

Augusta County Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027

Planning Policy Area/ Future Land Use Map and Summary of the Plan

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors
Augusta County, Virginia
April 25, 2007
As Amended January 28, 2009

What This Comprehensive Plan Is, and What It Is Not

The Augusta County Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027 is an update of the county's existing Comprehensive Plan which was adopted in 1994. Upon adoption, this new Plan replaces and supersedes the 1994 document. The Comprehensive Plan consists of formal goals, objectives, and policies which will guide the land use decision-making of county officials during the next 20 years. The Plan will be reviewed at least every five years and modified or updated as deemed appropriate by the Board of Supervisors.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a law or ordinance. It is a guide for land use decision making. It establishes the long term goals which the county seeks to achieve, and it establishes the policy guidelines for when, where, and how to provide public facilities, change zoning designations, and otherwise facilitate, coordinate, and regulate development. Some of the Plan's policies are implemented upon adoption of the Plan. Other policies are not implemented directly by the Plan, but rather will be implemented through future changes to the county's development regulations after adoption of the Plan.

The Planning Process

This Comprehensive Plan is the result of almost two years of work by county citizens, elected and appointed officials, staff, and consultants. At the outset of the planning process, a Steering Committee was appointed to represent the county and guide staff and consultants through the process, serving as a liaison to the citizens. The Steering Committee held almost 30 meetings between May 2005 and final adoption of the Plan. Additionally, three workshops were held to bring the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission together with the Steering Committee to discuss the Plan's vision, goals, and policies. The public was invited to attend all of these meetings.

The county also held nine public input meetings; one in October 2005, five in January 2006, and three in January 2007, and a public hearing in March 2007. There was significant public participation at each of these meetings, with a total of more than 1,800 citizens in attendance. A great deal of research and data collection by consultants and staff took place along the way, including a citizen survey on development issues distributed in the Summer of 2005, that received more than 1,500 responses.

Vision

While the original vision statement from 1994 still reflects the county's basic values and desires concerning its future, a new vision statement provides insight gained from more than a decade of implementing the original plan and a more focused view of the future. Thus, a narrative description of Augusta County 20 or more years in the future, that reflects the essential values of county citizens, as expressed by the county leaders working on their behalf, is:

- **The county's population and employment** will continue to steadily increase, but new growth will be located mainly in the designated Urban Service Areas, thereby preserving the county's agricultural industry and rural character.
- **Urban development** will be encouraged to be compact, pedestrian-oriented, interconnected with a network of streets, sidewalks and trails, and protective of natural resources. New neighborhoods will be places with beauty, identity and charm, which citizens are proud to call home. A blending of uses, housing types, densities and

costs will be available to the county's increasingly diverse population.

- **Agriculture** will continue to be the predominant land use in the county and a major part of the economy. The small amount of residential development built within agricultural areas will be incrementally added and very low density, thereby causing minimal disruption to agricultural activities.
- **The county's scenic beauty and natural environment** will be preserved, with farms, forests, mountains, rivers and streams providing the framework and context for development in the urban areas, and continuing to define the landscape in the rural areas.
- **The compact, interconnected pattern of new development** will allow the county to continue to provide high quality, efficient and cost-effective public services and facilities. These may include transportation improvements that maintain and improve safety, capacity and overall mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motor vehicles, while improving the overall quality of life in neighborhoods.

Planning Policy Areas

Planning Policy Areas are geographic areas designated in the Plan as appropriate for a particular range of future land uses and public facilities. The location and extent of these areas are based primarily upon the existing land use pattern, the location of public facilities and natural resources, and the expected demand for development. The Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map shows the locations of these Policy Areas.

The general purpose of designating geographic Planning Policy Areas is to provide a logical and predictable framework for implementing zoning and subdivision regulations and making cost-effective investments in public facilities and services. Additionally, the Policy Areas serve as an implementation tool for many of the policies identified in the Goals, Objectives, and Policies. Key objectives of the Policy Areas are to:

- Help set priorities for the location of public utilities so as to minimize public costs
- Designate appropriate areas for various types and densities of land uses so as to minimize conflicts between neighboring residents
- Ensure that an adequate total amount of land is designated for the full range of land uses needed to meet expected market demand

Policy Areas are not zoning districts. They are areas which will be eligible for different zoning districts depending on the suitability of the area for a specific purpose. Policy Areas are somewhat flexible and may be modified by the county as development and fiscal needs change. However, they will be most effective in achieving county goals if they are closely followed in making land use and capital decisions.

