

JCC Natural and Cultural Assets Plan [Proposed Framework] – Draft for NaCAMC review 06/06/22 Workshop

Prepared by consultants GIC under contract to the County

Proposed Plan Outline:

- I. Plan Purpose
- II. Plan History {past JCC related work and Comp Plan directive to complete this strategic plan to implement a natural assets network}
- III. Exec Summary and Primary Network Map + Cultural and Recreation Overlays.
 - a. Key Goals <Top 3-6>: TBD Maps <Priority natural assets network of habitat cores and connecting corridors, recreation, culture and ag and water maps>
- IV. Policy Applications {what is this report for, how it will be used} This plan supports the James City County 2045 Comprehensive Plan goals <see Appendix A list from CP 2045 for list of goals and objectives supported by this plan.>
- V. Strategies [These strategies to be workshopped with the appointed committee, strategies will have specific measurable objectives, timeframes and identified partners.]
- VI. Funding [This will cover potential grants and partners]

The following goals and objectives support the Comprehensive Plan 2045 Goals and Objectives (see Appendix A for a list from the 2045 Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2021). It could be possible to adopt a numeric goals such as preserving X% of the County's highest valued habitat cores – this is a bit difficult since most land is privately owned but it could be aspirational as part of a vision statement.)

- 1. Conserve and protect highest valued natural habitat cores and connecting corridors to support wildlife, trails and greenways, scenic vistas and cultural and recreational values. <See map of those>**
 - a. Update the greenway plan to include key corridors identified in this plan (where appropriate).
 - b. Conduct an education campaign for landowners <I am the steward of a high value landscape, what are best practices to conserve it? Plan consultant to provide this for James City County.>
 - c. Publish the map of high value cores and corridors on County website with design guidance for developers about how to avoid disturbing them through clustering or creative site layouts and how to maintain connectivity through a development site. <Consultant to provide this guidance separately or as an appendix to this plan. This would be an update to H-Character-Design-Guidelines-PDF attachment to the new CP>. For highest value sites (those with highest ranked cores or primary corridors) encourage a pre-meeting before site layout to discuss options with developers for maximizing conservation on site.

- d. Add conservation cores and corridors as additional criteria for awarding points for purchase of development rights <Consultant to provide draft standard to consider adopting into County ordinance.>
 - e. When evaluating sites for the County’s Greenspace Program, utilize the natural and cultural assets maps and their rankings as highly valued or at risk.
 - f. Use the Assets Risk Map to identify areas where public access or parks will be impacted by sea level rise and consider whether uplands could or should be acquired to ensure similar open space access over the next 50 years. Use this information to update park master plans.
 - g. Work with Preservation Virginia and the National Park Service to identify places for relocation of natural and historic resources as they manage retreat from Sea Level Rise.
 - h. Develop zoning tools that discourage solar installation in highest value habitats and for locations with high value agricultural soils. Consider limiting the total percentage of rural lands that can be used for utility scale solar.
 - i. Investigate ways to compensate landowners for keeping their land in forest cover.
 - j. Partner with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy and other land trusts to encourage voluntary enrollment as conservation easements for properties with high value landscapes that conserve both natural and cultural assets.
 - k. Adopt an incentive program for developers who conserve substantial amounts of high quality habitat (using cores map) or who maintain conservation corridors.
 - l. When updating the County’s Long Range Transportation Plans and developing transportation projects, utilize the natural and cultural asset maps to inform road siting and design to avoid disturbing sensitive and highly ranked areas whenever possible. Share with the Virginia Department of Transportation areas that could be restored using their mitigation funds from land disturbance for road projects.
- 2. Conserve and protect high value agricultural soils and historic farms to support the agricultural economy and continue the County’s agrarian heritage.¹**
- a. Include high value ag soils maps in County Geographic Information System layers and property information and recommend minimal disturbance of those soils during development (especially for utility solar sites).
 - b. Facilitate continued agricultural uses by promoting the farm link program to help young farmers and retiring farmers connect and make plans to keep the land in agriculture <https://virginiafarmlink.org/>
 - c. Actively promote expansion of existing agricultural and forestal (AFD) districts to those farms with highest value agricultural soils that are not currently within the district.
 - d. Create a heritage tourism route (map and application) to direct visitors and residents to current agritourism sites and promote this through <https://www.virginia.org/places-to-visit/regions/hampton-roads/williamsburg/> and on the County’s website

