

## Cumberland County Land Use Plan

### Introduction:

The purpose of a land use plan is to guide both the development and conservation of land. Land use is much more than the division of land. Rather, land use involves every aspect of daily life from where we live, where we work, where we relax and the transportation network we use to move between these places. Land use planning is a fundamental tool in determining where new businesses should locate, where housing should concentrate, and what infrastructure is needed to support local citizens' needs.

The Land Use Plan reviews the existing land use patterns and trends and proposes future land use categories and development patterns **for the approximately 192,000 acres of land in the county**. Land use planning is essential for Cumberland County as it experiences suburban-style growth pressures from the Richmond metropolitan area yet desires to retain a rural quality of life. The land use plan will be used to guide decisions regarding land use policies, procedures and code revisions by both elected officials and staff. The land use plan is not intended to halt growth and development but rather to manage it so that natural resources, such as farmland and forest, as well as taxpayer dollars, are not wasted. The land use plan is an opportunity to anticipate and address future challenges before problems arise.

The Planning Commission has held citizen meetings, hosted educational workshops and conducted citizen surveys by telephone to determine how the land use plan can best meet the needs and desires of local citizens. In the citizen survey, the majority of respondents did not feel that land development was happening too quickly. However, they did favor restricting the amount of land sold for both commercial and residential development, and concentrating development in order to preserve land and maintain rural character. In addition, citizens were eager to have new businesses, services and employment opportunities in the county. Thus, the majority sentiment illustrates a desire to maintain a rural quality of life while encouraging new businesses and services in specific areas. To that end, the land use plan is ultimately a balance between rural conservation, economic development and new growth.

As more and more farmland is lost each year to new development in urban and suburban areas, rural lands and rural ways of life are being lost. Statistics show that Cumberland County has 62,638 acres of land in working farms **and \_\_\_ acres of land in forestry**. In addition, farming and forestry are major forces in the local economy with \$28.3 million in agricultural receipts, \$25.7 million in livestock and poultry receipts, and over \$5.2 million in forestry.<sup>1</sup> (*Percentages to be added*)

The rural character and community found in Cumberland County involves both maintaining the rural economies—agriculture, forestry and local businesses—as well as a slower-paced and independent style of living. A rural area has clean air and water sources, wildlife, trees and fields, and the sights and sounds of tractors and farm animals. Narrow country roads, little artificial lighting, limited services and a sense of independence all characterize country life.

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<sup>1</sup> 2002 Census of Agriculture County Data, VASS County Summaries

Zoning district boundaries generally correspond to patterns of categories of land use shown on the future land use plan. The zoning ordinance is a primary tool for implementing the land use plan and map. In addition, individual zoning district requirements do not exactly reflect the description of the land use categories contained herein. However, decisions relating to the creation or amendment of zoning districts must consider the future land use plan and must support the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Existing Land Use:**

Cumberland County remains a predominantly rural county with a strong agricultural and forestal basis. However, development pressures from the Richmond and Farmville areas have the potential to rapidly alter the natural and built environment. Cumberland still retains a significant number of large parcels used for farming and forestry operations. Most of the development and land subdivision that has occurred to this point has been through by-right development. This means that most of the subdivision of land for residential use comes from the division of parent tracts (those parcels of land created prior to April 5, 1991) or through family divisions. In addition, much of the business development occurs as the by-right permitted uses, or through the application to conduct a business with a conditional use permit. The majority of the county is zoned agricultural with some areas zoned business and industrial. The Route 60 corridor is currently zoned Rural Residential (1000 feet on either side of the road) and permits residential, civic and some commercial uses. The current zoning map is shown as Map II.

Division of land and new construction is occurring throughout the county and is not concentrated in a single specific area. Many of the land divisions were and are two (2) acre cuts that are used for family divisions or parent tract divisions for residential purposes. In addition, many divisions result in parcels under ten (10) acres used as small farms or ranchettes. The more recent development that Cumberland has experienced is typical of many rural communities throughout the United States with suburban-style characteristics.

