-tidal wetlands connected by surface flow and contiguous to tidal wetlands or tributary streams. Development within the waterfront residential overlay district must conform to the requirements of both the overlay and the underlying base district or the more restrictive of the two. To protect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its

tributaries, development along the County's shoreline will continue to consist of low-density residential development.

***Objective II-A:***

**Make growth and development consistent with the Future Land Use Map and the County's Vision Statement.**

Strategies:

- Utilize the County's traditional village-oriented development to encourage the concentration of higher intensity land uses to help retain the County's rural nature, meet the needs of citizens throughout the County and maximize the efficiency of public infrastructure and services.
- Encourage all Future development and land use decisions to be consistent with the Future Land Use Map and character areas.
- Concentrate commercial and residential development in appropriate areas, particularly around existing villages and between towns.
- Discourage development of areas with poor soils, high water tables, steep slopes or areas with other environmental constraints.
- Promote and participate in the development of a Regional Land Use Plan for compatible land use at the borders of jurisdictions.
- In coordination with an economic development program that identifies the type of industrial and commercial development desired by the County, identify the most appropriate areas in the County for location of supporting facilities and infrastructure.

***Objective II-B:***

**Ensure new development complements and enhances character and quality of existing neighborhoods and communities.**

Strategies:

- Evaluate rezoning and special exception permit applications to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and compatibility with the character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure that the scale, character and density of new development are compatible with adjacent land uses.

- Encourage development with design features such as varied building orientation and setback, lot size, façade treatment, open space and landscaping to help avoid the visual repetition of suburban sprawl.
- Reduce the number of permitted uses in existing zoning districts to avoid mixed, incompatible uses within a zoning district (especially the agricultural districts).

***Objective II-C:***

**Protect potential future reservoir sites to ensure the provision of adequate water supply.**

Strategies:

As further explained in Chapter 3, the following strategies are included to ensure protection of the county's water supply.

- Eight potential impoundment or reservoir sites were identified in a 1973 study. Preserving these sites to meet future demand is very important for a County that is entirely dependent on groundwater for its drinking supply. The County should create a special reservoir overlay zone to protect the impoundment areas from encroaching development.
- Create a new or join an existing State Water Management Area.
- Pursue coordination with the Northern Neck Planning District Commission to join a regional Water Management Area.

**III. RURAL CHARACTER AND MARITIME HERITAGE – Discussion and Objectives**

Lancaster County is fortunate to have retained many of the aesthetic qualities ascribed to rural areas: beautiful roadways through forested acreage; postcard-like vistas of open water, wetlands, and marshes; and picturesque villages and hamlets (many of which are on the water) that are the commercial and cultural centers of any rural community. It is important to emphasize that these waters and rural lands are not sitting vacant or unused. Watermen are still plying their traditional crafts, most farms are still engaged in active agriculture, and many forested areas are used for ongoing timbering operations.

***Goal: Preserve Lancaster County’s rural character and maritime heritage***

Retaining the County’s rural character and maritime heritage involves five objectives:

- A. *Preserve and promote our maritime heritage, the watermen who continue it, and our waterfront recreational and service industries.*
- B. *Protect farmland and agricultural resources*
  - a. *Preserve, protect and promote agricultural activities*
- C. *Preserve the county’s historic resources*
- D. *Preserve open space and views along roads and waterways*

***Lancaster County’s rural character...***

***Physical Appearance***

- ◆ *Farmland*
- ◆ *Waterfront*
- ◆ *Natural unspoiled vistas and viewscapes of both land and water*
- ◆ *Connections to land and water*
- ◆ *Small town feel*
- ◆ *Rural roads*
- ◆ *Open space*

***Activities***

- ◆ *Farming*

The following section provides a detailed description of each policy and identifies objectives and strategies for implementation and successful achievement.

***Objective III-A:***

***Preserve and promote our maritime heritage, the watermen who continue it, and our waterfront recreational and service industries***



With over 330 miles of shoreline, two tidal rivers, and numerous navigable creeks, maritime industries and water-oriented recreation have always been critical components of our economy. As the stocks of our commercial fishery products have declined over the years, their contribution to our economy have declined accordingly. Water-oriented recreational activities and interest in our maritime heritage and the resultant tourism and movement of relatively affluent retirees to our area have assumed major importance. Though fishery stocks are somewhat cyclical, and even now the future of oystering appears somewhat more promising, it is very unlikely that these commercial fishery sales will ever assume their former volume. Which is not to say that they are unimportant. In fact, they are of critical importance in bringing tourists interested in our maritime heritage and seafood products and retirees (the major engines of our economy) to our area. The following strategies are designed to preserve and promote our maritime heritage industries and water-oriented business activities and encourage the development of new ones.