¹ The “Strategy for Rural Economic Development, September 2014” report remains a relevant guidance document, although further consideration may be given to any updates that may be necessary or advisable.

<https://explorejccva.com/2928/AgritourismFarming>. (Routes and maps are more popular than lists.)

- e. Consider hosting a workshop on agritourism to bring more farms into the tourism network to provide additional revenue for farms to keep them in business.
- f. Prior to future AFD renewals, continue to explore lengthening the AFD terms with property owners in order to promote the long-term stewardship of highly valued landscapes.

3. Facilitate voluntary planting projects to extend the width of vegetated buffers to serve as wildlife corridors along the County's waterways and to protect water quality.

- a. Educate landowners on the importance of healthy vegetated buffers for both water quality and wildlife.
 - i. Use the corridor maps to identify places where tree planting could meet goals for wildlife and water quality.
 - ii. Educate landowners about the problems of invasive species and seek funding for invasive removal and treatment for interested County landowners.
- b. Partner with the Virginia Department of Forestry to plant stream buffer projects along streams that lack wooded buffers with priority placed on those streams that also provide connectivity between high valued landscapes.
- c. Use this plan to seek an increase in the County's Community Rating System points to allow for discounted flood insurance premiums for landowners.
- d. As per new Virginia Department of Environmental Quality requirements, create and adopt guidance/standards for stormwater management for utility scale solar developments to prevent new stormwater impacts.

4. Promote biodiverse landscapes to improve habitats within the built environment.

- a. Amend County codes and policies where appropriate to include a requirement for biodiverse street tree plantings by ensuring at least five species of street/yard trees selected to be varied at the block level. Include required street trees in bonding requirements to ensure mandatory trees survive.
- b. Add a soil volume requirement to tree lawns (currently specified as only 5 feet wide) to ensure adequate planting depth and tree survival.
- c. Review the recommended tree list to ensure it includes suitable species by locations (streets, yards, parking lots). Consider adding species not to plant at development sites (due to invasiveness or poor survival rates).

Appendix A: 2045 Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

Following are exact goals from the Comprehensive Plan that can be supported specifically by this strategy document and associated maps. Note that there are other strategies such as the County's watershed plans that this plan also supports.

James City County Comprehensive Plan 2045 (adopted 2021)

ENV - Continue to improve the high level of environmental quality in James City County and protect rural and sensitive lands and waterways that support the resiliency of our natural systems for the benefit of current and future generations.

ENV 1 - Protect and improve the quality of water in County watersheds, wetlands, and waterways including water bodies that discharge into the Chesapeake Bay.

ENV 1.5 - Implement comprehensive coastal resource management guidance, consistent with the policy that living shorelines are the preferred alternative for stabilizing eroding shorelines prior to consideration of structural stabilization methods.

ENV 1.5.6 - Promote the preservation of open space in areas adjacent to marsh lands to allow for inland retreat of vegetation and additional water containment areas as sea level rises.

ENV 1.5.7 - Evaluate and consider opportunities for grants, cost sharing partnerships between public entities and private property owners, and other funding sources for construction of living shorelines.

ENV 1.16 - Develop funding and implementation mechanisms for the watershed protection and restoration goals and priorities from watershed management plans adopted by the Board of Supervisors. (WMPs contain recommendations for parcels to conserve.)

ENV 1.17 - Continue to develop watershed management plans for the remaining County watersheds, and to update existing watershed management plans that identify environmentally sensitive areas and specific protection, restoration, and retrofit recommendations. Include in those studies an evaluation of the impact of the change in precipitation events in the watershed.

