

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION AND VISION



## INTRODUCTION

The Spotsylvania County Comprehensive Plan presents a long range land use vision for the County. The Comprehensive Plan sets forth principles, goals, policies, and implementation techniques that will guide the development activity within the County and promote, preserve, and protect the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens. Specifically, the Plan provides data and analysis on land use, transportation, housing, natural and historic resources, and public facilities and utilities. The purpose of this document is not to regulate, but rather guide land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions. This guidance seeks to ensure continued economic and community vitality while ensuring necessary policies and infrastructure are in place to provide for the continuation of quality services to Spotsylvania’s residents and businesses.

The majority of the Comprehensive Plan’s policies focus on the next 20 years and provide guidance for development decisions. These policies can be amended as new information is available, or to address a change in circumstances, without straying from the basic vision and goals of the Plan. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan is not a static document and should be changed if deemed appropriate. Changes to the document can be achieved through a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The process entails public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The County has established a Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement to guide the overall direction of the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan updates, its Action Items, Goals, Objectives and Strategies. The Vision Statement is as follows:

### Vision Statement

***“Spotsylvania families will enjoy a community that remembers and respects its place in our nation’s history and builds on the principles of our founding fathers to provide freedom and prosperity through limited government, respect for property rights, low taxes and pro-business policies for the 21st Century.”***

### Legal Basis for the Plan

The County’s Planning Commission is responsible for preparing the elements of the Comprehensive Plan under the Virginia Code, Section 15.2-2223 which states in the pertinent parts:

“The local Planning Commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.” The Code states that the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to achieve “a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.”

The Comprehensive Plan establishes goals, objectives, policies and implementation techniques that will provide the tools to help the decision makers guide the County’s future development.



Section 15.2-2223 further states:

“The Comprehensive Plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvements and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned or changed in use as the case may be. As part of the Comprehensive Plan, each locality shall develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that may include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not limited to roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities.”

Section 15.2-2224 states in part that, “The Comprehensive Plan shall recommend methods of implementation and shall include a current map of the area covered by the Comprehensive Plan.”

### **Amendment Process**

Under Section 15.2-2229 the County Board of Supervisors may consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the document by which the County will evaluate rezoning and special use applications, public facility locations, and capital improvements for consistency with its development policies. If an application is determined to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan may be considered. The application will be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with the elements contained within the Plan.

The applicant should demonstrate that any change in land use designation or density/intensity:

- would benefit the public health, safety and welfare;
- is consistent with the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate Development Districts (i.e., Primary Settlement);
- will not be detrimental to uses of property in the immediate vicinity of the subject property;
- has merit and value for the community as a whole; and
- will result in benefits (fiscal, aesthetic, employment, etc.) that will outweigh any significant impact of the change.

### **Growth Rates and Projections**

In 1990, the U. S. Census Bureau indicated that the County population totaled 57,403. By 2000, the population had increased to 90,395. This represented a 57.5 percent increase since 1990 or an average annual growth rate of 4.6 percent. The Census Bureau reported the County population to be 122,397 in 2010, a 35.4 percent increase since 2000, making Spotsylvania County one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Per the 2020 US Census, recently released population data shows a County population of 140,032. This population figure represents a population increase of approximately 14.4% since 2010. This growth is principally due to the County’s location along Interstate 95 midway between Washington, D.C. and Richmond as well as the high quality of life available. Continued growth is



