

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Introduction

James City County's community character is often described as "historic," "rural," and "small town." Key components include the natural topography; large wooded areas of tall deciduous forests; open vistas across ravines, wetlands, and water bodies; relatively low traffic volumes; scenic roads; and small scale, low intensity development. Places such as Norge, Toano, Five Forks, and Jamestown bring to mind separate, identifiable areas of the County. However, this small town feel and sense of place has been challenged by the growth of the past 20 years, including an evolution to more urban and suburban landscapes.

Modern development can change a locality's character in a positive or negative way depending on the manner in which the growth occurs. Factors such as architectural style and massing, streetscape, buffers, scale, and accessibility can influence whether designs are distinctive and build the community's character, or lack authenticity and are indistinguishable from those found anywhere else in America. The County continues to encourage growth to occur inside the Primary Service Area (PSA), and has stricter requirements for developments outside of the PSA. This is an important tool in preserving our rural lands and well as ensuring that development inside the PSA is in keeping with the existing community and preserves the elements of our unique community character.

The character of James City County is important to its citizens and business community members alike, and has contributed to the County's attractiveness and growth through the years. The changing nature of the area and its impact on the quality of life remains a concern as noted in the Virginia Tech Citizen Survey. In addition, the Business Climate Task Force report concluded, "It is the quality and community uniqueness that provides James City County its competitive edge." In recognition of the importance and value of community character, the County has taken many positive steps over the years toward shaping future development and continues to be sensitive to the many characteristics that already exist. The methods that the County has at its disposal influence not only the appearance of the community, but also the way the community functions and the experiences of visitors, citizens, and those who do business in the County.

Community Character Corridors and Other Roads

Community Character Corridors (CCCs) are roads in the County that were previously designated as greenbelt roads, described in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan as entrance corridors and roads which promoted the rural, natural, or historic character of the County. In 1997 they were adopted as Community Character Corridors and have played an instrumental role in helping to preserve the original character of these roads. More attention has been given to the roads which are considered to be entrance corridors because they set the important first impression that many visitors have of the area.

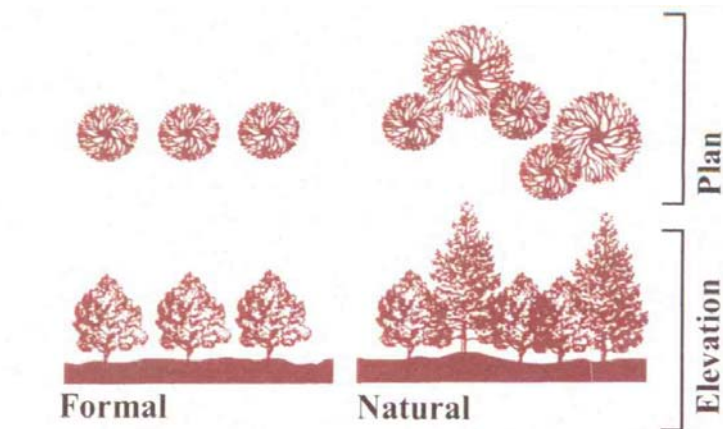
In the past, the community has made conscious decisions to pursue protections beyond those afforded by the CCC designation, such as attempting to maintain certain CCC's as two-lane roads through alternatives to widening (for example, new connector roads, decreasing traffic from development, or accepting lower levels of service).

Types of Community Character Corridors and Guidelines

Since the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, each plan has identified the following types of CCCs and their corresponding goals. Designating Community Character Corridors throughout the County as wooded, urban and suburban, or open/agricultural will define standards for how corridor buffers are to be treated during development. Having these designations will give developers and citizens a better understanding of how the County intends to create design elements to preserve the unique community character along these key corridors throughout the County.

To provide the most effective immediate buffer, existing plant material should be maintained and supplemented with a mix of small trees and shrubs that are both evergreen and deciduous and preferably native. Planting should occur in a staggered pattern, with the smaller under story plant material defining the edges of the existing groupings of material. New buffers can also be successfully planted in a more natural design, especially when the buffer might be very wide and the developer wants to reduce maintenance costs associated with a manicured area.

In urban and suburban CCCs that do not have existing vegetation, it may be beneficial to take a more formal approach to the buffer design. Trees and shrubs can be planted in rows or groupings that effectively screen as a group. These buffers are more groomed and require higher maintenance.



Examples of formal and natural landscape treatments

The three types of buffer treatments and their corresponding goals are listed below.

