

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

The *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* (the Plan) has been developed as a tool for the county to prepare for the future. The Plan combines assessments and recommendations on a broad spectrum of topics and functions of the county that are essential to the continued health and vitality of the community. As the county has grown, it has become more important to ensure decisions are made about development in a coordinated manner. The *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* establishes a framework for land use decisions to be coordinated with transportation and public services improvements.

ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* will serve as the general guide for development in the county for the next twenty (20) years. The Plan provides information through four (4) steps: an assessment of current conditions and future needs; a vision, including goals and objectives for the county's future; policies for guidance; and actions and tools to implement the recommended policies. The county's previous comprehensive plan was composed of the *2010 Land Use Plan*, the *2010 Major Thoroughfare Plan* (transportation), and the *2015 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan*. With the *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* these components, as well as chapters addressing public facilities and utilities, have been updated simultaneously and coordinated into an inclusive and comprehensive document.

LEGAL BASIS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *Code of Virginia* (§15.2-2223) mandates Henrico County prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the land within its jurisdiction. The plan must include assessments of existing conditions, growth trends, and the future needs of the community. The plan must provide guidance intended to promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the inhabitants. The State Code also requires the plan to include transportation and land use components. The land use component is encouraged to provide policies for: the location of future public facilities such as parks, schools, waterworks, and sewage disposal; historical areas; areas for redevelopment; and areas of environmental significance. The plan must also address affordable housing within the county.

The *Code of Virginia* specifies the process for plan adoption. The Planning Commission must hold a public hearing prior to an official recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for adoption of the comprehensive plan or any parts thereof. After this public hearing, the Planning Commission may recommend approval of the plan, or amend and recommend approval of the plan, and forward it to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. If the Planning Commission recommends approval, it must adopt and forward a resolution to the Board of Supervisors, which must also hold a public hearing to meet the *Code of Virginia* requirements.

After the Board of Supervisors adopts the comprehensive plan, it may adopt amendments as needed. The process for adoption of amendments is the same as the

approval and adoption process required for the original plan. The State Code also requires the plan be reviewed at least every five (5) years to determine if amendments are advisable.

The general or approximate location, character and extent of public facilities are controlled by the adopted plan. Therefore, if a proposed street, park, public building, or public utility facility is not identified on the plan, the Planning Commission must find that the proposal is substantially in accord with the adopted comprehensive plan. Likewise, any widening, extension, deletion or change to roadways in the Major Thoroughfare Plan requires Commission approval and Board adoption of the amendments.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of this Plan began in November 2004, when the county retained consultants to assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The first part of plan development was the inventory and assessment phase. County staff and consultants reviewed inventories of existing facilities and land uses, and assessed the transportation network for current levels of service and areas where improvements were needed.

McBride Dale Clarion and the Survey Evaluation and Research Laboratory (SERL) at Virginia Commonwealth University prepared a citizens' survey which was distributed to 3,100 county households. The survey focused on various elements relevant to the Comprehensive Plan, and their level of importance. The survey results were used to support the development of goals and objectives for review by the Board of Supervisors.

The planning team reviewed demographic information and prepared population, housing, and employment forecasts. As part of the initial assessment, the consultants prepared a detailed capacity analysis for future development to determine where and how the county could accommodate future growth. After completion of the initial assessment of existing and forecasted future conditions, a three (3) day visioning session was conducted with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. This session culminated in a draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives, which helped guide the development of the remaining elements of the Plan.

A key feature of this planning process was the coordinated development of land use, transportation, and utility models. The team used these models to test proposed future land use alternatives and assess the implications of proposed land use patterns on other county systems. These assessment results were used to refine and tailor the various Plan policies to be complementary to one another.

A draft Plan was developed from these initial land use assessments and presented to the general public through a series of five (5) open houses in May, 2008. Citizen comments and requests for Land Use and Major Thoroughfare Plan revisions are

PLAN PROCESS

- **Inventories**
- **Trends & Forecasts**
- **Citizens' Survey**
- **Visioning**
- **Modeling of Scenarios**
- **Draft Plan**
- **Public Open Houses**
- **Adoption**

documented and available in the General Comments and Proposals for Revisions Manual.

The Plan is a result of cooperative work between many county departments. A Technical Advisory Committee worked closely with the planning staff and consultant team in reviewing and developing the various Plan elements. The members of the Technical Advisory Committee represented several individual departments so the Plan would reflect the comprehensive needs of the county.