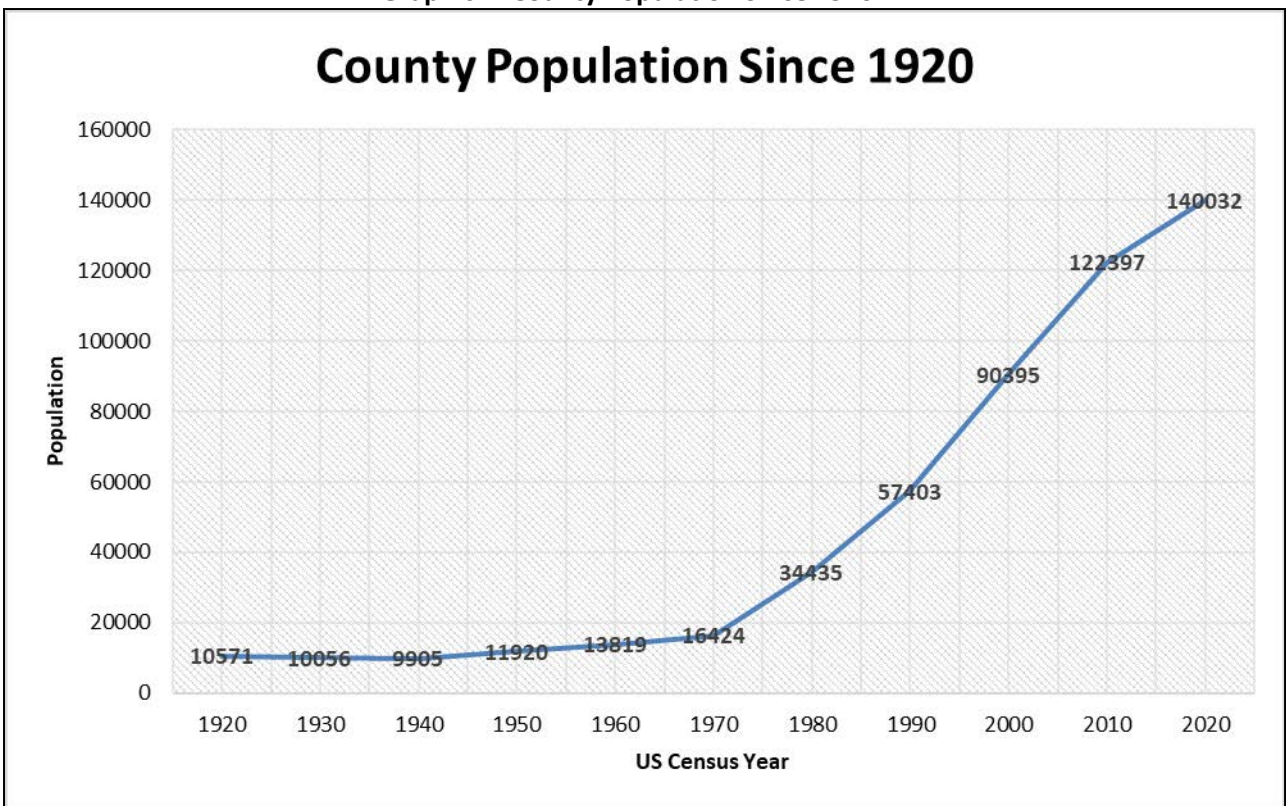
expected within Spotsylvania County and surrounding localities in the region. For Spotsylvania County, based on Weldon Cooper estimates, the population is expected to be 158,025 in 2030, and 177,369 by 2040 (the end of the Planning period).

The County growth rate has generally remained low over the last decade. Staff has included as reference the County's growth rate between 2011 and 2020 (most recent available). The County growth rate has stayed below 2% during this period based on Census estimates between 2011 and 2019. The recently released 2020 decennial census based on total count suggests a growth rate exceeding 2% over the past year. This may be suggestive of a recent increase in growth or prior years estimates being more conservative than actual growth over a longer period of time. Between the 2010 and 2020 decennial census, the County population grew approximately 14.4% or an average of 1.44% annually.