Suburban and Urban CCC

A suburban or urban CCC is characterized as an area that has moderate to high traffic volumes, moderate to high levels of existing or planned commercial or moderate-density residential uses, and may contain some natural screening buffers along roads. The objective of these CCCs is to ensure that James City County retains its unique character. The predominant visual character of the suburban CCC should be the built environment and natural landscaping, with parking and other auto-related areas clearly a secondary component of the street scape. In urban CCCs, landscaping should be more formal and the built environment and pedestrian and other streetscape amenities are dominant. Off-street parking should be a minor part of the streetscape. Development in urban and suburban CCCs should not replicate standardized designs commonly found in other communities, but rather reflect nearby historic structures, a

sensitivity to the history of the County in general, and an emphasis on innovative design solutions. The scale and placement of buildings in relation to each other, the street, and parking areas should be compatible with the character. In these areas, the CCC designation would provide enhanced landscaping, preservation of specimen trees and shrubs, berming, and other desirable design elements which complement and enhance the visual quality of the urban corridor

Wooded CCC

A wooded CCC is characterized as an area that has natural wooded areas and vegetation along the road, low to moderate traffic volumes, and suburban or rural development patterns with minimal existing or planned commercial development. In these areas, the main objective of the CCC designation should be to fully screen development from the adjacent roadway by retention and enhancement of existing vegetation along the full width of the buffer. The intended effects would be to protect development from the impacts of traffic, to preserve open space and animal habitats, and to maintain the wooded and natural character of the County.

Open/Agricultural CCC

An open/agricultural CCC is characterized as an area that is located primarily in rural areas where farming and forestal activities are predominant or are sought to be preserved. In these areas, the objective of the CCC designation is to preserve the views and integrity of farm fields and natural open spaces so that they remain dominant visual features.

Designated Community Character Corridors

The following roads are designated as CCCs:

- ◆ Greensprings Road
- ◆ Monticello Avenue
- ◆ Jamestown Road
- ◆ John Tyler Highway
- ◆ Ironbound Road*
- ◆ Centerville Road
- ◆ Longhill Road
- ◆ Longhill Connector Road
- ◆ Forge Road
- ◆ Richmond Road (Route 60) from the New Kent County Line to Anderson's Corner
- ◆ Pocahontas Trail (Route 60) south of Route 199 to the Newport News border
- ◆ Barhamsville Road (Route 30) from New Kent County Line to Anderson's Corner.
- ◆ Richmond Road (Route 60) from Anderson's Corner to the Williamsburg City Line
- ◆ Colonial Parkway
- ◆ Route 199
- ◆ News Road
- ◆ Riverview Road from Croaker Road to the entrance of York River State Park
- ◆ Sandy Bay Road from Ironbound Road to Jamestown Road

*A portion of Ironbound Road from Strawberry Plains Road to News Road, which was previously designated, has been removed as a Community Character Corridor.

Rural Roads

A number of secondary roads both inside and outside the Primary Service Area (PSA) have a distinct rural character. These roads are characterized by pavement widths typically less than 20 feet, limited sight distances, narrow shoulders, and in many instances, tree canopies that extend over the pavement. Such roads play a major role in preserving the rural character of the

County. Some need safety improvements while others are impacted by traffic volumes greater than their intended capabilities. The County works with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to make needed improvements through the Secondary Six Year Improvement Plan (SSYIP) in a manner that retains the rural character of these roads.

Community Character Areas

Existing Community Character Areas

During the 1997 Comprehensive Plan process, certain areas of James City County were confirmed as important places during the public participation process. Guidelines for future development were developed for these areas. The following areas are identified as Community Character Areas (CCAs):

- ◆ Toano
- ◆ Norge
- ◆ Jamestown Island-Greensprings Road
- ◆ New Town
- ◆ Five Forks

Toano

Toano still retains much of the “village” character that led to its designation as a Community Character Area. Although some new development has occurred, the character is still dominated by buildings constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century. These buildings have shallow setbacks and many are two-story, creating a more pedestrian-oriented storefront environment than any other area in the County. Toano has also retained a fairly clear visual separation from more recent development along Richmond Road, with visitors enjoying a distinct sense of arrival from both the east and the west.