ENV 1.19 - Continue to follow the progress of the Lower Chickahominy Watershed Study and incorporate final recommendations into local policies and Ordinances.

ENV 1.22 - Conduct an analysis of the impacts of sea-level rise, tidal flooding, and non-tidal flooding in the areas around Chickahominy Haven, Powhatan Shores, and other impacted areas based on the work of Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency at Old Dominion University, and other relevant agencies.

ENV 2 - Continue to promote public knowledge of and involvement in County environmental programs and initiatives.

ENV 2.1 - Continue to educate the public about voluntary techniques to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive lands; wildlife habitats; water quality; and watersheds, agricultural, forestal,

and other open space lands through County programs, including but not limited to, the Clean Water Heritage program.

ENV 3 - Protect and conserve environmentally sensitive areas, and work to maintain or promote the ecosystem services provided by all natural areas.

ENV 3.1 - Maintain and promote biological and habitat diversity, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity by protecting wildlife and riparian corridors between watersheds, sub-watersheds, catchments, and tidal and nontidal wetlands, and by developing and implementing a green infrastructure plan.

ENV 3.2 - Develop specific recommendations for voluntary and regulatory means to protect resources identified in studies, such as the Regional Natural Areas Inventory, and watershed management plans for County watersheds.

ENV 3.3 - Continue to update mandatory tree protection standards and examine tree canopy protection standards.

ENV 3.4 - Continue to develop and enforce zoning regulations and other County Ordinances that preserve to the maximum extent practicable rare, threatened, and endangered species; wetlands; flood plains; shorelines; wildlife habitats; natural areas; perennial streams; groundwater resources; and other environmentally sensitive areas.

ENV 3.5 - Continue to gather and gain technical knowledge on data that is available to help the County identify and map its natural and cultural assets, and, where appropriate, use such data as an information tool to help guide decisions during the creation of regulations and policies to provide guidance to property owners and development proposal applicants on lands best suited for development, and to inform open space preservation efforts.

ENV 3.6 - Ensure that site development projects, including those initiated by the County, are consistent with the protection of environmentally sensitive areas so that development projects do not exacerbate flooding in flood prone areas.

ENV 3.7 - Seek to maintain and protect forested land and recognize the benefits it provides by sequestering carbon dioxide.

ENV 3.7.1 - Investigate changes to the Zoning Ordinance including renaming the A-1, General Agricultural District and re-examining lot sizes and clustering provisions to acknowledge and encourage preservation of forested land.

ENV 3.7.2 - Assemble a local flood resilience plan to address the County's flood resilience needs using existing plans where available and supplementing with additional documentation where necessary.

ENV 4.9 Proactively work with private, local, regional, state and federal organizations to implement innovative solutions to improve air quality, including through the protection and enhancement of natural resources such as forest ecosystems

ENV 4.6 - Investigate ways to amend the County Ordinances to address alternative energy production, and to amend ordinances or include special use permit conditions that protect and enhance natural resources on alternative energy production sites.

ENV 4.6.1. In Ordinances or as development approval conditions, include provisions to minimize clearing of forested land.

ENV 4.6.2. In Ordinances or as development approval conditions, implement best practice documents on the inclusion of native pollinator plants.

ENV 4.10 - Use resources from the HRPDC or other applicable organizations to periodically monitor sea level rise at the local and/or regional level.

ENV 4.11 - Evaluate adjustments to watersheds, floodplains, and resource protection areas with changes to the VRMC mean high water line.

ENV 4.11.1 - Use predicted shoreline protection needs to inform shoreline protection strategies and to re-examine relevant County master plans.

ENV 4.11.2 - Notify landowners of likelihood of shoreline impacts based on shoreline protection needs.

ENV 4.12 - Continuing James City County's partnership with VIMS and the HRPDC to more fully identify specific issues with respect to riverine flooding, storm surge, sea level rise, and other conditions affecting coastal flooding in James City County.