### Population and Growth Rate

Below you will find historic and recent population tables for Spotsylvania County. Annual growth rate tracking since 2011 will also be found below:

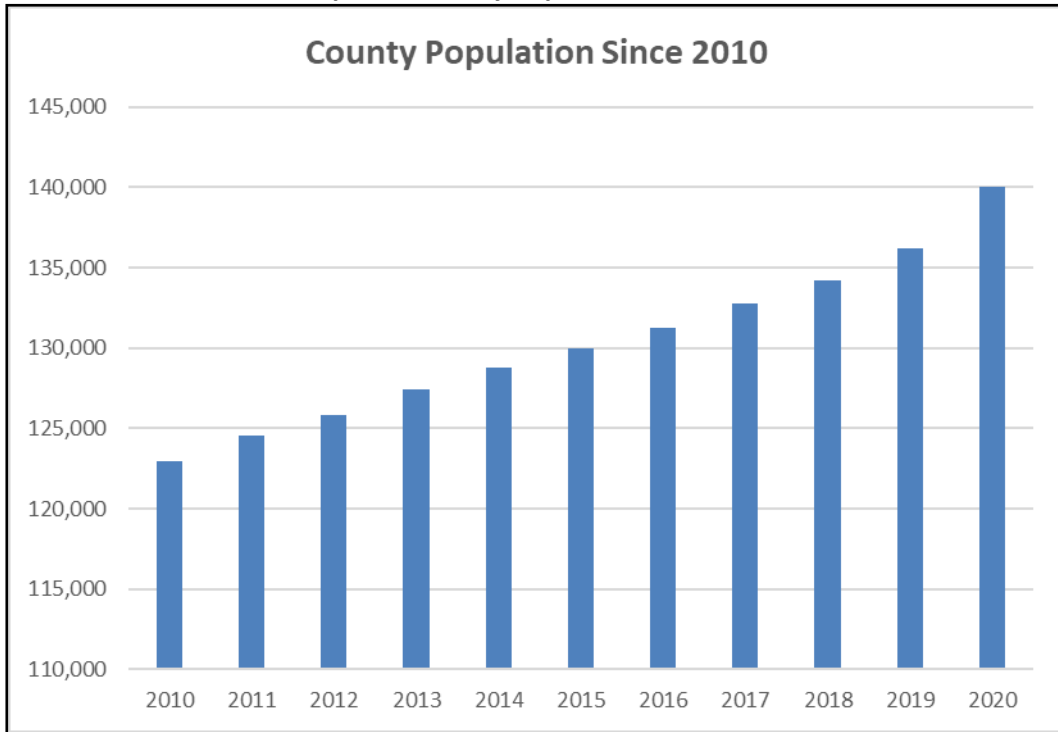
Graphic 1: County Population Since 1920



Source: Historic Decennial US Census.

