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## Community Character

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### GOAL, STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

#### Goals:

1. Acknowledge the County's responsibility to be good stewards of the land by preserving and enhancing the scenic, cultural, rural, farm, forestal, natural, and historic qualities that are essential to the County's rural and small town character, economic vitality, and overall quality of life.

#### Strategies & Actions:

- 1.1. Preserve and enhance entrance corridors and roads that promote the rural, natural, or historic character of the county.
  - 1.1.1 Ensure that development along Community Character Corridors protects the natural views of the area, promotes the historic, rural or unique character of the area, maintains greenbelt network, and establishes entrance corridors that enhance the experience of residents and visitors.
  - 1.1.2 Seek the designation of roads that serve as entrance corridors to the County or have historical or special significance as Virginia Byways. Develop specific guidelines to guide development that occurs along these roads and in these areas.
  - 1.1.3 Designate Community Character Corridors as wooded, urban and suburban, or open/agricultural. Create separate standards and tools for each of the different situations that may occur along Community Character Corridors, including standards and tools for protecting wooded areas, open/agricultural areas, scenic vistas, urban and suburban areas, and other areas as appropriate.
  - 1.1.4 Fund the underground utility escrow fund, with priority on Jamestown Road, John Tyler Highway, and portions of Richmond Road in Norge, Toano, and Lightfoot.
  - 1.1.5 Recognize existing residential subdivisions and commercial properties that make beautification improvements, especially along high profile corridors of the County.

- 1.1.6 Prioritize Community Character Corridors for the funding of the placement of existing utilities under ground, beautification through sustainable landscaping or building changes, and the acquisition of easements and properties. The highest priority roads would be entrance corridors or those in the proximity of historic landmarks.
  - 1.1.7 Monitor the status of billboards throughout the County and pursue action, where possible, to remove billboards; using all currently available methods; and explore and pursue any new methods as they become available.
  - 1.1.8 Pursue the expenditure of public funds and the support of citizens to improve the appearance of highly visible focal points of the County including, but not limited to, County entrance corridors, median areas, and undeveloped parcels fronting on thoroughfares. Continue to coordinate corridor enhancement efforts within the County and surrounding localities to achieve compatible, attractive corridors.
  - 1.1.9 Preserve the character of rural roads by identifying roads that should be preserved, and work with VDOT to maintain their rural character while providing an acceptable level of safety.
  - 1.1.10 Encourage development to occur in a manner that does not require changing the character of roads that enhance the small town, rural, and natural character of the County.
- 1.2 Maintain the unique heritage and identity of designated Community Character Areas within the County.
- 1.2.1 In New Town, continue to support the Design Review process. Encourage developers to apply the design guidelines developed for Toano and Five Forks to projects within these areas. Within the other Community Character Area boundaries, continue to establish development management and preservation techniques to meet specific historic preservation and community character needs. Encourage development patterns and building designs that maintain and reinforce the visual separation of Community Character Areas.
  - 1.2.2 Ensure that development along Community Character Areas protects the natural views of the area, promotes the historic, rural or unique character of the area, maintains greenbelt network, and establishes entrance corridors that enhance the experience of residents and visitors.
- 1.3 Preserve and enhance neighborhood and community appearance.
- 1.3.1 Encourage vistas and other scenic resources to be protected and encourage building, site, and road designs that enhance the natural landscape and preserve valued vistas. These designs should also minimize any potential negative impacts with regard to noise and light pollution and other quality of life concerns. Create voluntary guidelines that can also be used, when possible and applicable, through the special use permit and rezoning processes.

