

Implementation Guide

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan of James City County is a guidance document and a tool to be used in the everyday decision-making process. This document embodies the guidance and direction of citizens, the business community, elected and appointed officials, appointed boards and committees, and the professional staff of the County. The Comprehensive Plan provides a blueprint for the future development of the County. It guides land use decisions, development and growth patterns, and standards for the facilities and services that the County government provides to its citizens.

The Comprehensive Plan is necessarily a living document that changes over time. This is because new developments, changing conditions and events—both expected and unexpected—reshape James City County. Some changes, like the growth in the County’s population, occur slowly over time and may escape notice from one day to the next. Other changes can be dramatic and swift, such as those caused by a new roadway opening or a major storm event. The Comprehensive Plan, to be most effective, must stay current with the major changes that the County as a whole experiences.

To this end, the County staff and administration work in conjunction with the citizenry, Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, developers, landowners, citizen groups, the business community, and numerous other entities to review the Comprehensive Plan once every five years. *Historic Past, Sustainable Future* is the result of the latest effort, which began in fall 2007 and was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on November 24, 2009. The next several paragraphs outline the implementation schedule for *Historic Past, Sustainable Future*. The implementation schedule, in conjunction with the implementation spreadsheet, provides guidance for turning the Comprehensive Plan into a tangible reality.

Providing Direction for the County through the Comprehensive Plan

In preparation for putting the Comprehensive Plan into action, it is important to understand the role that the Comprehensive Plan plays in directing James City County. This is best explained by identifying how the Comprehensive Plan is developed and by outlining the Comprehensive Plan’s relationship to other guiding documents used by the County.

The will and the desires of the County’s citizens lay the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. With this in mind, a great effort is put into bringing the public into the Comprehensive Plan review process. Public meetings, surveys, listening stations, e-mails, letters, and portals for making comments on the County’s Web site are all used to capture the public’s opinion. In a similar vein, the Planning Commission, and ultimately, the elected members of the Board of Supervisors help to shape the creation of the new Comprehensive Plan, along with careful analysis and input from the County’s administration, staff, and appointed bodies. The Comprehensive Plan, then, reflects the ideas, goals, and guidance of the County’s citizens and leaders.

The Comprehensive Plan is used by the County’s staff and by its elected and appointed officials on a very common and regular basis to guide decisions, analyze data, and form opinions. For example, the Comprehensive Plan guides revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and the creation of area plans, and provides standards for reviewing development proposals, developing and interpreting policies, and making recommendations or proposals related to transportation projects. The Comprehensive Plan is kept in sharp focus and continual discussion by this routine interaction, which helps to reinforce the Comprehensive Plan as a living document.

Strategic Management Plan and Budget

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, there are several other documents in place that help provide the County with direction. The primary process linking the Comprehensive Plan to the budget is the Strategic Management Plan (SMP), which is updated each year by staff and the County Administrator, and presented to the Board of Supervisors. The budget is adopted annually by the Board of Supervisors and is a

purely fiscal document. However, the SMP is the work program that accounts for the budget. Along with other projects and plans for each of the County's departments, the Comprehensive Plan strongly informs a series of formally recognized and adopted Strategic Directions and Pathways that comprise the SMP. The Strategic Directions, which are intended to provide overarching guidance for the management of the County's government, include the following:

- Manage finances wisely and encourage a balanced economy;
- Enhance the lives of citizens and foster a sense of community;
- Plan responsibly for the needs of a growing, diverse community;
- Steward the natural environment and historic heritage; and
- Provide outstanding customer service.

Under each of the Strategic Directions are a list of supporting Strategic Pathways that set the County staff's work focus in terms of measurable new projects and initiatives. Each year, the Board of Supervisors adopts the County's budget and makes decisions in light of the Strategic Directions and Pathways. At the conclusion of each year, the Board of Supervisors receives a presentation on the progress made on the SMP, and the County produces the annual Progress Report that identifies how responsive the County has been to the needs and desires of the community through the actions it has taken.

It should be noted that the SMP has a shorter-term view, updated annually, while the Comprehensive Plan is reviewed every five years and concentrates on a 20-year (or longer) timeframe. The SMP is more rooted in current priorities and available resources, and is a more flexible document than the Comprehensive Plan. Together, the Comprehensive Plan, SMP, and budget work to ensure that the County government operates as efficiently as possible while still maintaining the levels of service expected by its citizens. Through the SMP presentation and annual Progress Report, the citizenry receive updates on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan given the priorities of the SMP and realities of the budget.