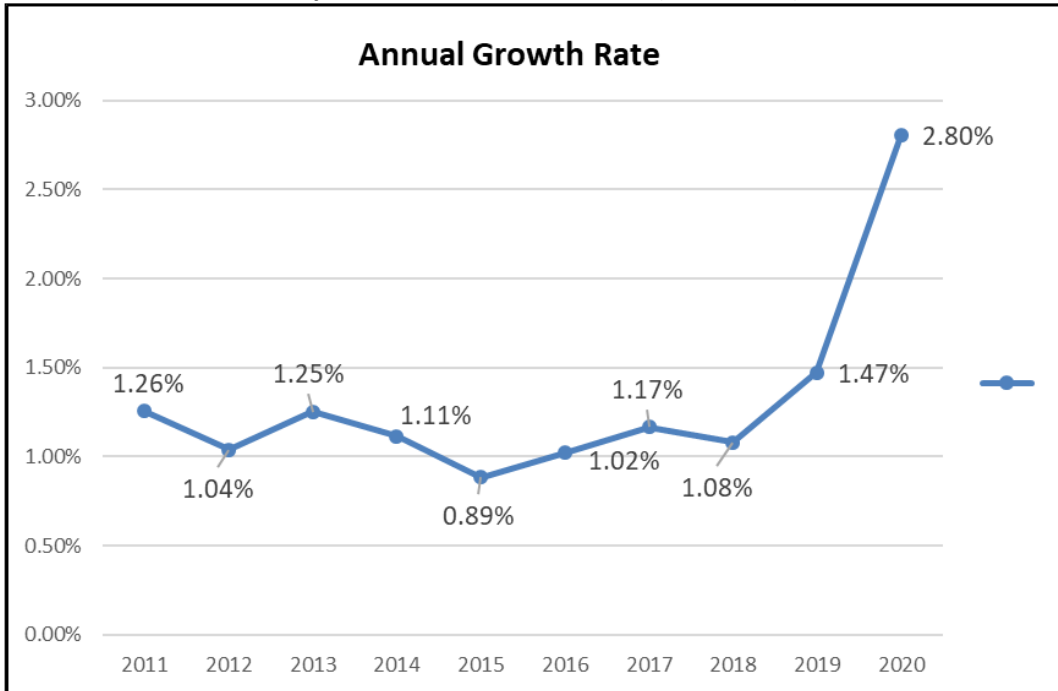


**Graphic 2: County Population Since 2010**



Source: 2011-'19 US Census Population Estimates (all figures as of July 1). 2010, 2020 US Decennial Census

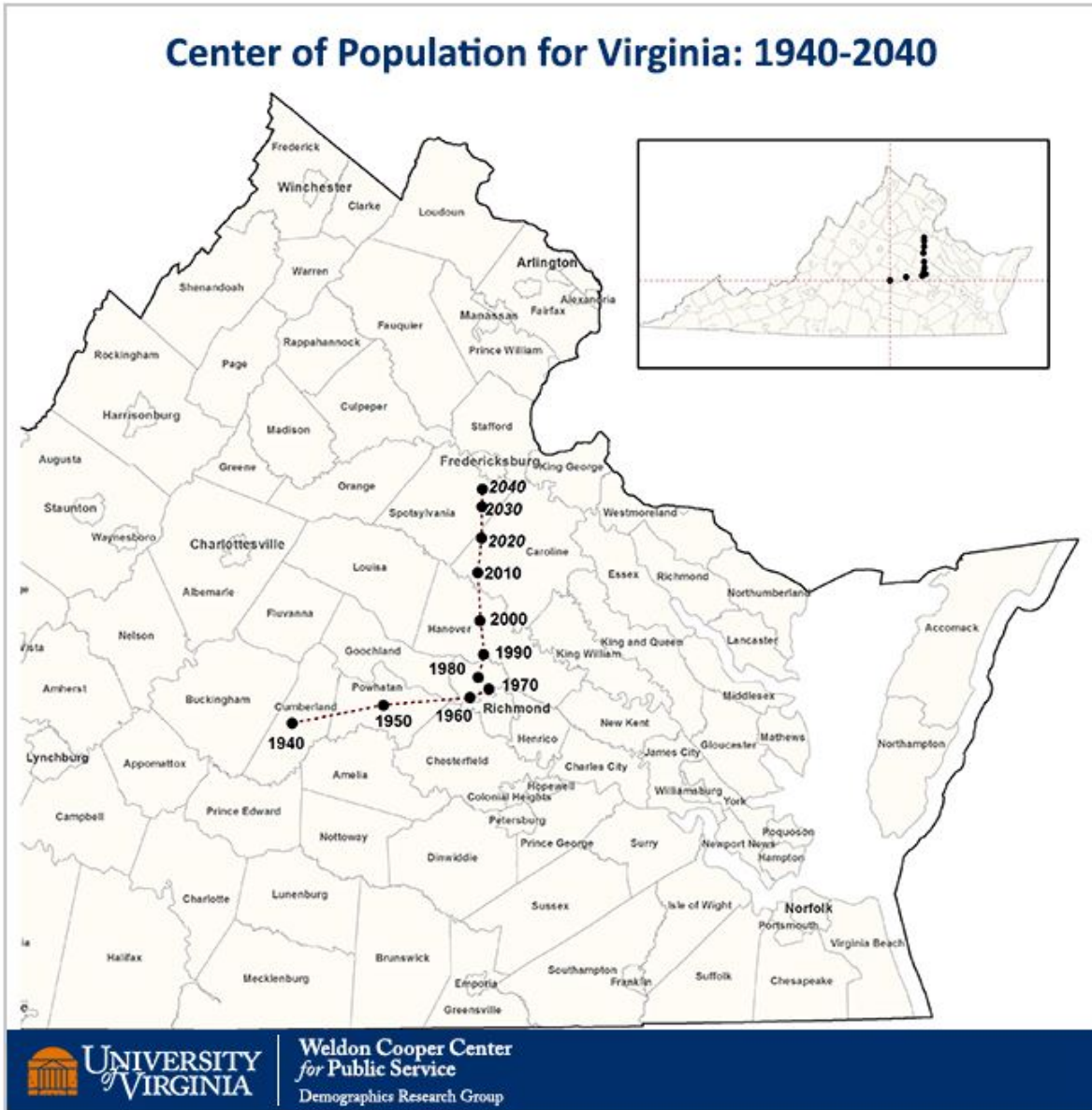
**Graphic 3: Annual Growth Rate (2011-2020)**