Community Character - The County will be a good steward of the land by preserving and enhancing the scenic, cultural, rural, farm, forestal, natural, architectural, and historic qualities that are essential to the County's distinctive character, economic vitality, and the overall health and quality of life of its residents. Strategies and Actions

CC 1 - Preserve and enhance entrance corridors and roads that promote the rural, natural, or historic character of the County.

CC 4 - Integrate community character considerations in open space planning and programs.

CC 4.1 - Continue to gather and gain technical knowledge on data that is available to help the County identify and map its archaeological, historic, and cultural assets, and, where appropriate, use such data as an information tool to help guide decisions during the creation of regulations and policies, to provide guidance to property owners and development proposal applicants on lands best suited for development, and to inform open space preservation efforts.

CC 4.2 - Devote resources to and operate programs to preserve or enhance components of the County that significantly contribute to community character, including historic properties and cultural heritage landscapes, scenic properties and viewsheds, agricultural and forestal lands, and entrance corridors, community character corridors, community character areas, and other special places. Integrate these considerations with others found in the Parks and Recreation, Environment and Land Use chapters. In addition, collaborate with other entities, the private sector, and landowners in these efforts.

CC 5 - Preserve existing vegetation as possible and appropriate during development.

CC 5.1 - Use County Ordinances and/or policies as enabled by the Code of Virginia to require a more detailed phased clearing plan that minimizes the removal of existing trees and ensures tree preservation requirements are implemented during the site plan review and pre-construction phase of development. Consider developing requirements for County staff to inspect projects pre-and-post construction specifically to ensure compliance with the tree protection requirement of the Zoning Ordinance.

CC 5.2 - Promote the Optional Specimen Tree Designation to enable more developers to preserve specimen trees that are not within required tree save areas.

CC 5.3 - Continue to enforce existing methods/requirements 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, buffers, and proper maintenance.

CC 6 - Identify and protect archaeological and historic sites.

CC 6.1 - Require that archaeological studies for development proposals are conducted and require their recommendations to be implemented.

CC 6.2 - Update the document Preserving Our Hidden Heritage, an assessment of the archaeological resources in James City County. Review the document prior to each Comprehensive Plan revision and perform a complete revision every 10 years to include new site surveys.

CC 6.3 - Pursue the preservation of historic and archaeological sites of the County by:

CC 6.3.1 - Enlisting the assistance of the County's Historical Commission in updating the County's inventory of historic places.

CC 6.3.2 - Promoting voluntary techniques for preservation of these properties.

ED - Build a more sustainable local economy that upholds James City County's commitment to community character and environmental protection; results in a diversity of businesses, community investment, and professions that attract higher paying jobs; supports the growth of the County's historic, agri-tourism and eco-tourism sectors; contributes positively to the community's quality of life; and better balances the local tax base.

ED 2 - Continue to explore opportunities to diversify James City County's economy in order to strengthen the economic base and long-term resilience. (Relates to recommendations in the Strategy for Rural Economic Development)

ED 2.1 - Promote tourism, including eco-tourism and agri-tourism and associated industries as a year-round asset.

ED 6.3 - Promote existing ecotourism and agri-tourism venues and support the establishment of new ones, where appropriate.

GOAL: Parks and Rec - Provide a range of recreational facilities and activities desired by the community that are affordable, accessible, and adequate in number, size, type and geographic dispersion to accommodate the needs of all County residents and that promote personal growth, social development and healthy lifestyles.

PR 1 - Ensure that the number and type of facilities and programs meets citizen needs for recreation and open space.

PR 1.1 - Implement the specific strategies and tactics approved in the current James City County Parks & Recreation Master Plan. (This plan includes a needs analysis for different types of facilities, including parkland)

PR 1.2 - Prioritize potential property acquisition for parks in underserved areas of the County, as identified in the needs analysis in the current Parks and Recreation Master Plan or the outdoor recreation category of the ConserveVirginia model.