In September 2005, the Board of Supervisors created the Toano Community Character Area Study Committee in order to listen to the views of County citizens, particularly those who live and work in Toano. The committee’s purpose was to recommend principles and guidelines that highlight and honor Toano’s history, encourage growth that enhances the area’s character, and improve streetscapes and a pedestrian-friendly town center. The guidelines created by the study were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in February 2006. The design guidelines highlight improvements and plans for the Toano area, and give guidance for all future developments inside the Community Character Area. They have also been the basis for streetscape improvements, and through public and private partnerships improvements have been made to median landscaping, signage, and future sidewalk improvements are planned. For parcels fronting on Richmond Road (Route 60) with a designation of Moderate Density Residential on Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map, the design guidelines encourage a mix of commercial and residential uses, but predominantly neighborhood commercial on the Richmond Road frontage.

Norge

In contrast to Toano, Norge is more impacted by recent commercial development along Richmond Road and has not been the subject of a subarea study. While Norge continues to have a unique and very identifiable residential component located off Richmond Road, and some pedestrian-oriented storefronts, the early twentieth century “village” character of its

business and residential areas along Richmond Road has been visually impacted by automobile-oriented infill development. Also, newer development from the east has substantially blurred the distinction between Norge and Lightfoot. Voluntary efforts by both residents and businesses have helped retain the visual attractiveness of Norge in some areas; however, a subarea study with guidelines similar to Toano may be beneficial in providing a more comprehensive evaluation of how to minimize impacts to the historic village character of Norge. Outlined below are specific design standards intended to guide future development and redevelopment in Norge:

- ◆ The architecture, scale, materials, spacing, and color of buildings should complement the historic character of the area.
- ◆ Building setbacks should be consistent with nearby historic buildings and structures.
- ◆ Where possible, parking should be located to the rear of buildings. Parking should be screened from roadway and adjacent properties.
- ◆ Shared access and parking should be pursued before constructing new access breaks and parking facilities.
- ◆ Existing specimen trees and shrubs should be preserved to the extent possible.
- ◆ New landscaping should be of a type, size, and scale to complement and enhance the building and site design. Native plant and tree species are encouraged.
- ◆ Signage should be of a scale, size, color, and materials to complement the historic character of the area.
- ◆ Pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation should be promoted through the provision of sidewalks, bike racks, benches, cross-walks, street trees, and other design features which help accomplish this goal.
- ◆ Mixed use development which provides residential, commercial, and office uses in close proximity is encouraged.
- ◆ Efforts to maintain and reinforce the boundaries of Norge and Toano through open space and site design measures are strongly encouraged.

Jamestown Island-Greensprings Road

The County has an opportunity to preserve additional open space at the recently acquired Jamestown Beach Campground and Jamestown Yacht Basin located on Jamestown Road along the James River and Powhatan Creek. These two parcels, and the Chickahominy Riverfront Park, are being evaluated by a master planning project called Shaping Our Shores. . The master plan will address the long-range physical development, use, and stewardship of these sites over the next 20 years. It will present a vision for the physical environment that promotes and supports the values and goals of James City County citizens. Outlined below are specific design standards intended to guide future development and redevelopment in Jamestown:

- ◆ The architecture, scale, materials, and color of buildings should be complementary and reflect the historic character of James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and Colonial Williamsburg.
- ◆ All development should be well-screened from Jamestown Road.
- ◆ Parking should be located to the rear of buildings and should be well landscaped with shrubs and street trees.
- ◆ All utilities should be placed underground.
- ◆ Existing specimen trees and shrubs should be preserved to the extent possible.
- ◆ New landscaping should be of a type, size, and scale to complement and enhance the building and site design. Native plant and tree species are encouraged.

- ◆ Signage should be of a scale, size, color, and materials to complement the architecture and scale of buildings. Low signs with subdued colors are encouraged.
- ◆ Pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation should be promoted through the provision of sidewalks, bike racks, benches, and other design features which help accomplish this goal.
- ◆ Natural woodland, open space, and waterfront vistas should be the predominant features.
- ◆ Public access to the waterfront should be an integral feature of new development but carefully designed to limit the visual impact on views from the river.

New Town

In 1997 the Board of Supervisors adopted design guidelines for New Town and has amended them several times as new sections have been developed. The document was prepared by Cooper, Robertson & Partners, and the New Town Design Review Board was created to review all development plans within New Town for compliance with the guidelines. Both the guidelines and master plan establish standards for different areas of New Town. Thus far more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial space and over 1,300 residential units have been approved for New Town, much of which has been built or is in the process of being built. Many of the original design features are now taking shape, and the New Town Design Review Board has been instrumental in adhering to the design guidelines, thus ensuring that the original concept is realized.