Source: 2011-'19 US Census Population Estimates (all figures as of July 1). 2020 US Decennial Census



Exhibit 1: Center of Population for Virginia: 1940-2040



Source: University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Demographics Research Group.

The center of population for Virginia is based on the distribution of population throughout the Commonwealth. It is not based on the geographical center of Virginia. Large population centers such as those in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads act to “pull” the population center away from areas where population is more dispersed and more rural. Higher growth areas with large populations have geographically shifted Virginia’s Center of population since 1940 to the north and east. A study by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service has mapped the Center of Population for Virginia since 1940. Throughout the Planning period of 2020-2040 (above map), Virginia’s population center will be located near the Spotsylvania and Caroline County lines in 2020, and within Spotsylvania County’s Primary Development Boundary in 2030 and 2040.



## Fiscal Climate

Ensuring fiscal sustainability is key to assuring successful, sustainable implementation and maintenance of portions of this Plan, particularly related to administration of programs and provision of level of service and capital facilities investments now and in the future.

The Code of Virginia requires that all general-purpose local governments publish a complete set of financial statements presented in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP) and audited in accordance with governmental auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Annual updates of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the County of Spotsylvania, Virginia is made available for review online [HERE](#).

Considering development within the County, the County has aspired to achieve a 70/30 mix of residential to commercial/industrial development (based on assessed value). There is interest in assuring fiscal stability and ability to fund public services for citizens of the community. Additionally, ensuring a mix of land uses helps diversify the local economy and may help “buffer” slowdowns that may impact one industry type or land use more than others. For instance, the retail sales climate has seen significant shifts over the last decade as online sales trends and home deliveries increase. Such trends have led and may continue to lead to commercial floor area vacancies and challenges to identify other potential users. The County aspires to avoid simply being a “bedroom community” for the Washington, DC and Northern Virginia areas where employment opportunities have been plentiful for local citizens. Current commuter trends have strained local roadways, especially during peak times (morning and afternoon rush). In order to achieve level of service goals for things like transportation, parks and recreation, schools, it is critical that revenue sources that can offset costs be identified. Having a vibrant commercial/industrial base helps offset some of these challenges.

The 70/30 mix is aspirational and is not expected to be wholly static due to economic development slowdowns and surges that can and do happen over time. Based on historical data (See Table 1 below) the County should seek gradual improvement overtime to help better realize the policy objective. Since 1995, Spotsylvania County’s residential to commercial/industrial mix (based on assessed value) has generally remained around 80/20.