Strategies:

- Identify active commercial fishery operations and ensure that County land use decisions on nearby properties are not necessarily detrimental to these waterfront activities. Educate the public to the fact that the contribution these heritage industries make to the economy of our area, as outlined above, far exceeds the sales value of their product.
- Identify and encourage the adaptive reuse of vacant or failing waterfront commercial properties. Consider the use of historic tax credits, Community Development Block Grants, or the use of public or privately generated funds to stabilize such properties or develop new uses.
- Consistent with land use and water quality and environmental considerations, seek out and encourage new waterfront commercial enterprises including such things as aquaculture, maritime museums, boating instruction schools, restaurants accessible to boaters, seafood retail stores, marinas, charter fishing operations, retirement communities, etc. Actively help such water-oriented businesses identify suitable sites for their particular enterprise. The adaptive reuse sites discussed above, as well as our waterfront villages and hamlets, could be prime candidates for locating such new enterprises.
- Increase efforts to identify and develop waterfront public access sites and promote multiple uses for such sites. For example, a public fishing pier in an appropriate location could be opened up for three mornings a week to commercial fishermen, oystermen and crabbers to tie up and sell their catch to the public. Canoe and kayak launching public access sites could be linked as part of the County's developing blue water trail system and used for point-to-point scenic paddling gatherings or paddling races.
- Actively educate the public and promote the maritime heritage and waterfront oriented recreational, cultural and business activities of our County. Examples of opportunities for such education and promotion would include our outstanding maritime museums and the picturesque waterfront villages most are located in, Belle Isle State Park and the various recreational opportunities it offers, our

marinas and the facilities they provide, boat races and shows, fishing derbies, maritime and seafood festivals, steamboat landing reenactments, tall-ship visits, etc.

***Objective III-B:***

***Protect Farmland and Agricultural Resources***

Farming is an important component of the County's economic history. Farmlands provide the "aesthetically pleasing landscape" referred to by many citizens, contribute to the local economy, and also assist with recharging groundwater aquifers. According to the 2010 Census, employment related to farming, fishing and forestry declined over 72% between 1990 and 2010 (253 jobs to 69 jobs). These figures represent full-time employment and do not reflect seasonal or migrant labor associated with those industries. The change in employment does not necessarily imply a direct correlation in the reduction of land in agricultural use, but does indicate trends in agriculture-related activity.

Coinciding with the decline in agricultural employment is increased development pressure as people move in, attracted by the County's rural character and easy lifestyle. This has the potential to change the natural landscape. Gradually, undeveloped fields and forests are being developed as housing, stores and offices, and other buildings. This is not to say that development itself is negative. New businesses bring much-needed jobs to the County, and the shops and offices bring more choices and alternatives to residents. Additionally, the ability to make economic use of the land is very important to many in the community who may be "land rich" but "cash poor." In other words, development can bring many benefits and challenges.

The County has two Agricultural Zoning Districts (A-1 and A-2). Lands within these districts comprise a significant portion of the total county land area. As currently specified, the minimum lot size in these districts is 2 acres in the A-1 district and 33,000 square feet (0.75-acre) in the A-2 district. This means that a 100-acre farm in the A-2 district could conceivably be turned into a development with almost 120 homes (it does not equal to 100 acres divided by 33,000 square feet because roads, drainage, landscaping, and other features prevent the construction of homes on the entire site). In reality, the actual number of units will likely be less based on site suitability constraints such as wetlands, slopes, or other features. It is intended that the uses and density in the A-1 and A-2 districts will be reviewed for consistency with the intent of this plan.

The County also has the Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) which is primarily

designed to limit the number of driveways entering certain County roads and provide for some visual buffering of developments from the roadway. In general, the HCOD is a good approach for visually obscuring developments that are in already forested areas, because existing plant material can do a good job of screening the new buildings. However, on open farmland and other cleared areas, the screening may be inadequate or even seem out of character if the remaining portions of the property are all cleared lands.

