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## Community Character

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### GOAL, STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

#### Goals:

1. Improve the overall appearance of the County's urban and rural environment, and enhance and preserve the County's scenic, cultural, rural, farm, forestal, natural, and historic resources as essential to the County's rural and historic character, economic vitality, and overall quality of life.

#### Strategies & Actions:

- 1.1 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.
  - 1.1.1 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.
  - 1.1.2 Continue to fund the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program and encourage participation by landowners.
  - 1.1.3 Continue to fund the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Greenspace Fund to acquire valuable open space lands.
- 1.2 Ensure that development is compatible in scale, size, and location to surrounding existing and planned development.
  - 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 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.
  - 1.2.3 Continue to encourage conceptual plans for all subdivisions and developments required to have an approved site plan.
  - 1.2.4 Continue to expect illustrative drawings, including streetscapes, architecture, and perspectives as a binding component of rezoning and special use permit applications.
  - 1.2.5 Continue to update the Community Appearance Guide regularly to include new examples of development and policy changes in the County.
- 1.3 Ensure that development along Community Character Corridors and 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.
- 1.3.1 Seek the designation of roads that serve as entrance corridors to the County or have historical or special significance as Virginia Byways. Develop specific standards and to guide development that occurs along these roads and in these areas.
  - 1.3.2 Continue to fund the underground utility escrow fund, with priority on Jamestown Road, John Tyler Highway, and portions of Richmond Road in Norge, Toano, and Lightfoot.
  - 1.3.3 Create a program to recognize existing residential subdivisions and commercial properties that make beautification improvements, especially along high profile corridors of the County.
  - 1.3.4 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.
  - 1.3.5 Continue to monitor the status of billboards throughout the County and pursue action, where possible, to improve or remove such billboards.
- 1.4 Encourage beautification of existing development to improve the overall visual quality of the County.
- 1.4.1 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.

- 1.4.2 Continue to require or encourage the planting of street/curbside trees, while ensuring flexibility for those subdivisions or developments which already provide adequate landscaping along streetscapes. Continue to review the placement of streetscape package locations for rezoning and special uses permits to ensure that there is no conflict with utilities, and are placed close enough to the right of way to shade the street and create a canopy as intended.
- 1.5 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.
  - 1.5.1 Continue to require underground utilities in all new developments. Continue to require screening and buffering of existing above-ground utilities and their placement below ground.
  - 1.5.2 Continue to enforce existing tree preservation regulations and improve the methods the County uses to make sure tree preservation measures are properly performed, resulting in healthier trees and buffers after development has occurred.
- 1.6 Preserve unique or distinctive natural and cultural resources occurring in areas to be developed in recognition of their irreplaceable character.
  - 1.6.1 Ensure adequate code enforcement for the preservation of specimen trees and landscaping. 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.
  - 1.6.2 Request archaeological studies for development proposals 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.
  - 1.6.3 Continue to update the document “Preserving Our Hidden Heritage” regularly to include new site surveys.
  - 1.6.4 Pursue the preservation of historic and archaeological sites of the County by:
    - 1.6.4.1 Enlisting the assistance of the County Historical Commission in updating the County inventory of historic places.
    - 1.6.4.2 Registering all eligible sites in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
    - 1.6.4.3 Developing a priority list for nominating eligible properties for the state and federal registers.
    - 1.6.4.4 Promoting voluntary techniques for preservation of these properties.
    - 1.6.4.5 Investigating the feasibility of designating areas of the County as historic districts or

historic corridors with architectural review.

1.6.4.6 Discouraging the demolition or inappropriate use of cultural and historic resources through existing regulations and voluntary techniques.

1.6.4.7 Integrating the results of the Architectural Survey into the planning process upon the completion of the survey.

1.6.5 Preserve the character of rural roads by:

- a. Identifying roads that should be preserved.
- b. Working with VDOT to maintain their rural character while providing an acceptable level of safety.

1.7 Maintain the small town, rural, and natural character of the County by:

1.7.1 Encourage nonresidential development to occur in compact mixed use or commercial centers which have their own internal road systems rather than spreading out along road corridors, and maintaining areas of natural open space and well buffered residential areas that visually and physically separate these centers.

1.7.2 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.

- 1.7.3 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.
  - 1.7.4 Encourage new development and structures to be consistent with the Development Standards in the Comprehensive Plan during the development review process.
  - 1.7.5 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.
- 1.8 Keep pace with the changes in wireless communication technology to better enable providers to preserve existing community character while providing quality service.
- 1.8.1 Consider revising the Wireless Communications Division of the zoning ordinance to encourage use of new communication technologies that minimize visual impacts and improve service.
  - 1.8.2 Consider facilitating a study and master plan of existing wireless communication facilities, potential new sites, and the best available technology needed to serve the entire county