Five Forks

Five Forks is an area that retains elements of a village character. Bounded to the east by Mill Creek and to the west by the Powhatan Creek, Five Forks is within a significant natural area. Five Forks is generally understood to encompass the area that lies within three-quarters of a mile of the intersection of John Tyler Highway and Ironbound Road. This area has grown and changed and, as a result, the Board of Supervisors created the Five Forks Area Study Committee in June 2004 to listen to the views of County citizens, particularly those who live and work in Five Forks. The committee's purpose was to recommend principles that preserve and build upon the many positive qualities of Five Forks. These principles seek to protect the watersheds and safeguard the village character of the area. The principles address residential growth, commercial development, traffic concerns, and alternative transportation, and called for the creation of the Five Forks Community Character Area to incorporate design standards for future development. In August 2004, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Primary Principles for the Five Forks Area. These principles have been applied in special use permit and rezoning cases since their adoption and as a result, improvements to the road, bike lanes, buffer and green space preservation have been accomplished.

Neighborhood and Community Appearance

While market conditions greatly determine the type of housing and commercial product offered to citizens, the County can influence the design and appearance of the community to meet the ideals expressed by citizens. Public input shows that many residents value the history and culture of the area, as well as the small-town and friendly atmosphere the County offers. Elements of development can reflect these characteristics that help make James City County a special place for its residents. They are addressed in many ways, from suggestions and requirements for new development to expectations for public plans and improvements.

Elements of Neighborhood and Community Appearance in Development

- ◆ The preservation of trees and shrubs during development helps new development blend in with older, existing areas of the community. To preserve existing trees, the Zoning Ordinance requires that certain buffers remain undisturbed.
- ◆ Street trees provide a unifying quality tied into a tradition in older neighborhoods. Large shade trees that canopy over the road and sidewalk assist in making the scale more inviting to pedestrians. The County Streetscape Policy is commonly added as a condition for special use permits or offered as a rezoning proffer for subdivisions.
- ◆ By de-emphasizing the automobile, street level activities are encouraged and neighbors have the opportunity to interact more often.
- ◆ Prominently placed landmarks, such as public facilities and open spaces, can contribute to the cohesiveness of a community and a sense of place.
- ◆ Accessory structures and infill development of residences and commercial development can be designed to assist in keeping a small-town character.
- ◆ The County should encourage commercial and mixed-use development to utilize shared parking, especially when the peak times of the uses are different
- ◆ The adaptive re-use of existing structures helps maintain the existing character of the community. For new development, building styles that complement the historic and cultural character promote the traditional feel of the community.

County Policy and Beautification

The County employs techniques other than development review for beautification. For instance, the County currently has a policy against new billboards, but does not have a single way of removing existing billboards. Since 2006, the County, in cooperation with landowners, business owners, and the Virginia Department of Transportation, has assisted in the removal of more than 15 of these billboards along John Tyler Highway, Richmond Road, and Merrimac Trail.

Also in years past, the County has designated funds toward the beautification of high profile corridors, intersections, and public areas in the County, including planting and maintenance. Planting has been installed along Route 199, Monticello Avenue, Richmond Road, Jamestown Road, Anderson's Corner, as well as many other areas. In addition to landscaping, James City County funded the replacement of the standard VDOT signs for route names and route numbers along Route 199 and adjacent roads with signs more complementary to the character of the area. In 2006 the County installed a new wayfinding system in anticipation of the Jamestown 400th anniversary commemoration. It was a regional effort to make the entire Historic Triangle easier to navigate, with signage that was easier to read and more aesthetically pleasing than the standard VDOT signs.

Historic Triangle Corridor Enhancement Program

The Historic Triangle Corridor Enhancement Program, a public-private partnership between the City of Williamsburg, James City County, York County, VDOT, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance, the Virginia Cooperative Extension and Master Gardeners, the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors, and led by the Williamsburg Land Conservancy, has worked together for the past four years to implement a program to enhance the major entrance corridors in the region. Jamestown Road was the first corridor selected, and businesses and neighborhoods along the road have worked hard to improve its appearance. Much of the

work done to date has centered on the improvement of landscape plantings and maintenance, but improved signage, curbing, and building facades have all been part of the program. The Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance will lead the next project along Pocahontas Trail from York Road to just beyond Busch Gardens. This endeavor involves property in all three jurisdictions in the Historic Triangle, providing an opportunity to work together across jurisdictional lines. Carlton Abbott Design Firm is in the process of producing the conceptual master plan while consulting with the various stakeholders located along the corridor.