Fortunately, some of the recent development activity in Lancaster County has focused on areas near existing towns, leaving many of the farmlands intact. However, it is likely that this development momentum could start impacting rural areas as farmers retire and capitalize on the equity in the land. Furthermore, from a development economics standpoint, the attractiveness of farmland due to the flat topography and lower site clearing and preparation costs will only increase development pressure on these areas.

The County recognizes that different key policy approaches are required for farmland preservation versus open space preservation; and that effective farmland preservation and management efforts require a multi-faceted approach with many elements beyond land use policies and regulations.

### **Virginia Land Use Statutes Addressing Rural Character**

The *Code of Virginia* has many statutes devoted specifically to land preservation. The following are some of the key sections that may have particular application in Lancaster County.

<b>Statute</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
§ 3.1-22.28	Right to Farm	Establishes the right to engage in farming and forestry activity. Protects farmers and loggers from nuisance suits.
Title 10.1	Conservation	This entire title provides the legislation authorizing many forms of rural land conservation programs and agencies.
§10.1-1009 to §10.1-1016	Virginia Conservation Easement Act	This act authorizes the use of conservation easements. It also authorizes the levying of taxes that reflect the restricted usability of the land under the terms of the easement.
§ 10.1-1017 to §10.1-1026	Virginia Land Conservation Foundation	Establishes the Foundation and authorizes it to receive donations of money and land. The Foundation can enter into conservation easement agreements with private landowners as well as purchase land outright.
§10.1-1700 to §10.1-1705	Open Space Land Act	Authorizes public bodies (for example, Lancaster County) to purchase, receive as dedication, or otherwise obtain land for use as open space. This acquisition does not have to be permanent and can last as little as five years. The public body can authorize farming or timbering on the land.
§10.1-1800 to §10.1-1804	Virginia Outdoors Foundation	The Foundation promotes the preservation of open-space lands and encourages private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, scientific, open-space and recreational areas of the

		Commonwealth
§10.1-2100 to §10.1-2116	Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act	Restricts and governs certain land use and development activities in the lands that drain into the Chesapeake Bay. Imposes limits on the amount of land that can be cleared, amounts of impervious cover, and other activities that can affect the receiving watershed.
§15.2-2316.2	TDR Enabling Legislation	Authorizes local governments to initiate a Transfer Of Development Rights program.
§15.2-2286.1	Clustering	Authorizes local governments to preserve open space through the use of conservation development standards.

#### Strategies:

- Review the list of permitted uses in the A-1 and A-2 district for compatibility with the intent of the districts. Modify as necessary.
- Promote the use of conservation easements in the *Rural* character area.
- Require all new development to be buffered from the roadway to minimize the visual impact.
- Explore the development of a County PDR program to purchase development easements on sensitive lands.
- Promote the use of bargain sales to promote the conservation of sensitive lands.

### ***Objective III-C:***

***Preserve, protect, and promote agricultural activities.***

There are several programs that have been used successfully throughout the United States, including the Commonwealth of Virginia, that offer a variety of means to manage and preserve farmland and open space. The following strategies will help the County ensure that farming and timbering remain viable alternatives.

#### Strategies

- Develop a comprehensive farmland and open space protection program with a blend of land use and economic policies and actions.
- Update the inventory of land still in agricultural use as a first step to allow for improved farmland management and development of a comprehensive farmland protection program.
- Direct new residential and commercial development to designated growth areas (see Objective 2A).
- Refine the list of permitted uses within the agricultural areas to limit those uses related to agricultural community activities.
- Adopt a right-to-farm policy statement to allow activities related to farming operations to continue. Provide information about farming practice and its cultural and economic importance in Lancaster County to prospective

homebuyers.

- Expand the Land-use Taxation program.
- Residential design standards must provide for appropriate transitions and buffering between the residential component and open space areas, agriculture and aquaculture activities, and nearby properties or roadways.
- Amend the Lancaster County zoning ordinance to ensure that non-agricultural uses do not compromise agricultural and silvicultural uses or lands.