PLAN CHAPTERS

The various chapters of this Plan are designed to provide information and guidance for future county development decisions. The Plan addresses the topics of land use, community character, redevelopment and revitalization, natural, cultural and historic resources, recreation and open space, transportation, public facilities, and utilities. Policy statements are supported by the Implementation Chapter which assigns responsibility and priority to the various plan recommendations.

The *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* incorporates the adopted elements of the county’s previously adopted Comprehensive Plan (*2010 Land Use Plan, 2010 Major Thoroughfare Plan, and the 2015 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan*) into one coordinated and comprehensive document. This new Plan also incorporates additional components including chapters on community character, public facilities and utilities. By incorporating all of these components into a coordinated plan and process, the county is better able to evaluate interrelationships between future development and the ability to maintain balanced and compatible growth, fiscal stability, and the need to coordinate new public facilities and utilities with growth.

Because the scope of this new Plan is broader than the previous Plan, the physical structure of the document has been updated to facilitate greater coordination between the various chapters, and help develop a cohesive and comprehensive vision to guide decisions in all growth areas.

The Plan is structured into twelve (12) chapters and an executive summary. The *Henrico County Vision 2026 Comprehensive Plan* includes the following:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the County presents a brief history of Henrico County and its development.

Chapter 2: Overview of the Plan establishes the purpose of the Plan, the legal basis for the Plan, the planning process, and a summary of the plan chapters.

CHAPTERS
▪ Introduction to the County
▪ Overview of the Plan
▪ Henrico Today
▪ Vision, Goals & Objectives
▪ Land Use
▪ Community Character
▪ Planning & Economic Focus Areas
▪ Natural Resources
▪ Recreation, Parks, Open Space, & Cultural Resources
▪ Transportation
▪ Public Facilities & Utilities
▪ Implementation

Chapter 3: Henrico Today presents a brief overview of existing county conditions to establish a starting point for the Plan. It also presents the forecasts used to establish Plan recommendations.

Chapter 4: The Vision, Goals & Objectives provides the guiding framework or overarching Vision for the Plan and establishes the goals and objectives that create the roadmap for the rest of the Plan to follow.

Chapter 5: Land Use presents the future land use designations for the county. The designations are grouped in Land Use Groups described in this chapter. This chapter also includes development policies called “Keystone Policies” for each land use group, the Future Land Use Map and development intensity recommendations.

Chapter 6: Community Character presents recommendations for future urban and non-urban characteristics. Appropriate character types are described for a range of development types, from rural, low-intensity conservation to suburban and urban. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and promote community character and a variety of quality development types. The chapter is further enhanced by the *Design Guidelines Manual* which is being developed parallel to the Plan as an implementation tool.

Chapter 7: Planning & Economic Focus Areas gives further direction on development recommendations for specific areas of the county requiring additional planning attention and are recommended for additional study or for a particular economic development use. This chapter is divided into three (3) sections: Special Strategy Areas, Prime Economic Development Sites, and the county’s Enterprise Zone. Special Strategy Areas are further broken into four (4) types of areas: Existing Character Protection Areas, Mixed-Use/Village Areas, Neighborhood Enhancement Study Areas and Revitalization/Reinvestment Opportunity Areas.

Chapter 8: Natural Resources identifies the county’s environmental resources and provides guidance on protecting, preserving and conserving these natural resources. This chapter also offers guidance related to watershed protection and natural and open space conservation.

Chapter 9: Recreation, Parks, Open Space, & Cultural Resources contains an update of the county’s *Update 2015 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan* and includes a summary of the existing facilities and policies guiding their development. Recommendations are also provided related to level of service standards, and planning for future facilities, and historic and cultural resource protection.

Chapter 10: Transportation presents future transportation recommendations which address the existing transportation facilities and identification of future needs for network improvements needed to coordinate Future Land Use recommendations. The updated Major Thoroughfare Plan Map is also included in this chapter.

Chapter 11: Public Facilities & Utilities provides general planning guidance for schools, police, fire/rescue, libraries, and water and sewer. The purpose of this chapter is to identify criteria for assessing potential future public facility locations, levels of service standards and locational criteria.

Chapter 12: Implementation organizes and prioritizes in matrix format, the various actions required to implement Plan recommendations. Assignment responsibilities are identified, including a task and time frame.

In addition to the individual chapters, several handbooks will be completed to support Plan implementation. These include:

- *The Henrico County Public Facilities Handbook*
- *The Henrico County Public Utilities Plan*
- *The Henrico County Design Guidelines Manual*
- *Zoning Analysis Report*