Community Appearance Guide

The County has developed the *Community Appearance Guide* to offer visual examples of suggested design elements. Last updated in August 2007, the guide should be updated prior to each comprehensive plan revision. During plan review, conceptual plans allow staff to become involved in the design process earlier to offer suggestions on site layout and building style and material. Adherence to the suggestions is voluntary; however, the rezoning and special use permit processes offer good opportunities for the County to influence site and building design in a regulatory capacity.

Open Space

The preservation of open and green space within James City County is a continuing priority of residents, as evidenced by the responses to the 2001 and 2007 citizen surveys and comments from the Community Conversations. James City County has defined open space as any undeveloped or minimally developed land that is either left in its natural state or set aside as part of a development proposal. The land may be used for active or passive recreation or simply appreciated for its scenic or aesthetic value. Public input has shown that citizens were interested in preserving and utilizing open space when possible.

Mechanisms for Preserving Open Space

James City County has several mechanisms in place for preserving open space:

- ◆ *The Greenspace Acquisition Fund* was established in 1997 and designates one penny of the real estate property tax towards a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) fund for the County to acquire greenspace. Bonds are used to fund the acquisition of land for open space and land conservation purposes. Since the establishment of the fund, a number of parcels and easements have been acquired, including ones along Forge Road, John Tyler Highway (Route 5), and Jamestown Road. Also, James City County has acquired easements or titles to several large parcels, including Mainland Farm, the Warhill tract, Chickahominy Riverfront Park, Whitehall Tavern, and Jamestown Yacht Basin and Campground.
- ◆ *The Greenway Master Plan* was adopted in 2002 by the Board of Supervisors. The Division of Parks and Recreation manages the plan with the goal of balancing environmental protection with the need for recreational amenities. Greenways are networks of natural open space corridors that connect neighborhoods, parks, and schools to areas of natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and historic significance. Greenways are often critical for the natural migration, sheltering, and survival of many wildlife species.

- ◆ *The Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program* was established in James City County in 2001. The program is voluntary for landowners interested in preserving their property and allows landowners to enter into agreements to sell the development potential of qualifying property to the County while maintaining the right to continue to own and use the property. Property in the PDR program is put into a conservation easement that places permanent limits on future development of the property and binds all subsequent owners of the property. To date more than 460 acres have been protected through this program.
- ◆ *The Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) program* in James City County is a formal method of assembling tracts of land into large, contiguous parcels for the purpose of short- or long-term conservation. Terms can vary from four to ten years at the discretion of the landowner and landowners are offered reduced tax assessments based on land use values. Currently there are almost 18,000 acres in the AFD program. The AFD program does not prohibit activities that have the potential to negatively impact the County's visual quality (i.e., timbering).
- ◆ *The Residential Cluster Development Ordinance* was revised in 1999 to encourage innovative and quality designs of residential developments above one dwelling unit per acre that provide avenues for affordable housing, minimize environmental impacts, establish usable and meaningful open space, and provide recreational amenities within a more practical and efficient development.
- ◆ Planners encourage developers to leave usable open space within subdivisions, especially through the *special use permit and rezoning processes*. In the past, land designated as open space within new subdivisions was generally unusable due to environmental constraints such as wetlands or steep slopes. Even small interior open spaces within subdivisions can be beneficial and usable to the residents and should be considered as an open space opportunity in design.
- ◆ The County also preserves open space by dedicating *conservation easements*. A conservation easement is a legal document in which a property owner agrees to forgo specific property rights while retaining ownership. An easement is signed and recorded like other deeds and is a covenant that accompanies the title to the land.

Preserving Vegetation during Development

Landscape requirements per the Zoning Ordinance, open space requirements per the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, and buffer preservation all play a role in retaining existing trees and vegetation during development. Listed below are some of the requirements that help the County preserve vegetation during development.

- ◆ Community Character Corridors and Right-of-Way Landscape Requirements
When development occurs along one of the County's Community Character Corridors or other roads, landscape buffers are required to be preserved or installed along the rights-of-way. Community Character Corridors require a 50-foot buffer for commercial projects and a 150-foot buffer for residential projects. All other roads require a 30-foot buffer for commercial projects and a 75-foot buffer for residential projects.
- ◆ Transitional Screening
When development occurs adjacent to a conflicting land use, an enlarged buffer is required between the two uses. The buffer is required to be preserved in its natural

and undisturbed state. If the buffer is not vegetated, then screening landscape is to be installed.