***Objective III-D:***

***Preserve the historic resources and archaeological sites that reflect the County's heritage and historical significance***

The County's historic buildings and other resources are an important part of the County's identity and character and should be protected. Chapter 6 of the Plan notes the importance and benefits of historic preservation. It includes a partial listing of the County's historic resources and a policy goal with four objectives for historic preservation. Additional strategies include the following:

Strategies:

- Provide property owners with information on how to have their properties included in the Virginia Landmarks Register or the National Register and how to seek available Federal rehabilitation tax credits.
- Create and maintain a computerized inventory, listing and map of all significant historic, cultural, architectural and archeological sites. The Virginia Department of Resources is a source for technical and financial assistance to local jurisdictions. Include all identified historic, cultural, archeological and architecturally significant sites on a map in the amended Comprehensive Plan.
- Require surveying, identifying and mitigating adverse impacts on proven historic resources as a condition for rezoning and special use permits.
- Encourage voluntary efforts for historic preservation, including donation of preservation easements by property owners.
- Utilize strategies such as brochures with local landmarks, local landmark signs, and driving tours.

***Objective III-E:***

***Preserve open space and views along roads and waterways***

County residents desire to retain the views along the County's roadways and waterways and are concerned over the potential impact of any type of development on these views.

Strategies:

- Promote land use practices to preserve the rural character and qualities of the County.
- Encourage low intensity field crop farming as use in reserved open space areas.
- Allow efficient development patterns that prioritize preservation of open space, wooded areas, and other features.
- Discourage commercial and residential sprawl along road corridors.
- Revise the Highway Corridor Overlay District to better protect the rural character and to encourage appropriate development. (The Highway Corridor Overlay District currently applies to Routes 3, 354, and 200).
- Provide incentives to retain stands of trees, open spaces, and other buffer areas. Incentives may include lot size flexibility or site layout flexibility in exchange for increased buffering from the roadway.

#### **IV. RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES - Discussion and Objectives**

Lancaster County needs additional recreational facilities and opportunities, including bicycle, pedestrian paths and trails, and designated areas for hunting and fishing.

***Goal: Provide a range of recreational facilities and activities to accommodate the needs of all County residents***

***Policy IV-A:***

***Develop a comprehensive system of pathways and trails suitable for use by bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians***

Chapter 6 states the County has adopted a series of Class III (shared with the existing roadway) bikeways which extend throughout the County and includes a related map, *Bicycle Trails of Lancaster County*, with a plan for bikeway improvements. Lancaster County should use this existing Bicycle Trails Plan as the basis for developing a more comprehensive countywide multi-use trail, bicycle and pedestrian system. The system would serve both short-distance trips between neighborhoods and nearby services, and also longer-distance transportation and recreational users.

Strategies:

- Expand upon the Bicycle Trails Plan to develop a comprehensive County-wide Bicycle, Water and Pedestrian Trails Program with a prioritized list of improvements for implementation.
- Inventory and map existing bikeways, sidewalks and trails to determine location and condition as the starting point for the County-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Program.
- Include the action steps in Chapter 6 (Section B. Highways, 3. Planned Highway Improvements by VDOT, C. Bicycle Trail) in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Program. Bike paths and sidewalks will be considered in the

design of improved and new road projects. Small projects such as painting bike lane stripes on existing roadways with sufficient pavement width, minor grading, gravel compaction, and vegetation trimming will be undertaken as a means of improving safety and utility. Consistent with the plan, additional grant funding will be sought to carry out such larger projects as bridge widening, separate path construction, and shoulder paving.

- Encourage developers to construct bikeways and sidewalks for transportation and recreation purposes.
- Seek the use of utility rights-of-way for bicycle and pedestrian trails.

***Policy IV-B:***

***Develop a Parks and Recreation Program***

Chapter 6 identifies existing publicly and privately owned recreational sites and facilities. It also includes a list of standards for a range of recreational facilities including baseball and softball fields, basketball, tennis and swimming pools and notes that these standards “may be adjusted as appropriate for Lancaster County.” One way in which the County’s population is distinctly different from the rest of the state is its relatively high percentage of residents over the age of 65, estimated to be 31.4% in the 2010 US Census versus 12.5% statewide. That percentage gives Lancaster County the oldest population by county in Virginia and one of the top ten oldest populations by county nationwide. Demographic trends such as these suggest that the County needs to take additional steps to better identify the recreational opportunities that are most appropriate and desired by residents.