Urban Service Areas

Urban Service Areas are defined as areas which are appropriate locations for development of a full range of public and private land uses of urban character on public water and sewer in either the immediate or long term future. They include the areas of Fishersville, Stuarts Draft, Verona, Mt. Sidney, Weyers Cave, Jolivet, and Craigsville, among other locations. Urban Service Areas are priority locations for:

- Significant amounts of urban residential and employment growth
- Expansions of public water and sewer service
- Local and regional public facilities
- Most "one-of-a-kind" public facilities, such as hospitals

- Most industrial development – light, medium, and heavy, with adequate facilities and buffers
- Larger scale urban residential and business developments
- Larger scale mixed use developments, where different combinations of residential, business, and industrial uses will be found within a development

Community Development Areas

Community Development Areas are local community settlements which have existing public water or public sewer systems in place or which have relatively good potential for extensions of either of those utilities. These areas are appropriate locations for future low density, rural land uses based upon road access, the existing land use pattern, and proximity to existing public facilities and services, although they are planned to remain predominantly residential in character. Community Development Areas are priority locations for:

- Moderate amounts of small scale residential and employment growth at marginally higher densities than in the Rural Conservation Areas
- Limited expansions of public water or sewer service
- Local public facilities
- Small scale, low-intensity commercial and/or light industrial developments

Rural Conservation Areas

Rural Conservation Areas are areas which are substantially subdivided and/or developed with residential uses, which have no public water or sewer service and which have few existing intensive agricultural operations. They are therefore priority locations for moderate amounts of future rural residential development. Ideally, any development would be in the form of incremental additions to existing settlements. Rural Conservation Areas are priority locations for:

- Moderate amounts of low density rural residential development on individual wells and septic fields, including clustered development (although there are concerns about groundwater protection)
- Non-intensive agricultural and forestry activities

Agricultural Conservation Areas

Agricultural Conservation Areas are areas which have mainly farm or forest uses and have generally the lowest overall density of residential uses, have no public water or sewer service, and have most of the county's intensive agricultural operations. These areas are planned to remain in predominantly agricultural and forestal uses with very little additional residential development. Agricultural Conservation Areas are priority locations for:

- Minimal, incremental amounts of very low density rural residential development on individual wells and septic fields
- A full range of long term agricultural, forestry and natural resource industry activities, including intensive agricultural operations

Rural Communities

The designated Rural Communities include many of those existing local community settlements which function as cultural, historic, social or economic focal points for surrounding rural areas. While most do not have public water or sewer service and are therefore located in the Rural Conservation or Agricultural Conservation Areas, a few do have public services and are located in a Community Development Area. These areas are designated with a future land use of Rural Community on the Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map.

Summary of Land Use Policies

The four Planning Policy Areas each allocate a portion of the total future residential growth:

- The Urban Service Areas are planned to accommodate at least 80% of the total future residential growth.
- The Community Development Areas are planned to accommodate up to 10% of the total future residential growth.
- The Rural Conservation Areas are planned to accommodate up to 5% of the total future residential growth.
- The Agricultural Conservation Areas are planned to accommodate up to 5% of the total future residential growth.

Population estimates produced for this Plan indicate that approximately 17,700 new residents can be expected in the county by 2027. Given that, the 2000 Census estimates there are 2.56 persons per household in Augusta County. That means that the county will need to provide approximately 6,900 new housing units to accommodate those new residents. Should the persons per household rate continue to fall, even more housing units would be required.

If the recommendations of this Plan are fully implemented, the Urban Service and Community Development Areas should easily be able to accommodate 90% or more of those new housing units in developments of moderate to high density. Additional land has been placed in those categories in order to ensure that enough land is available for development at any one time, helping to make sure that land located in the Rural and Agricultural Conservation Areas remains affordable for residents interested in keeping their land in agricultural production.

The Plan balances the land designated for potential development by designating the remaining land areas to remain primarily in agricultural, forestal, and low density rural uses for the foreseeable future. The Plan's policies are aimed at increasing the efficiency of providing both public and private services, thereby minimizing the local tax burden and maximizing the economic base of the county.

Future Land Use Categories

The future land use categories function within the geographic areas defined by the Urban Service and Community Development Areas. They serve to identify the specific use and density that is proposed for a parcel. There are thirteen future land use categories identified by the Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map which were updated after completion of the Fishersville Small Area Plan in 2009 to coincide with suggested changes. Those areas include:

- **Industrial**, which may be for industrial uses of varying scale and scope
- **Business**, which may be for business uses of varying scale and scope
- **Public Use**, which identifies land owned by or utilized by a federal, state, or local government agency
- **Community Mixed Use**, which may include a variety of residential uses at a density of six to twelve dwelling units per acre and, on up to 40% of the total land area, retail and office uses and in some, but not all, cases industrial uses
- **Neighborhood Mixed Use**, which may include a variety of residential uses at a density of four to eight dwelling units per acre and convenience retail and office uses on up to 20 percent of the total land area
- **Multifamily Residential**, which may include residential buildings housing between nine and sixteen dwelling units per acre, as well as manufactured home developments
- **Single-Family Attached Residential**, which may include attached residential units like townhouses and duplexes at a density between four and eight dwelling units per acre; found only in the Urban Service Area
- **Medium Density Residential**, which may include detached residential units at a density between three and four dwelling units per acre