- ◆ Perimeter Buffers

The perimeter of any parcel that is not adjacent to a roadway or that requires transitional screening is required to have a 15-foot side and rear buffer. These buffers are to be left in their natural undisturbed state, unless supplemental planting is needed.

Utilization of Existing Regulations to Preserve Vegetation

The County has a comprehensive and extensive set of regulations to preserve vegetation, including trees; however, the buffers and preserved trees on developed sites can be left in unhealthy and damaged states. In these instances, the result is buffers that do not meet the intent of what the regulations were created to accomplish. By implementing the following procedures, the County endeavors to improve the quality of tree preservation efforts and ensure the integrity of the buffers:

- ◆ Concurrently conduct plan reviews by both the Environmental and Planning staff.
- ◆ Enforce the language in the tree protection landscape ordinance.
- ◆ Add more emphasis on tree protection measures during the pre-construction meetings.
- ◆ Strictly enforce tree protection measures in the field during development.
- ◆ Train Environmental inspectors on proper tree protection measures and identification of native plants.
- ◆ Strictly enforce violations found in the field for encroachment into protected areas, as well as damage associated with improper tree protection techniques used that result in damage.

Optional Specimen Tree Preservation Policy

To make it more economically feasible and practical for developers to preserve specimen trees on development sites, the County will consider adopting an optional specimen tree preservation policy. This incentive-based policy would make it more attractive for developers to voluntarily preserve large healthy trees that may be located outside of a required tree save area. In exchange for preserving the specimen tree, the developer could be given a waiver to reduce the landscape requirements on another portion of the property.

Archaeological and Historic Sites

The character of James City County is closely linked with the numerous known and unknown archaeological and historic sites within its boundaries. As home to Jamestown, the Battle of Green Spring, and the first free black settlement, the County is known for its diverse wealth of nationally significant archaeological resources.

Studies and Policies

The following studies have been commissioned to identify and evaluate the archaeological and historic resources in the County:

- ◆ *Toward a Resource Protection Process*, a 1986 historic inventory of James City County, York County, Williamsburg, and Poquoson written by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

- ◆ *Toward a Resource Protection Process Update (RP3)*, a 1992 update to the 1986 historic inventory.
- ◆ *Preserving Our Hidden Heritage*, a 1997 archaeological assessment of historic resources in James City County by The William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research.
- ◆ *Architectural Survey* was begun by the County in 1999 and was expanded in 2006 to include 223 historic properties. The survey establishes historic contexts, which are guides that categorize these properties by period of time, ethnic and cultural background, and how they were influenced by historical events of the times. Each historical context has its own set of historical and architectural themes. The survey has been an important planning tool in negotiations with developers to demonstrate the importance of the structure and why it should be preserved. Some notable successes are the redevelopment, in the Five Forks area of the former school building and the renovation of the Power's house on Richmond Road in Toano.
- ◆ *Archaeological Policy*, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1998, ensures the identification and protection of sites as development continues to occur in the County. The current policy recommends adding a condition to all appropriate legislative cases requiring archaeological studies. Staff uses existing archaeological studies, representatives of the County Historical Commission, and other qualified archaeologists, to make a determination of when a study is required and forwards the recommendation to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Historical Commission

In addition to efforts from staff, the County has a Historical Commission whose mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the rich historical heritage of the County by engaging in the following efforts and activities:

- ◆ Surveying, identifying, and documenting historical buildings and sites within the County well in advance of potential damage or destruction by public or private action; and
- ◆ Conducting and promoting related activities at all educational levels to increase community awareness and involvement in historic resource preservation.