Strategies

- Establish a citizen’s committee charged with making recommendations for projects and improvements to be included in the Parks and Recreation Master Program with a prioritized list of desired improvements and facilities.
- Conduct an inventory of the current publicly owned and privately owned recreational facilities that are accessible to the public.
- Survey County residents to determine recreational needs and priorities.
- Use the Program as a basis for identifying proffers for development or redevelopment
- Many citizens identified improved public access to the water as a desired element of recreational opportunities in the County. The ‘Public and Private Access to Waterfront Areas Plan’ in Chapter 5 includes several goals and objectives to improve public access to water, and should serve as the basis for this element of the County’s Parks and Recreation Program.
- Encourage the creation of a Lancaster County Parks and Recreation Department and the hiring of a Parks and Recreation Director.



## V. QUALITY HOUSING AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES - Discussion and Objectives

Lancaster County needs more ‘affordable’ or ‘workforce’ housing in the County along with the need for a diverse housing stock. About 82% of the approximately 2,599 building permits issued in the County between 2000 and 2012 were for single-family residential units. Additionally, much of the new development was and continues to be located in very expensive waterfront areas. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 5.4% of existing homes in the County were in multi-unit structures, as compared to over 21% statewide. The great majority of land in the County is zoned for large-lot development (one dwelling unit per three quarters of an acre to two acres). Given that the median household income in the County, an estimated \$46,625 in the year 2011, was significantly lower than statewide \$63,302, the high price of land on which to place a home is an even greater barrier.

Lancaster County desires to retain its diverse, eclectic housing and communities with a range of housing types and income levels located in close proximity, as an important component of community character. The County will continue to address and reduce substandard housing conditions and deteriorating older housing stock.

***Goals:***

***Provide a range of housing options and types to preserve the diversity of the County’s communities and to meet the housing needs of County residents.***

***Achieve high-quality design, construction and appearance of existing and new residential development and neighborhoods***

***Policy V-A:***

***Allow for a range of choice in housing type, design, density and price***

***Strategies***

- Encourage diverse and innovative housing and subdivision design.

- Revise the County’s Zoning Ordinance to allow for a variety of housing types with appropriate development standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding development.
- Ensure an adequate supply of land in appropriate locations is provided for medium and *high-density* residential development.
- Encourage infill development in residential areas to minimize development costs and maximize the development potential of land convenient to public facilities and services.
- Review family member transfer standards to ensure regulations are not creating an undue burden on families.
- Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to develop a regional approach to housing needs including a regional inventory of housing needs.
- Work with lending institutions, state and federal agencies and private parties to increase affordable home ownership opportunities for both for-sale and rental housing

***Policy V-B:***

***Eliminate substandard housing conditions***

*Strategies*

- Support the efforts of private and nonprofit groups to improve the condition of the County’s housing stock.
- Develop an information campaign to educate the public about local, state and federal programs that assist home repair, preventive maintenance and sanitary health conditions. Such programs include the Virginia Housing Development Authority’s housing rehabilitation and winterization programs.
- Continue to implement the County’s Housing Choice Voucher Program which provides a subsidy to families living in rental property to make it feasible for them to live in decent housing.
- Continue to implement the County’s Indoor Plumbing/Rehab Program which provides grants or loans to assist in drilling wells, building septic systems, or installing plumbing systems to new or renovated housing.
- Implement the Greentown/Gaskins Road Community Development Block Grant, which will provide water and sewer services to residents of the Greentown/Gaskins Road community.
- Continue to seek aid from the Federal Emergency Management Administration to elevate homes affected by storms out of flood plain areas to mitigate further damage.

## **VI. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES - Discussion and Objectives**

Lancaster County, while rich in historic, natural and cultural resources, faces problems of unemployment and underemployment. The decline in traditional industries and the growth in retirement and second home development are changing the landscape of Lancaster County. The 1990 survey of county citizens conducted by the University of Virginia presents some interesting results. Of those polled, 51.3% were retired, 79.5% do not have children living in their household, and 82% think the county should promote itself as a good place to retire. These findings punctuate the growth of the county's retired population that has occurred and continues to occur. This growth trend has had a major impact on the type of employment opportunities that exist.

The challenge for Lancaster is to diversify the tax base while maintaining its rural character and excellent quality of life. The county must take appropriate steps to ensure that outside forces do not govern growth. The continuing loss of farm and forestland and the escalating emigration of youth must be dealt with by local government through public policy. Plans must be implemented which will result in the creation of employment opportunities that provide stable economic conditions with the opportunity for high wages, advancement and benefits. Absolutely essential to the creation of any employment opportunities is the provision of high-speed internet service throughout the county. Effective job training and placement programs must be provided for all elements of the population so that ability and opportunity for this local employment can be developed.