Service Plans (Strategic Plans and Master Plans)

Service plans are created and updated by individual

departments as operational guides for carrying out their mandated functions. They include such documents as strategic plans (e.g., Strategic Plan for Children and Youth) and departmental master plans (e.g., Parks and Recreation Master Plan). Many of these documents are referenced throughout the Comprehensive Plan and are listed in Appendix D. Service plans are intended to be complementary to the Comprehensive Plan, serving as both reference and guidance documents for the Comprehensive Plan. The service plans, in turn, are often outgrowths of action items found in the Comprehensive Plan, and in many ways take other forms of direction from the Comprehensive Plan. For example, if the initial creation of a service plan was not dictated by the Comprehensive Plan, the components of the service plan may still be guided by many of the goals, strategies, and actions (GSAs) found in the Comprehensive Plan. Service plans are typically created or revised independently of the Comprehensive Plan. The development of a service plan may involve in-depth research and an extensive participatory process, and often includes the input, guidance, recommendations, or work of other County entities, commissions, or committees.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Capital Budget

Another major document that charts the course of the County is the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). In the CIP, large-dollar investment projects, usually related to tangible assets such as a new facility, building, specialized vehicle, or a major infrastructure upgrade or improvement, are put forth for consideration by the Board of Supervisors for inclusion into the County's annual budget. The capital projects are introduced by individual County departments, divisions, and agencies as part of their service plans. These departmental CIP applications are then reviewed by staff and the Planning Commission using the Comprehensive Plan. Applications that directly support the GSAs found in the Comprehensive Plan generally receive higher ranking scores in these evaluations. The budget brings all of the planning and guidance documents together, in that it is here where initiatives and projects are funded and the functions of the County government are facilitated and realized.

Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map

The Zoning Ordinance and its accompanying map

prescribe both the size (intensity and bulk regulations) of lots and the uses which may be placed on the property. All property in the County is mapped to a certain zoning district. The Zoning Map, therefore, is a primary means by which the use and intensity for specific land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented. Many of the GSAs found in the Comprehensive Plan directly relate or refer to the Zoning Ordinance, including guidance for updates to the Zoning Ordinance upon its next revision.

Subdivision Ordinance Regulations

This is the basic tool for controlling the subdivision of land. The Subdivision Ordinance contains the regulations for dividing parcels of land into smaller lots. Lots to be developed must conform to applicable zoning regulations.

The Regional Planning Effort

The effort taken to move the County forward in the direction set by the Comprehensive Plan is not done in isolation. In recent years, it has become increasingly obvious not only that issues and problems often have a regional scope and impact, but also that the solutions and funding mechanisms that might combat those problems are regional in nature. James City County has many partners at the regional level. Those jurisdictions immediately adjacent to the County are partners in many things, such as sharing library and school services, and supporting each other with back-up emergency response efforts, but there are other challenges which require the involvement of all of the localities in this region. Some of the many regional issues might include the following:

- *Potable water* – Peninsula localities collectively, and in cooperation with the State, must address the issues of water is going to come from, how and where it will be stored, and how it will be used.
- *Transportation* – Individual localities, the region as a whole, and the State are trying to find ways to reduce vehicles miles traveled (VMT), exhaust emissions, and traffic congestion. At the same time, there is the ongoing search for ways to move people and goods more quickly and efficiently.
- *Housing* – Part of the transportation equation involves the availability and affordability of housing. If people cannot afford housing near their places

of employment, they typically become commuters, increasing the numbers of cars on the roadways.

- *Economic Development* – In abundant times and in lean times, it is clear that a large number of economic interdependencies exist which tie the fortunes of the different Peninsula localities together.

There are certainly other issues that affect the localities of the Peninsula on a regional basis, including but not limited to wastewater management, solid waste and landfill management, the effect of changes in climate, and unified responses to major storm events and other emergencies.

To tackle these and other issues, James City County joins the other members of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) to develop creative solutions and coordinate efforts. The sixteen member localities, including James City County, Chesapeake, Franklin, Gloucester County, Hampton, Isle of Wight County, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Southampton County, Suffolk, Surry, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, and York County, may benefit from economies of scale, complementary areas of expertise and resources, and a wide variety of diversified economies in meeting the challenges that face these localities.

Similarly, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) concentrates on regional transportation issues that the members of the HRTPO are collectively facing. The HRTPO also includes representation from Federal and State transportation-related agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Collectively, the members of the HRTPO prepare and request funding for the 2030 Long Range Plan (LRP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which identify specific road, pedestrian, and bikeway improvements in the region. James City County uses the Comprehensive Plan both to inform and introduce new projects and to review and analyze projects that have been proposed.

Closer to home, an inter-jurisdictional panel called the Regional Issues Committee (RIC), helps to provide a communication and problem-solving arena for the planning commissions and governing bodies of James City County, York County, and the City of Williamsburg. The three localities will also undergo

a coordinated review of their three comprehensive plans, starting in 2012, looking for places to identify, align, and reduce points of conflict among the planning efforts and strategies of each jurisdiction. Preparations for the coordinated review will begin well beforehand with planning efforts starting in mid-2010 and discussion forums scheduled for 2011 and 2012. Finally, the three localities are preliminarily discussing new land use directions that consider the cumulative effects of land use decisions across jurisdictional boundaries. This can be seen in the discussions surrounding regional workforce housing needs and application of Economic Opportunity (EO) land use designations, among others.