Historical and Archaeological Sites

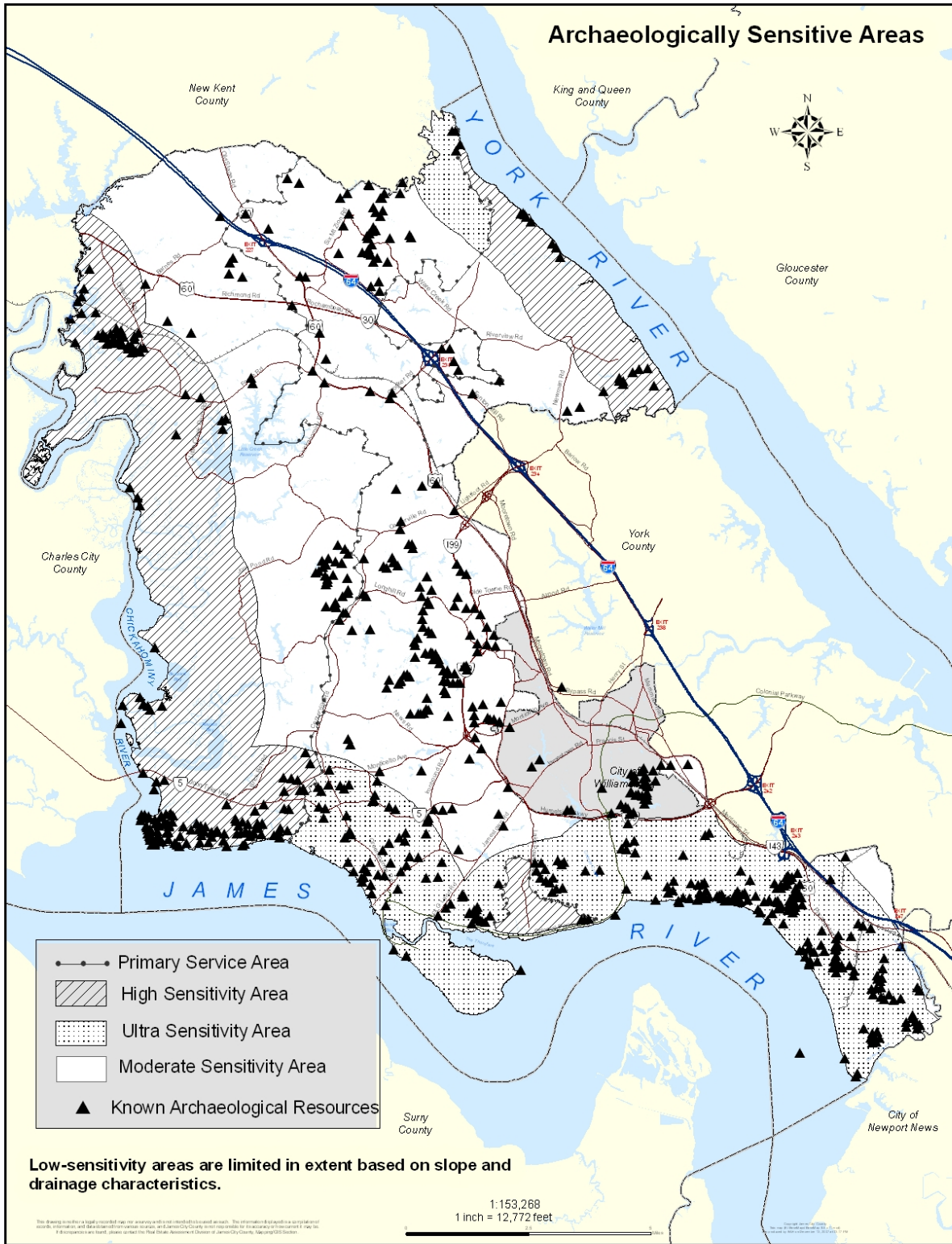
Currently, the County has 20 properties on the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register. The two newest members include Whitehall Tavern and the Norge Train Depot. It is the goal of County staff and the Historical Commission to get all eligible properties listed on one or both registers to create awareness of the resources within the community.

Table CC-1: Properties listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or the National Register of Historic Places

Property Name	Property Type	Virginia Landmarks Register	National Register of Historic Places
Paspehegh Settlement	Prehistoric Native American Village	X	X
Carter's Grove*	18th-century Plantation	X	X
Croaker Landing Archaeological Site	Early-Late Woodland Camp	X	X
Chickahominy Shipyard Archeological Sites	Early-Middle Woodland prehistoric shell midden	X	X
Governor's Land Archeological Sites	17th-century English sites	X	X
Green Spring	17th-century plantation	X	X
Hickory Neck Church	18th-century plantation	X	X
Colonial National Historic Park/ Colonial Parkway	17th-/18th-century sites		X
Jamestown National Historic Site	17th-/18th-century village	X	X
Kingsmill Plantation	17th-/18th-century sites	X	X
Powhatan	18th-century Plantation	X	X
Stonehouse Site	17th-century dwelling	X	X
Tutter's Neck Site	18th-century dwelling	X	
Windsor Castle	19th-/20th-century dwelling	X	X
Riverview	19th-/20th-century dwelling	X	X
Pinewoods (Warbuton House)	17th-century dwelling	X	X
Norge Train Depot (as relocated)	20th-century train station	X	X
Whitehall Tavern (White Hall)	19th-/20th-century dwelling and tavern	X	X