**Like all communities, Cumberland County has special features that make the community unique and give it a sense of place.** The magnitude, quality and characteristics of special features may vary from community to community but nearly always contribute to the economic and social viability of the community. Also, such special features often have an important bearing on the future economic and social growth potential of the community. **Cumberland County offers a multitude of special features that range from historic resources to long-established communities to recreational and natural resources. From the first call for independence issued by a governmental body, made on the steps of Effingham Tavern, to the many outdoor recreational opportunities, Cumberland has a unique sense of place and role in history. By creating an inventory of the special features, the County may create plans that are sensitive to what it has and what it wants to enhance. For example, the number of historic sites throughout the county will serve as the foundation for a historic preservation plan as well as heritage tourism activities.**

**Many of these special features are the reason why established residents remain and why new residents are drawn to the county.**

Cumberland County's special features and historic resources include the following:

**Special features map sites:**

*Transportation and Business*

1. Farmville Regional Airport
2. Riverside Industrial Park
3. Cumberland Courthouse Village
4. Farmville-Cumberland Business District
5. Cartersville Business Area
6. Stops on the Farmville Area Bus

*Recreational and Natural Resources*

7. Brookleigh Golf Club
8. Madison Ballfield
9. Bear Creek Lake State Park
10. Cumberland State Forest
11. James River
12. Appomattox River
13. Willis River
14. Cobbs Creek Reservoir (proposed)

*Government and Community Facilities*

15. Cumberland County Courthouse/County Government Complex
16. Randolph Volunteer Fire Department
17. Cumberland Volunteer Fire Department
18. Cumberland Rescue Squad
19. Cartersville Volunteer Fire Department
20. Cartersville Rescue Squad
21. Cumberland County Schools

*Historic/Residential Communities*

22. Cumberland Court House Village
23. Cartersville Historic District
24. Clinton Community
25. Hamilton Community
26. Hillcrest Community
27. Lakeside Village
28. Sunnyside Community
29. Tamworth Community
30. Guinea Mills Community

**Historic Resources map sites:**

*Historic Homes/Home Sites*

1. Clifton Home
2. Amphill Plantation
3. Foster Home
4. Morven Home
5. Needham Law School
6. Old Jordan Home site, with Concrete Mottoes
7. Jesse Thomas Homestead Site
8. Goshen
9. Mt. Elba
10. Rochelle
11. Bizarre Plantation (no longer extant)
12. Trenton
13. Oak Hill
14. Oakland

*Historic Store/Mill Sites*

15. Old Tamworth Post Office/Tamworth (Muddy Creek or Moon's) Mill
16. Flannagan's (Trice's) Mill
17. Trent's Mill
18. Trenton/Sports Lake Mill
19. Garrett Roller Mill
20. Ca Ira Warehouse/Store/Mill

*School/Educational Sites*

21. Bethlehem School
22. Rosenwald School sites (New Hope School, Pine Grove Elementary)
23. St. Paul's School House
24. Hamilton School
25. Cumberland Training Agricultural Building (now part of the Luther P. Jackson School)
26. Stops on the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail

*Historic Churches*

27. Grace Church
28. Fork of Willis Church
29. Browns Presbyterian Church
30. Center Presbyterian Church
31. Cartersville Baptist Church
32. Grove Methodist Church
33. Oakwood United Methodist Church
34. Thomas Chapel United Methodist Church

*Other Historical Sites*

35. High Bridge
36. Remains of old Cartersville Bridge (built in 1884)
37. Courthouse Green (Old Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Old Jail, Baber Law Office)
38. Confederate Cemetery
39. Oak Hill Cemetery (One tombstone, Charles Irving Thornton, has an epitaph written by Charles Dickens.)
40. Effingham Tavern (no longer extant)
41. Lithia Springs
42. Cartersville Historic District
43. Stops on the Route of Lee's Retreat

See Map III and IV, on the following pages, for identification of special features and historic resources in Cumberland County.