PR 2 - Continue to develop an integrated network of linear parks, trails, bikeways, sidewalks, and greenways with connections to a regional greenway system that allow foot or bike access to destinations and that preserve the diverse natural, cultural, scenic, and environmental resources of the community that contribute to recreation activities.

PR 2.1 - Continue to coordinate with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Historic Triangle Bicycle Advisory Committee, and local running, hiking and bicycling clubs to develop a bikeway network consistent with the adopted Regional Bikeways Map.

PR 2.2 - Update the Greenway Master Plan and develop a new strategic Action Plan based on the current needs, conditions, objectives and funding resources in order to continue to improve bike and pedestrian connectivity in the community.

PR 2.2.1 - Continue to seek funding in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the acquisition and use of open space areas and greenways to preserve the scenic, natural, and historic character of the area and to promote public access to these sites.

PR 2.2.2 - Collaborate with adjacent localities, developers, and other interested organizations to align and integrate plans so as to increase bike/pedestrian connectivity.

PR 2.3 - Continue to collaborate regionally to improve connectivity of open space, including but not limited to working with Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) and County staff to develop a local level green infrastructure map, which identifies critical natural, cultural and recreational networks, and develop a plan for implementation.

PR 2.4 - Work with the National Park Service to realize the recreational and cultural potential of national park sites within James City County.

PR 3 - Research and pursue available funding sources for parks and recreation programs and facilities programs that create offsetting expenditures and creating positive cash flows, including through private sector partnerships, the establishment of a park foundation, the use of citizen volunteers, grants and revenue producing facilities.

PR 3.1 - Coordinate outdoor recreation, greenway, Purchase of Development Rights, greenspace, community character and environmental protection programs in order to maximize utility of shared resources and funding.

PR 3.2 - Submit grant applications to secure funds for new parks and recreation programs, services, facilities, and related transportation services.

PR 4 - Continue to provide access to major water bodies for expansion of water recreation opportunities.

PR 4.1 - Seek additional waterfront access on the James, York, and Chickahominy Rivers to improve and expand water access and blueway trail development, especially in areas currently lacking water access, such as the lower James River.

PR 4.3 - Collaborate with the National Park Service to continue to provide trail information at designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways and for the Captain John Smith Water Trail.

PR 4.4 - Provide more public access to waterways for recreation and as part of a collaborative ecotourism/agritourism strategy.

PR 5 - Maintain up-to-date regulations and policies for new development that address neighborhood park facilities, sidewalks, bikeways, and trails as outlined in the Parks and Recreation, Greenway, and Pedestrian Accommodations master plans and that protect open space and natural resources.

PR 5.1 - Continue to encourage new development proposals to identify on-site natural resources and design the development layout in a manner that places the natural resources within protected open space parcels.

PR 5.2 - Encourage new developments to dedicate right-of-way and to construct sidewalks, bikeways, and greenway trails for transportation and recreation purposes, and to construct such facilities concurrent with road improvements and other public projects in accordance with the Pedestrian Accommodation Master Plan, the Regional Bikeways Map, and the Greenway Master Plan.

PR 5.3 - Encourage new developments requiring legislative review to provide public recreation facilities consistent with standards in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. New developments should have neighborhood parks with trails, bikeways, playgrounds, practice fields, sports courts, and open spaces.

PR 5.4 - Amend Zoning Ordinance regulations to facilitate development of recreational facilities, including but not limited to neighborhood parks, playgrounds, sport courts, fields, and trails within by-right residential developments in accordance with design standards as enabled by the Code of Virginia.

PR 9 - Sponsor educational opportunities that emphasize the connections between parks and recreation and economic development, as well as environmental, conservation, and historical preservation.

PR 9.1 - Enhance existing facilities and marketing efforts to fully promote an ecotourism program that promotes passive recreational opportunities within natural open spaces and special environmental and historical areas, and identify and designate public lands in support of this purpose.