*Designated a National Historic Landmark

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources



Utility Lines

Utility lines include electrical, natural gas, petroleum, water and sewer transmission, and communication lines. Many utilities are placed underground or are substantially screened for safety reasons and do not affect the character of the community in adverse ways. Although all new utilities are required to be placed underground unless granted an exception by the Planning Commission, the visual impact of existing above ground utilities can be substantial and can increase as lines are upgraded and expanded. Placing existing utilities underground can be costly and difficult. In 2000, James City County established the Underground Utility Fund to target specific corridors that are currently negatively impacted by above-ground utilities. The fund, established originally with one cent of the real estate tax and more recently with annual allocations to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), has been dedicated to this purpose and has allowed the planning and placement of utilities underground on Jamestown Road, John Tyler Highway, and Ironbound Road.

Wireless Communication Facilities

In 1998, the increasing need for new wireless communication facilities prompted the County to establish *Performance Standards for Wireless Communication Facilities* and a new division in the Zoning Ordinance to address them. Through the use of the performance standards and the ordinance, the County has sought to accomplish the following:

- ◆ Keep the number of wireless communication facility sites to a minimum;
- ◆ Minimize the impacts of newly approved wireless communication facilities; and
- ◆ Expedite the approval process for new wireless communication facility applications.

The policy and ordinance strive to effectively camouflage new wireless communication facilities in many areas of the County in order to reduce their incompatibility with and impact on adjacent development. These efforts have been fairly successful to date. Many new towers have been either constructed below the surrounding tree line or built as a camouflaged structure to blend in with the surrounding natural and man-made environment.

New Wireless Communication Facility Technologies

Due to the ever-changing field of wireless communications technology, the County needs to provide flexible and adaptive regulations for approving wireless communication facilities. Some of the technologies being monitored use multiple smaller linked antennas to eliminate the need for large towers that can be intrusive to the landscape. There are a range of advantages and disadvantages related to these systems. Other technologies exist, such as satellite, with different sets of advantages and disadvantages. While no single technology has been deemed the best for all of James City County, the benefits of staying abreast of all technologies and making appropriate ordinance and policy changes are clear. In order to analyze what is best for the County, a master plan of existing wireless communication facilities, possible new locations, and possible system types, could be established to identify compatible collocation capabilities and areas that impact residential and other adjacent land uses the least.

Citizen Commentary

Citizen commentary revealed that, “community character remains a high priority issue.” More than three-quarters of the respondents of the Virginia Tech Citizen Survey rated historic preservation and the amount of resources devoted to it as good or excellent. Over 79% of respondents felt that development is happening too quickly, that it is important to preserve more farmland, and that more biking and walking trails need to be provided. These figures were five to ten percent greater than the previous survey conducted in 2001. In the National Citizen Survey, approximately 70% of respondents rated the

appearance, cleanliness, and overall quality of the environment of the County to be good or excellent, which was above the national benchmark. However, less than half of the citizen's surveyed felt that the County is doing a good or excellent job of preserving open space, farmlands, and greenbelts, which was similar to the national benchmark.

In the first round of Community Conversations, answers to the open-ended questions about what services citizens would most like to see, were strongly directed toward more green areas and open space, the maintenance of environmental and historical areas, and the continued creation of biking and walking trails. In the second round of the Community Conversations, three-fourths of the questionnaire respondents believed that James City County was changing for the worse in terms of preserving large stands of mature trees along major roads open fields, and agricultural areas. Seventy percent believed that the County was not preserving enough mature trees in residential and commercial developments, and that the County's roads no longer have a rural small town feel due to development along them. Over half of the respondents felt that development in the County looks the same with no sense of place, and that the County needs more commercial areas that are conducive to walking.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: 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 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.
 - 1.4.1.1 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.
 - 1.4.1.2 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.
 - 1.4.1.3 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 Review and amend applicable County ordinances and/or policies to require a more detailed phased clearing plan that minimizes the removal of existing trees and ensures tree preservation measures are implemented during the site plan review and pre-construction phase of development.
- 1.5.2 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.
- 1.5.3 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.
- 1.5.4 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 Consider the adoption of 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.