**Table 1: Land Use Diversification Mix (Based on Assessed Value)**

Year	Percentage Residential Contribution (Based on Assessed Value)	Percentage Commercial/Industrial (Based on Assessed Value)
1995	83.32%	16.68%
2000	81.93%	18.07%
2005	84.75%	15.25%
2010	77.30%	22.70%
2015	80.36%	19.64%
2020	82.28%	17.72%

Source: Commissioner of Revenue, Assessment



## **Guiding Principles and Policies:**

### **A. Spotsylvania County is a “business friendly” community and local job creation is a priority.**

1. Encourage business investment in the County and promote the relocation of federal and state agencies to the County, providing more opportunities for Spotsylvania County residents to work in the County.
2. Support the installation of broadband internet, telecommunications infrastructure, microwave towers, fiber optics, and similar communications systems that meet an identified need for communications support for businesses throughout the County.
3. Encourage the rezoning of land to industrial/office uses in areas designated for Employment Center uses and the revitalization of older, underperforming commercial, office, and industrial developments.
4. Encourage innovative land uses such as renewable energy generation, data processing centers, and other industries leveraging technology in fields such as information technology, medicine, logistics, etc.
5. Promote gateway signage and landscaping to encourage visitation, business, and tourism and consider establishing an I-95 overlay that sets a development standard that promotes Spotsylvania County as an attractive, orderly, and business friendly location.
6. Review and modify the Subdivision Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance, and Design Standards Manual to ensure they implement the Comprehensive Plan and to streamline development review and approval procedures.

### **B. Spotsylvania County is fiscally sustainable.**

1. Achieve a 70/30 mix of residential to commercial/industrial development (based on assessed value), and the annual growth of the industrial and commercial tax base at a rate greater than 2%.
  - a. The County should identify priorities to achieve this goal through incentives, infrastructure improvements and extensions, etc.
  - b. Consider proactively rezoning certain areas to promote business development.
  - c. Diversify the non-residential tax base by encouraging a wide variety of businesses to locate in the County.
2. Development projects seeking increased residential density and/or non-residential intensity should address impacts that are specifically attributable to the proposed development (i.e. natural resources, historic resources, fiscal impacts, land use transitions, etc.).
  - a. Each development proposal should include sufficient information to fully evaluate its impacts.
3. Any development project seeking increased residential density compared to existing zoning and by-right potential or non-residential intensity should address the project’s impacts on the County’s public infrastructure consistent with the levels of service standards in this Plan and as allowed in the Code of Virginia.





- a. A rezoning proposal that is expected to result in demands in excess of current capacity or that would diminish level of service standards below the County’s standard for any public facility should mitigate its impacts to the extent allowed in the Code of Virginia.

Mitigation for projects may take the form of voluntary reasonable proffers that seek to address an impact that is specifically attributable to the proposed new development. Such proffers may include, but not be limited to:

- 1. Cash contributions toward capital improvements,
  - 2. Land dedication for public facility needs,
  - 3. Public facility improvements constructed by the applicant, or
  - 4. Other onsite or offsite proffers that the applicant deems reasonable and appropriate.
  - 5. Phasing of proffered improvements or other proffered mitigations.
- b. Development should be phased with the provision of public facilities to maintain acceptable levels of service as identified in the Public Facilities Chapter of the Spotsylvania County Comprehensive Plan. This can be achieved by proffering: 1. Cash or in kind improvements to advance the provision of the public facility 2. Proffer phasing.
  - c. The County should support onsite transportation alternatives such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect to neighboring properties.
  - d. Support the expansion of transit systems to link employment centers with residential areas and transportation nodes.
  - e. “Access management” in the form of systematic control of the location, spacing, design, and operation of entrances, median openings, traffic signals and interchanges should be utilized for arterial and major collector roads in order to minimize the vehicular traffic impacts of new development.
  - f. Active adult communities, with their diminished impact on County services, should be supported.
- 4. Preserve significant natural, historic, and cultural resources of the County to ensure the continued allure of the County as a tourism destination.
    - a. Seek cultural resource surveys, documentation of cemeteries, surveys of potential threatened or endangered species as part of the development review process where appropriate.
  - 5. Diversify and enhance the tourism opportunities in the County.