PR 9.2 - Continue to promote interpretive signage and programs that provide educational opportunities in cultural and natural resources.

Goal Transportation - Provide citizens, businesses, and visitors of James City County with an efficient, safe, attractive, and resilient multimodal transportation system that encourages use of nonautomotive forms of transportation and reinforces or is consistent with the goals and land use patterns of the Comprehensive Plan. Strategies and Actions

T 2.2 - Continue to participate in the efforts of James City County, the City of Williamsburg, York County, and the Historic Triangle Bicycle Advisory Committee to coordinate and implement a regional bicycle network, including further joint planning and development of regional funding proposals.

T 3.7 - Develop greenways in a manner that supports their use as one element of an integrated transportation system.

LU 1.3 - Use policy and ordinance tools to ensure the provision of open space as part of development proposals, as applicable. In particular, maintain or increase incentives for cluster development in exchange for additional open space that provides significant benefits to the community.

LU 1.6 - Explore emerging technologies in the renewable energy industry, with the intention of protecting the County's unique rural character, preserving natural resources, and mitigating impacts to neighboring properties.

Goal Land Use - Achieve a pattern of land use and development that reinforces and improves the quality of life for citizens by encouraging infill, redevelopment, and adaptive re-use within the PSA; limiting development on rural and natural lands outside the PSA; and achieving the other eight goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Strategies and Actions

LU 1 - Promote the use of land in a manner harmonious with other land uses and the environment.

LU 2.1 - Plan for and encourage the provision of strategically located greenways, sidewalks, and bikeways to connect neighborhoods with retail and employment centers, parks, schools, and other public facilities and to effectively connect buildings and activities within individual sites, using the Pedestrian Accommodations Master Plan, the Historic Triangle Regional Bikeways Map, the Greenway Master Plan and other adopted plans for guidance.

LU 6 - Enhance and preserve the agricultural and forestal economy and retain the character of Rural Lands and the predominantly wooded, natural, and small-town character of the County.

LU 6.1 - Promote the economic viability of traditional and innovative farming and forestry as industries.

LU 6.1.1 - Support both the use value assessment and Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) programs to the maximum degree allowed by the Code of Virginia. Explore extending the terms of the County's Districts.

LU 6.1.2 - Seek public and private funding for existing programs, investigate new programs, and support private or non-profit (such as land trust) actions that promote continued agricultural or forestal use of property.

- a. Encourage dedication of conservation easements to allow property owners to take advantage of State and Federal tax provisions. Develop a program that would provide information to property owners on the benefits of easement donation, including helping owners consider future possible plans for their property to verify they can be pursued under deed language.
- b. Seek a dedicated funding stream for open space preservation programs. Develop information for property owners on the benefits of participating in open space preservation programs.
- c. Stay informed of State legislation related to Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and on the status of TDR programs in Virginia peer localities.

LU 6.1.3 - Continue to update the Zoning Ordinance list of permitted and specially permitted uses in the A-1 zoning district. Investigate adding a development standards policy for those uses that might benefit from a rural location. Continue to look at non-residential uses and development standards that may be appropriate, such as agri-business, eco-tourism, or green energy uses, and uses related to projects that are identified by the Strategy for Rural Economic Development.

LU 6.1.4 - As resources allow, support implementation of the recommendations in the Strategy for Rural Economic Development to maintain and create viable economic options for rural landowners.

LU 6.1.5 - Consider funding a staff position for a rural or agricultural development officer to support and help acquire funding for rural protection programs and to undertake other similar activities.

LU 6.1.6 - Protect farming and forestry uses from conflicting activities by encouraging buffers and open space design and by raising awareness among new rural land purchasers about existing farming and forestry uses in the County.

LU 6.1.7 - Craft regulations and policies in a manner that recognizes the value of, and promotes the conservation of, prime farmland soils and environmentally sensitive areas, and consider impacts to the County's farm and forestal assets in land use decisions.