**Future Land Use:**

The future land use plan is based upon the concerns and interests of the citizens as well as sound planning principles. The purpose of the future land use plan is to guide decision-makers in land use changes as they relate to code amendments, new zoning district classifications, applications for change of zoning, economic development and other aspects of community planning. Future land use considers past and present land use and development trends to determine how to plan for the future.

The future land use plan seeks a way to balance new growth and development while maintaining rural character and viability in the county. The guiding principle to achieve this balance is to concentrate growth in specific areas known as designated growth areas. By channeling new development into these areas, rural lands and resources are not consumed at such a rapid rate. In addition, concentrating residents into growth areas will encourage businesses to locate in the county that need an established and concentrated population base.

Map V shows the proposed growth areas and entrance corridor overlay district. Figures \_\_ and \_\_ represent desired growth patterns as illustrated in Randall Arendt's *Rural by Design*. **The first figure represents an aerial perspective of creative development in a rural area. Development is not discouraged, yet it is done in a way that rural character and open space are retained while growth is concentrated. The second figure illustrates the range of subdivision choices that a developer has when dividing a 158 acre farm. Conventional subdivision patterns create lots between 3-5 acres and result in the loss of open space and rural character. Other options, such as clustering, emphasize a compatible and sensitive way to maintain farmland, forest and open space while permitting development in clustered, small lots. These images reflect the direction of growth and development that the County envisions in its long-term plans.**

**Land Use Categories**

The land use categories are intended to frame the concept for different types of land uses found in the county. The general land use categories listed below have specific characteristics yet combined they help to protect rural character and encourage sensitive growth and development. The future land use map illustrates the general locations of each land use category in the county. Thus, these categories will be used as a framework for code amendments that future zoning ordinance changes may be able to effectively help implement the land use plan.

### ***Rural/Agricultural Areas***

Recognizing that one of its richest assets is agricultural, forestal and rural lands, Cumberland wants to protect these areas and natural resources and to ensure that a rural quality of life is maintained. By limiting subdivisions and suburban style growth in these areas, agricultural and forestal production may continue as well as the conservation of natural and historic resources. Land conservation tools such as conservation easements, PDR programs and other tax programs, may be used to encourage minimal development in these areas. 55,110 acres are currently in land use. However, conservation subdivisions that provide 70% of the land area to be open space may be permitted and that feature cluster development such as in a hamlet.

### ***Growth Areas***

An important tool for preserving rural land and character is the establishment of designated growth areas. By studying where development and population growth has occurred in the past as well as considering existing and future infrastructure and services, certain areas of the county are ideal for future community development and provide a mix of both residential and economic development opportunities. Encouraging development in such specifically designated areas will limit sprawling, suburban-type, low-density development throughout the rural areas. Careful planning in the growth areas will provide needed goods and services, employment and increased tax revenues.

**The growth areas are ideal locations for planned unit developments (PUDs) and other forms of master planning. A PUD is defined in the Code of Virginia as “a form of development characterized by unified site design for a variety of housing types and densities, clustering of buildings, common open space, and a mix of building types and land uses in which project planning and density calculation are performed for the entire development rather than on an individual lot basis.” The review process for a PUD is typically more flexible than for traditional zoning in that, with a PUD, density can be calculated over the entire development instead of being calculated by individual lot. One type of PUD the County is considering is a planned retirement community. Given the increasing number of residents in Cumberland County that are over 50, and an expected influx of people due to the County’s proximity to Farmville, Charlottesville and Richmond, the need for senior-oriented services will only increase. This type of PUD presents an opportunity for Cumberland County to provide essential services while also creating new jobs, boosting the local economy and practicing smart growth.**

The growth areas will include a mix of uses and a variety of housing type, encouraging cluster development and higher densities. Such an area is where utilities, services, community facilities and businesses will be concentrated and where the transportation network will be expanded to create more connections. These areas will have a focus on good design that creates a sense of place and respects the existing architectural fabric. Within these growth areas will be varying intensity levels of development, as illustrated on the detail map of each area. Each growth area will permit the most intense development within an existing center within a primary corridor. This will create a core for each growth area.