**C. Spotsylvania County is a family friendly community.**

- 1. The County should support a diverse housing inventory, providing a mix of units that can accommodate housing needs for all stages of life. This would involve a range of housing from affordable units for young families just entering the housing market such as condominiums, townhouses, and small single family homes to larger homes, manufactured homes, and active adult and assisted care facilities.



- a. Considering manufactured homes as a possible source of affordable housing, consistent with the Code of Virginia Sect. 15.2-2223.5, strategies support:
  - i. preservation of existing manufactured housing communities;
  - ii. creation of new manufactured home communities;
  - iii. creation of new manufactured home subdivisions.
2. The County should support mixed use communities with varied housing types, civic buildings, shops, and active and passive recreation opportunities.
3. Plan for and provide public facilities that meet the needs of the community as it grows.
4. Ensure that Spotsylvania County continues to provide excellent educational and recreational, and cultural opportunities.

**D. Agriculture and silviculture are valued components of Spotsylvania County's economy.**

1. Promote the expansion of Farmers Market(s).
2. Continue the Land Use Taxation Program.
3. Make greater utilization of Agricultural/Forestral Districts by way of: nutrient management planning; Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); urban Best Management Practices (BMP) programs; and other practices coordinated through the local Soil and Water Conservation District.
4. Identify and protect productive agricultural and silvicultural lands.
5. Do not extend public infrastructure (such as water and sewer) into productive agricultural and silvicultural lands beyond the limits of the Primary Development Boundary.
6. Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow landowners to preserve farm and forested areas while providing by-right lot yields.
7. Encourage complementary land uses such as agritourism, agribusiness, and renewable energy generation in agricultural and rural areas.

**E. Spotsylvania County values its environmental resources.**

1. Protect environmental quality by promoting a comprehensive approach to air and water quality management. Examples of approaches to accomplish this could include but are not limited to: green space and tree preservation, stream restoration, and low impact development (LID).
2. The County should support integration of required onsite drainage and stormwater features as an amenity or landscape feature that is incorporated into the overall design of the site.



**MAJOR INITIATIVES ACTION PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan contains many strategies. The Action Plan is not intended to repeat strategies identified in the Plan, but rather to identify those major projects that are required to ensure implementation of the Plan.

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Lead Department</u></b>	<b><u>Assisting Departments</u></b>
Continue to monitor economic (industry and construction activity), demographic, socio-economic, and housing trends locally to assess service and facility needs	Planning/Economic Development	Those with LOS
Continue to review the Zoning Ordinance and Design Standards Manual and recommend amendments to the Planning Commission that implement the Comprehensive Plan, including amendments that will streamline processes and improves outcomes	Planning	County Attorney, Zoning, and Economic Development
Continue to review the Subdivision Ordinance and recommend amendments to the Planning Commission that implement the Comprehensive Plan, including amendments that will streamline processes and improves outcomes	Planning	County Attorney
Update the Water and Sewer Master Plan	Utilities	Planning
Ensure annual update to the Capital Improvements Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan	Planning	
Continue to update the annual financial report to monitors the 70/30 residential to non-residential tax rate goal, population estimates, approved projects, and demographic shifts	Planning	Commissioner of Revenue
Develop and implement a financial plan for multi-modal transportation that identifies all existing and new funding mechanisms, including private funding initiatives and public/private partnerships	Planning/Transportation	Finance
Provide an annual report to the Board of Supervisors on current Level of Service	Planning	Those with LOS
Develop periodic reports comparing built projects to the assumptions used during the application process (i.e. traffic impacts, school age children, assessment values, etc.)	Planning	
Develop Special Area Plans for areas where unique development opportunities exist in the County	Planning	Economic Development
Continue to work with partners on regional planning issues such as hazard mitigation, transportation, environmental, land use.	Planning	Based on subject matter