LU 6.1.8 - Examine the actionable framework from the Lower Chickahominy study and consider incorporating the items recommended by that study that are a best fit with the overall economic development strategies and conservation goals for the County's rural lands.

LU 6.2.1 - Revise the R-8 and A-1 Zoning Districts to set lot sizes to be consistent with the stated Rural Lands designation description and development standards. As part of this amendment, consider easing the subdivision requirements, such as eliminating the central well requirement or permitting the waiver of the central well requirement and/or allowing private streets in limited circumstances, as part of an overall balanced strategy.

LU 6.2.2 - Revise the rural cluster provisions in the A-1 zoning district to be more consistent with the Rural Lands designation description and development standards. As part of this amendment, consider easing the subdivision requirements such as eliminating the central well requirement or permitting the waiver of the central well requirement, allowing private streets in limited circumstances, making it a streamlined by-right use at certain scales, allowing off-site septic or community drainfields, etc.

LU 6.2.3 - Consider implementing a subdivision phasing program, where the number of blocks that could be created from a parent parcel within a given time period is limited.

LU 6.2.4 - Consider adding strong buffer and expanded setback regulations to the A-1 and R-8 Districts, particularly if the permitted densities are not lowered in these districts.

LU 6.3 - To help retain the character of Rural Lands, develop additional zoning and subdivision tools (e.g., scenic easement dedication requirements, increased minimum lot sizes, increased setbacks, and/or overlay districts) to protect and preserve scenic roadways such as Forge Road. Consider 400 foot setbacks along Community Character Corridors outside the PSA.

LU 7 - Develop tools for targeted open space preservation inside the PSA that work in concert with the tools used in the Rural Lands, while acknowledging that the PSA is the County's designated growth area.

LU 7.1 - Align eligibility criteria for applications for open space preservation with state and federal eligibility criteria for funding and other County efforts such as green infrastructure and greenway master planning, watershed preservation, and recreational planning, and prioritize properties at greatest threat of development. Monitor development trends and zoning regulations to periodically assess the threat of development and prioritization for properties inside the PSA versus those in Rural Lands.

LU 7.2 - Incorporate rural and open space preservation best practices within the new character design guidelines. Develop additional guidelines as necessary for specific resource protections including historic, environmental, or scenic resources.

LU 7.3 - Refine the buffer and setback standards specifically for visual character protection, addressing viewshed protection and maintenance of community character.

Goal

ENV - Continue to improve the high level of environmental quality in James City County and protect rural and sensitive lands and waterways that support the resiliency of our natural systems for the benefit of current and future generations.

Strategies and Actions

ENV 1 - Protect and improve the quality of water in County watersheds, wetlands, and waterways including water bodies that discharge into the Chesapeake Bay.

ENV 1.22 Conduct an analysis of the impacts of sea-level rise, tidal flooding, and nontidal flooding in the areas around Chickahominy Haven, Powhatan Shores, and other impacted areas based on the Work of Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency at Old Dominion University.

ENV 1.5.6 - Promote the preservation of open space in areas adjacent to marsh lands to allow for inland retreat of vegetation and additional water containment areas as sea level rises.

ENV 1.7 - Identify the specific existing and potential uses of County streams and rivers and identify standards necessary to support these uses. Protect the quality and quantity of these surface waters so they will continue to support these uses. Give consideration to protecting existing and potential water resource uses when reviewing land development applications.

ENV 3 - Protect and conserve environmentally sensitive areas, and work to maintain or promote the ecosystem services provided by all natural areas.

- ENV 3.1 - Maintain and promote biological and habitat diversity, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity by protecting wildlife and riparian corridors between watersheds, subwatersheds, catchments, and tidal and nontidal wetlands, and by developing and implementing a green infrastructure plan.
- ENV 3.2 - Develop specific recommendations for voluntary and regulatory means to protect resources identified in studies, such as the Regional Natural Areas Inventory, and watershed management plans for County watersheds.
- ENV 3.3 - Continue to update mandatory tree protection standards and examine tree canopy protection standards.
- ENV 3.4 - Continue to develop and enforce zoning regulations and other County Ordinances that preserve to the maximum extent practicable rare, threatened, and endangered species;

wetlands; flood plains; shorelines; wildlife habitats; natural areas; perennial streams; groundwater resources; and other environmentally sensitive areas.