The county government should also take meaningful steps to ensure that farming, forestry and water-related employment remain viable economic sectors in the local economy. This is a significant challenge given the advanced age of people currently farming and the reluctance of young people to go into farming. Equally troubling with respect to the seafood industry is the declining population of blue crabs and the low probability that stocks can be replenished while businesses continue to operate.

## **INVENTORY**

---

Estimates of Lancaster County's population figures indicate that growth is minimal. From 10,896 people in the year 1990 to 11,391 people in the year 2010, Lancaster County shows a slight increase in population.

The type of growth in Lancaster County has changed more than the rate. The total labor force (people employed or unemployed and actively seeking work) in 1990 was 4,774 (53.5%) and 4,682 in 2010 (48.7% of the County population). This is important because

it indicates that in spite of growth in total population, the number in the labor force and the percentage of the population that is in the labor force is actually decreasing. This can likely be attributed to the increase in population in the ages that are outside the traditional labor pool.

Lancaster County showed modest improvement in its employment characteristics from an unemployment rate of 11.1% in 1990 to 9.9% in the year 2010. Comparative rates for the Commonwealth of Virginia were 4.2% in 1990 and 7.1% in 2010.

In terms of number of people, Rappahannock General Hospital and Lancaster County School Board are the top two employers in the county.

The trends in rate of unemployment in the twenty-year period between 1990 and 2010 are reflected in the income characteristics of the residents of Lancaster County. The average weekly wage in 1990 was \$314. That increased to \$574 in 2010. Statewide, average weekly wages increased from \$438 in 1990 to \$953 in 2012. Employment in management, professional and related occupations ranked highest in the County with about 27.6% of the workforce, followed by 25.1% in sales and office occupations.

***Goal: Expand and diversify the economy within Lancaster County***

***Policy VI-A:***

***Support and encourage tourism and the businesses serving this market***

Tourism has become an important factor in Lancaster County's economy. Existing new and expanding businesses catering to this market will be supported or recruited by the county. The County government will actively promote these businesses and the area to tourists. The County government will also seek out ways to provide and promote additional events, public services and amenities sought by tourists, especially focusing on the provision of public access to beaches and state waterways.

***Strategies:***

- Develop promotional materials marketing Lancaster County as a tourist destination.
- Develop and promote tours of Lancaster County for travel agents, travel writers, state and regional officials and tourists.
- Develop a tourism marketing plan.
- Promote tourism education programs designed to train local service industry and retail employees as sales agents for Lancaster County.

- Foster the creation of new tourism related business, events, public services and amenities, especially focusing on the provision of public access to beaches and state waterways.

***Policy VI-B:***

***Ensure that proper and sufficient zoning and land use measures are in place to allow for responsible nonresidential growth***

Following the completion of the comprehensive plan update, the County will undertake a review of the zoning ordinances to identify any provisions that negatively impact desired development patterns. The zoning ordinance will be revised to encourage and support appropriate nonresidential growth, while protecting those resources, features and qualities that comprise the local rural character and quality of life.

Strategies:

- Review all zoning ordinances to determine that such measures allow sufficient flexibility to encourage and support nonresidential growth, while protecting those resources, features and qualities that comprise the local rural character and quality of life.

***Policy VI-C:***

***Standardize waterfront land use to ensure that future growth occurs in a planned and orderly manner***

County staff will develop a separate zoning classification which addresses traditional commercial and industrial waterfront usage, allows sufficient flexibility for future growth and removes ambiguities attached to limited, special exception and nonconforming uses along Lancaster's shoreline. County government will incorporate all current and future requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Act into existing and planned policies addressing development along the coast. Traditional businesses and occupations will be encouraged in these areas and new employers will be sought which have been identified as requiring proximity to waterways for the conduct of their business.

To adequately prepare for possible changes in rising sea levels, shoreline erosion and coastal subsidence over the next several decades, development should be carefully reviewed and managed to take into account the potential impacts. Where possible, conservation measures should be employed to protect natural communities and prevent investment losses in the future.

Strategies:

- Develop a zoning classification which addresses traditional commercial and industrial waterfront usage, allows sufficient flexibility for future growth and removes ambiguities attached to limited, special exception and nonconforming uses.
- Incorporate all current and future requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Act into existing and proposed policies.
- Consider amending the zoning ordinance to address possible sea level changes and develop appropriate use regulations and development standards such as increased shoreline setbacks.