- **Low Density Residential**, which may include detached residential units at a density between one-half and one dwelling unit per acre; found only in the Community Development Area
- **Planned Residential**, which may include a variety of residential uses at a density of four to eight dwelling units per acre
- **Rural Community**, which may include an appropriate mix of uses that conform to the established development pattern in an identified Rural Community; found only in the Community Development Area
- **Urban Open Space**, which identifies land permanently set aside for open space uses such as conservation easements and county recreation areas
- **Flood Plain**, which includes lands identified by FEMA as prone to flooding in a 100-year flood event and therefore unsuitable for most land uses; while there is flood plain located outside the Urban Service and Community Development Areas, it is only noted in these areas on this map

Like the Planning Policy Areas, the future land use categories are not zoning classifications. Instead, they act to inform the decision making process on rezoning and development applications. Since the land located in the Rural and Agricultural Conservation Areas is expected to remain in agricultural and other rural uses, those Policy Areas do not have designated future land uses.

Summary of the Major Elements

Volume I:

Section I: Introduction and Summary

This section includes a brief summary of the Plan's recommendations.

Section II: Population Estimates

The updated population estimates were used as the official estimates for the Plan.

Section III: Thoroughfare Plan

The Thoroughfare Plan recommends ways in which the county can mitigate the transportation problems that are anticipated in the next 20 years. The strategies include making spot improvements, upgrading existing roads and creating a network of streets in development areas.

Section IV: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

This section contains the goals, objectives, and policies as well as a detailed description of each of the four Planning Policy Areas established by the Plan. Each goal represents an ideal, desired end-state for a particular community resource.

Section V: Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map

This is where the Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map can be found within the structure of the Plan.

Section VI: Implementation Strategy

The Implementation Strategy outlines tasks that need to be completed in order to implement policy recommendations, timeframe for completion of these tasks, and parties responsible for completing them.

Section VII: Annual Reviews and Scorecard

This section outlines the process that should be followed for reviewing and amending the Plan. The Annual Scorecard is designed to be the initial part of the annual review process, aiding elected and appointed officials, as well as staff, in determining whether the vision of this Plan is being implemented.

Section VIII: Capital Improvements Plan

The Capital Improvements Plan sets the framework for linking capital improvements with land use decisions. It provides a systematic approach to planning and financing the capital improvements that will be necessary to implement the policies of the Plan.

Volume 2:

Section IX: Existing Conditions Analysis

The Existing Conditions Analysis provides a snapshot of the current conditions of the county from a planning perspective.

Section X: Future Conditions Scenarios

The two scenarios presented in this section were developed to provide an opportunity to evaluate different planning strategies.

Section XI: Appendices

The Appendices include a variety of background information collected during the update process.

Summary of Recommendations

Overall

The majority of the recommendations of the Draft Plan are found in the Goals, Objectives, and Policies. The recommendations are organized according to subject matter. Some of the major recommendations are listed below. One overall recommendation is that the county amend the land development regulations in order to effectively implement the Plan.

Agriculture

- Provide a range of voluntary agricultural preservation options such as Ag/Forestal Districts, Purchase of Development Rights, and Conservation Easements

Economy

- Prepare a strategic plan for economic development which will make specific recommendations on retention, expansion, and recruitment of businesses and industries, incentives, training, and marketing strategies to ensure the strength of the local economy

Education

- Prepare a strategic plan for education which will look at the facilities and programs that will be needed to meet expected demands

General Government

- Ensure that all infrastructure improvements needed for increased density in the Urban Service and Community Development Areas and the agricultural preservation programs for the Rural and Agricultural Conservation Areas are equitably funded by all county residents

Historic Resources

- Continue taking steps to identify and preserve the county's historic resources

Housing

- Prepare a housing plan to study and make recommendations on the housing needs of the county

Land Use and Development

- Prepare small area plans similar to the Fishersville Small Area Plan for communities like Stuarts Draft and Weyers Cave that will allow for more detailed planning to take place in these growing areas
- Prepare Interstate interchange area plans that will allow for more detailed land use and transportation planning to take place at these key locations

Natural Resources

- Develop watershed-based stormwater plans for the Urban Service Areas
- Consider performance standards for natural resource preservation

Transportation

- Implement the recommendations of the Thoroughfare Plan
- Implement an interconnected, walkable road network where possible and make access management and spot improvements where needed

Utilities

- Develop a source water protection strategy