- ENV 3.5 - Continue to gather and gain technical knowledge on data that is available to help the County identify and map its natural and cultural assets, and, where appropriate, use such data as an information tool to help guide decisions during the creation of regulations and policies to provide guidance to property owners and development proposal applicants on lands best suited for development, and to inform open space preservation efforts.
- ENV 3.6 - Ensure that site development projects, including those initiated by the County, are consistent with the protection of environmentally sensitive areas so that development projects do not exacerbate flooding in flood prone areas.
- ENV 3.7 - Seek to maintain and protect forested land and recognize the benefits it provides by sequestering carbon dioxide.

ENV 3.7.1 - Investigate changes to the Zoning Ordinance including renaming the A-1, General Agricultural District and re-examining lot sizes and clustering provisions to acknowledge and encourage preservation of forested land.

ENV 3.7.2 - Assemble a local flood resilience plan to address the County's flood resilience needs using existing plans where available and supplementing with additional documentation where necessary. Incorporate resiliency plan items from other chapters including Transportation, Land Use, and others.

ENV 4.9 Proactively work with private, local, regional, state and federal organizations to implement innovative solutions to improve air quality, including through the protection and enhancement of natural resources such as forest ecosystems.

ENV 4.6 - Investigate ways to amend the County Ordinances to address alternative energy production, and to amend ordinances or include special use permit conditions that protect and enhance natural resources on alternative energy production sites.

ENV 4.6.1. In Ordinances or as development approval conditions, include provisions to minimize clearing of forested land.

For reference purposes only, below are the original recommendations from the County's comprehensive plan consultants:

Within the PSA:

- Add a strategy that clearly prioritizes the purchase of development rights and green space programs for the areas within the PSA rather than the Rural Lands at such a time when zoning is changed to enhance rural lands protection.
- Define a set of eligibility criteria for applications for the Purchase of Development Rights and Green Space programs that are coordinated with state and federal eligibility criteria for funding.
- Incorporate rural and open space preservation best practices within the new character design guidelines
- Develop additional guidelines as necessary for specific resource protections including historic, environmental or scenic resources.
- Refine the buffer and setback standards specifically for visual character protection. This should include research into the types of conditions under which visual buffers for viewshed protection would be needed and the ideal types of buffers that help maintain community character.

Outside the PSA:

- More clearly describe the area outside the PSA as the County's intentional "greenbelt" where residential development should not occur except on very large lots with adequate protected open space.
- Clearly define a standard for a preferred minimum lot size that should be implemented in any rezoning approach in order to preserve rural character and a thriving rural economy (for example, as discussed above a minimum lot size of 20 acres or an average density of 1 unit per 20 acres if clustering is allowed have been shown to be a benchmark in the counties with the most successful rural preservation programs).
- Extend the applicable term of Agricultural/Forestral Districts beyond the existing four-year term.
- Include a recommendation for funding a staff position for a rural or agricultural development officer in the next budget to support and help acquire funding for rural protection programs.
- Reinforce the County's utility policy within the Comprehensive Plan to ensure protection of Rural Lands. For example, clarify that sewer and water cannot be extended into the Rural Lands.
- Add provisions that the central well requirements should not be removed without corresponding zoning provisions that would protect Rural Lands from development as a result of the removal of this traditional deterrent to rural residential subdivisions.
- Add a strategy to consider implementing a subdivision phasing program, where the number of blocks that could be created from a parent parcel within a given time period is limited.
- Add a strategy to consider adding strong buffer and expanded setback regulations to the A-1 and R-8 districts, particularly if the permitted densities are not lowered in these districts.