Three growth areas have been identified: Cumberland Courthouse village, Cartersville and Farmville. Depending on the existing infrastructure and existing land use, appropriate densities and growth patterns will be determined for each of these areas. For example, the Cumberland Courthouse village will permit a higher density than the Cartersville area, and will serve as a commercial and mixed-use zone, serving as both a central core and gateway to the county. Each growth area may have its own master plan in the coming years to ensure that growth and development occur in an orderly, planned manner.

*Cartersville:* Located in the northern part of the county along the banks of the James River, Cartersville is a small historic village surrounded by farms and former plantations. The village of Cartersville is listed as a National Register Historic District. The area includes small businesses, churches and no public utilities. The growth area here will be used to enhance the existing village and services while protecting the farmland and watershed in the vicinity. Map VI illustrates this growth area.

*Cumberland Courthouse:* Cumberland Courthouse is a village area that is both historically and physically the heart of the county. At the crossroads of the two major roadways of the county, Route 45 and Route 60, this area has a great concentration of businesses, community services and citizens. The schools, county administration, county courthouse, private residences, the state park and forest, and several businesses are all located in this area. Cumberland Courthouse is served by public sewer and will offer limited public water by the end of 2006. Due to infrastructure and location, this area would be well suited to planned unit developments. Map VII illustrates this growth area.

*Farmville:* At the southern end of the county along Route 45 is the Town of Farmville. Proximity to Farmville has encouraged growth and development beyond the town limits. The area contains existing residential and commercial growth, as well as the county's industrial park. Creating a growth area around the town limits encourages new development in this area. The growth area here encompasses land adjacent to both Route 45 and Route 600 (Plank Road). This area is served by public sewer. Map VIII illustrates this growth area.

### ***Industrial Areas***

These areas will have a concentration of industry and heavy commercial businesses that may not be compatible with business and residential districts or mixed-use. These areas will be designated with careful consideration to transportation routes, infrastructure and impact on

the natural environment. Where possible, multiple industrial uses will be concentrated on the same or adjacent properties. The County will continue to look for areas that can serve as a hub of light industrial and commercial activities, such as near the Farmville Airport and in other areas that best meet the County's interests and goals. **One possible industrial land use is a proposed landfill, adjacent to the Route 60 corridor in the eastern end of the county.**

### *Recreational Areas*

Recreational areas are an important part of maintaining the rural quality of life and providing community gathering places. The County already has recreational areas adjacent to Bear Creek Lake State Park. Future recreational areas may include land surrounding the proposed reservoir as well as land adjacent to the James and Appomattox Rivers and the proposed High Bridge State Park along the former Norfolk Southern rail line. The objective of these areas will be to protect natural habitats while permitting sensitive use and development of the land and may include residential as well as businesses that offer related goods to the recreational areas, such as eateries and equipment rental businesses.

### *Overlay Districts*

In addition to the above-described land use categories, certain areas of the county are suited for overlay districts. An overlay district is one that is available as an option over an existing zoning district. For example, a rural area might have an overlay district on an entrance corridor to control design features such as landscaping, architectural form and materials, and sign height. Such a district allows a community to delineate its gateways and create a distinct sense of place on a primary corridor. Overlay areas will include existing and proposed historic districts and entrance corridor areas. Such overlay districts will have design guidelines and standards to ensure that new development is compatible with historic and natural resources. Specifically, the Route 60 corridor and the future Courthouse Historic District will have an Entrance Corridor Overlay District that will extend 500 feet on either side of Route 60.