Public/Private/Civic Partnerships

While the County serves as the primary catalyst for focusing local and regional planning efforts, it is recognized that the resources and auspices of government cannot alone achieve the aspirations of the Comprehensive Plan. To more fully implement the actions of the Comprehensive Plan, the power of partnerships and private efforts are needed. Teamwork and collaboration between the public and private sectors can effectively engage the talents, funding sources, and visions of a wide variety of stakeholders. The government can bring tax-based financing mechanisms, regulation, and legal authority to a project, while a company, conglomeration, or civic group can contribute specialized expertise, private funding and investment sources, and in-kind services that might not otherwise be available. This leads to project buy-in, pride in community, and often, a more efficient expenditure of public monies and a more successful project overall.

All of these regional efforts both serve to inform and take guidance from the Comprehensive Plan. There remain strong linkages between the Comprehensive Plan, the CIP process, the budget, the SMP, departmental service plans, and the County's regional planning efforts.

Implementation Schedule

Most sections of the Comprehensive Plan include GSAs, which collectively provide a mechanism for turning the written guidance of the Comprehensive Plan into tangible steps that can affect positive

change in the County. It is important to note that these GSAs may not immediately lend themselves to implementation. Limitations such as financial constraints and limits in needed resources can delay or change the implementation of a given GSA. Changes in Board of Supervisors priorities or State or Federal laws may necessitate that some GSAs are amended, deleted, or replaced as part of the Comprehensive Plan review every five years. Some GSAs may only be partially realized, and some not at all, depending on fiscal and other constraints facing the County. The Board of Supervisors prioritizes projects, based on available funding and resources, through the annual budget and the SMP processes.

There are several elements in the implementation schedule which are explained as follows:

- The GSAs defined for each section of the Comprehensive Plan are listed by section;
- For each action, staff has identified a stakeholder (or stakeholders), a timeframe for completion, and a list of priorities;
- The stakeholder is the group most directly affected by and/or responsible for completion of the action. The stakeholder may be the County government, a business or related agency, a neighborhood or non-profit group, or some combination thereof;
- The timeframe, given in years, is the approximate period of time in which the action is planned to be undertaken. If the action is projected to be continual or ongoing, it is placed in the "Ongoing" category. As previously discussed, it should be kept in mind that limitations in budget and resources have a strong impact on the projected timeframes, and priorities set by the Board of Supervisors and the County's administration may not always coincide with timeframes identified in this document;
- A section has been added that shows preliminary priorities for all of the GSAs. Since many of the GSAs will be included in the work programs that comprise the SMP, these preliminary rankings will make it easier to rank work items year-to-year.

Reporting Mechanisms

In order for the Comprehensive Plan to have value and remain useful through its planning horizon, it is important to monitor progress in achieving adopted GSAs to recognize those that have been completed,

to identify areas where additional resources are needed, and to re-assess for changing conditions.

The Planning Commission will evaluate the progress of implementation efforts and prepare an annual report to the Board of Supervisors. Many actions are preceded by the word “consider.” It should be noted that when this term is used, the entity responsible for the action item in the implementation schedule will report on the actions it has taken to evaluate and accomplish the item. The report will identify actions that have been completed and actions that should be considered for a change in priority, keeping in mind that financial constraints, Board of Supervisors direction, available manpower, and other limiting factors play a crucial role in determining when GSAs get implemented.

To reiterate a point made above, the Board of Supervisors prioritizes projects, based on available funding and resources, through the annual budget and SMP processes. The following measures would be appropriate to address this periodic reporting issue, in that they would provide the relevant information and would be achievable given staff resources:

- Inclusion of information on implementation in the Planning Commission Annual Report that provides an update on the progress that has been made in implementing the GSAs. Since the Planning Commission Annual Report is usually published in November of the year, this would also allow these reports to be included in annual budget and CIP discussions.
- Highlight (via labeling or another mechanism) Comprehensive Plan actions included in the SMP in order to provide a stronger connection between the Comprehensive Plan and the budget and SMP.

The evaluation process will not only measure progress and identify areas that need attention, it will also serve as a catalyst to engage the community in dialogue about the future of James City County.

Conclusion

The Comprehensive Plan revision begun in 2007 and adopted in 2009, *Historic Past, Sustainable Future*, provides benchmarks for the future development and operation of James City County. To meet these benchmarks, the plan establishes a series of strategies

to reach these goals, and specific actions needed to implement each strategy. This implementation schedule offers specific guidance for realizing the full vision for the County created by the Comprehensive Plan.