***Policy VI-D:***

***Develop effective job training and placement programs through cooperation between county government, the public school system, vocational school, Rappahannock Community College and the business community***

A closer working relationship between the public and private sectors developed to address job training and placement will improve the match between what is being taught and the needs of employers. This will also provide a forum to enable rapid local response to changing needs, trends and technologies in education and the workplace.

Strategies:

- Recreate a workforce development committee comprised of affected organizations and interests to develop a closer working relationship between the public and private sectors.
- Sponsor events, seminars, courses and curricula designed to improve the match between what is being taught and the needs of employers and to enable rapid local response to changing needs, trends and technologies in education and the workplace.

***Policy VI-E:***

***Support programs encouraging and assisting entrepreneurs to move from employment to ownership in local business***

County government will work closely with state, regional and local organizations to assist small business and to assist entrepreneurs wishing to establish small businesses. The County will encourage retired business people in the community to become involved in these efforts. The County will also closely examine the feasibility of creating a business incubation facility within Lancaster County or proximity.

*Strategies:*

- Work closely with state, regional and local organizations to assist small business and to assist entrepreneurs wishing to establish small businesses.
- Encourage retired and active business people in the community to utilize their expertise in assisting small businesses and those interested in starting businesses.
- Examine the feasibility of creating a small business incubation facility in Lancaster County or proximity.

***Policy VI-F:***

***Promote and support existing industries, especially those engaged in seafood harvesting and processing, aquaculture, forestry and agriculture***

Employment in industries traditional to Lancaster County has declined significantly in the last two decades, while employment in services and retail trade has increased. Efforts will be made to develop the production of specialty and value added products that can restore these lost employment opportunities. Additionally, working with state and Federal agricultural agencies, action can be taken to improve the viability of the agriculture and seafood industries. Specifically, alternative crops (i.e. “truck farm” type crops) that yield a much higher dollar return per acre planted should be investigated. Other counties in Virginia, primarily near urban areas, realize a dollar return per acre that is more than ten times that of Lancaster farmers. Aquaculture, an industry ideally suited for this area, should be encouraged as well. An adequate supply of labor willing to work for the wages that can be paid will be the limitation in pursuing these efforts.

*Strategies:*

- Establish local and regional business networks to provide a base of support and cooperation for individual businesses.
- Promote agritourism and aquatourism in Lancaster County
- Coordinate and execute annual Business Appreciation Week events and activities.
- Establish and maintain an existing business and industry visitation program.
- Assist local businesses to develop new markets and to produce value added and specialty products.

***Policy VI-G:***

***Prevent unsightly strip development from occurring along Lancaster County roadways***

County government should develop policies and procedures to ensure that rampant, strip development does not occur. Studies should be performed to predict areas where future development is likely to fall into this pattern and expand the Highway Corridor Overlay District along these routes.

*Strategies:*

- Develop policies and procedures to prevent strip development while accommodating commercial and residential growth.

## **Economic Challenges**

One of the single biggest challenges facing the Lancaster County Government is the expansion and diversification of the economic base within the county. This will have to be done in a manner that preserves the rural character and excellent quality of life historically enjoyed by residents and visitors. By following the guidelines established in this plan, it is hoped that this challenge can be met.

In May 2000, Lancaster County was designated a joint enterprise zone by the State of Virginia. Other counties included in this zone are Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland as well as the towns of Kilmarnock and Warsaw. This designation makes available state funds to promote economic development in Lancaster and the other affected counties and towns. Funds will be utilized to provide financial incentives to businesses to locate in Lancaster County.

## **Planning Process**

In addition to land use issues, the County will improve the planning process itself, continually increasing opportunities for public participation in land use decision making and improving the link between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. The County will also seek better coordination on land use planning between the County and



the three towns.

## **Plan Implementation**

---

Lancaster County has limited planning resources and staff, and like all other jurisdictions, many demands for public funds. Nevertheless, with public input, the County will develop an implementation program for the Plan, with short-term, mid-term and long-term priorities. A Plan Advisory Committee should be created and charged with semi-annual or annual progress review and reports on the implementation program.

Lancaster County is fortunate to have a large number of citizens who are committed to ensuring the overall quality of life in the County over the future. The County will utilize this resource by creating various citizen task forces charged with assisting to implement various elements of the Plan. These task forces will include representation from all perspectives of the County.