- 1.3.2 Adopt a conceptual plan process that provides early input from staff, and where appropriate, appointed or elected officials, to allow applicants to better assess critical issues with the goal of having a predictable and timely development plan approval process.
  - 1.3.3 Require illustrative drawings, including streetscapes, architecture, and perspectives as a binding component for appropriate rezoning and special use permit applications.
  - 1.3.4 Update the Community Appearance Guide prior to each Comprehensive Plan revision to include new examples of development and policy changes in the County.
  - 1.3.5 Ensure that all currently approved and new development blends carefully with the topography and surrounding vegetation, preserves unique formations, greenery, and scenic views, and uses sustainable plantings and building techniques.
  - 1.3.6 Require underground utilities in all new developments. Continue to require screening and buffering of existing above-ground utilities and their placement below ground.
  - 1.3.7 Encourage new developments to employ site and building design techniques that reduces their visual presence and scale. Design techniques include berms, buffers, landscaping, building designs that appear as collections of smaller buildings rather than a single large building, building colors and siting that cause large structures to blend in with the natural landscape, and low visibility parking locations.
  - 1.3.8 Design streets in commercial/retail centers and residential areas to better encourage street-level activity and a safe and attractive pedestrian environment by encouraging the use of tools such as traffic calming, pedestrian-scale amenities, gathering spaces, pedestrian plazas, street trees, pocket parks, and consolidated entrances with fewer curb cuts. Develop voluntary guidelines that can be used, through the special use permit or rezoning process.
  - 1.3.9 Encourage new development and structures to be consistent with the Development Standards in the Comprehensive Plan during the development review process.
  - 1.3.10 Encourage on-site lighting that enables the retention of the rural “dark sky” qualities of the County by promoting the use of cut-off and glare reducing fixtures and low intensity lighting. Adopt guidelines that identify recommended lighting designs that address a wide range of lighting applications.
- 1.4 Preserve and create open space and greenways.
- 1.4.1 Encourage development to occur within the Primary Service Area.
  - 1.4.2 Protect farming and forestry from conflicting activities by utilizing the available tools to permanently preserve open space throughout the County and encourage development to occur within the Primary Service Area.
    - 1.4.2.1 Implement the Greenway Master Plan in the development review process to take advantage of opportunities to provide open space and make connections where new development or redevelopment occurs.

1.4.2.2 Fund the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program and encourage participation by landowners. Consider acquiring land that is adjacent to other protected parcels to facilitate the creation of a green infrastructure.

1.4.2.3 Fund the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Greenspace Fund to acquire valuable open space lands.

1.5 Preserve existing vegetation as possible and appropriate during development.

1.5.1 Ensure adequate code enforcement for the preservation of specimen trees and landscaping during development as well as for the maintenance of landscape areas and buffers after development has occurred.

1.5.2 Consider adopting a Specimen Tree Policy that would enable developers who wish to preserve specimen trees that are not within required tree save areas, an option of gaining a waiver to delete another portion of the landscape requirements in order to preserve the more desirable existing trees.

1.5.3 Enforce existing tree preservation regulations and improve the methods the County uses during planning, pre-construction, construction and post-construction phases to make sure tree preservation measures are properly performed, resulting in healthier trees and buffers after development has occurred.

1.6 Identify and protect archaeological and historic sites.

1.6.1 Require archaeological studies for development proposals requiring legislative approval on lands identified by the James City County staff as warranting such study and require their recommendations to be implemented. In making the determination, staff will consult archaeological studies and seek the recommendation of representatives of the County Historical Commission or other qualified archaeologists if necessary.

1.6.2 Continue to update the document *"Preserving Our Hidden Heritage"*. Review the document prior to each Comprehensive Plan revision, and perform a complete revision every ten years to include new site surveys.

1.6.3 Pursue the preservation of historic and archaeological sites of the County by:

1.6.3.1 Enlisting the assistance of the County Historical Commission in updating the County inventory of historic places.

1.6.3.2 Register all eligible sites in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places with the property owner's consent.

1.6.3.3 Developing a priority list for nominating eligible properties for the state and federal registers.

1.6.3.4 Promoting voluntary techniques for preservation of these properties.

1.6.3.5 Investigating the feasibility of designating areas of the County as historic districts or historic corridors with architectural review.

- 1.6.3.6 Discourage the demolition or inappropriate use of cultural and historic resources through regulatory and voluntary techniques.
  - 1.6.3.7 Integrating the results of the Architectural Survey into the planning process upon the completion of the survey.
- 1.7 Keep pace with the changes in wireless communication technology to better enable providers to preserve existing community character while providing quality service.
- 1.7.1 Update the Wireless Communications Division of the zoning ordinance to the use of new and emerging wireless communication services.
  - 1.7.2 Explore the feasibility of developing a wireless communications master plan to facilitate access to reliable and state of the art wireless communication services including cellular, wifi, emergency band, and other internet related wireless communications.