



Land use patterns are a critical factor in determining how a community functions and grows. Through an analysis of current land use we can determine which patterns and worked well in the past and which need to change to facilitate growth in the future. By establishing a future growth and development map, the county can work toward creating a desirable pattern of development in the future. Planning for roads, utilities and other public services depends in part on effective planning for future land use. Future land use also informs the zoning which is important to residents and business owners who depend on zoning to create predictability in uses around where they live or work.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will establish a general framework for the physical development of the county. It includes an analysis of existing conditions and recommendations for where residential and commercial growth should happen and where there are important resources that should be protected. The land use plan ties the location of growth areas to the provision of utilities and public facilities discussed in other chapters of this document.

Existing Land Use

Land Use regulation is administered through various programs in the county including the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Building Code, Erosion and Sediment Control Flood Plain Management Program and Storm Water Ordinances. These programs help implement goals included in the comprehensive plan.

Zoning Ordinance

"Zoning" or "to zone" means the process of classifying land within a locality into areas and districts, such areas and districts being generally referred to as "zones." It is an important function of local government and Washington County has administered a land use zoning program since December 29, 1971. The current ordinance is included as Chapter 66 of the County Code. The ordinance is revised through amendments approved by the Board of Supervisors. The zoning map is amended through the rezoning process upon approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Subdivision Ordinance

While zoning regulations define permitted uses and ways in which land may be developed, subdivision regulations identify procedures for land divisions and contain requirements for infrastructure to serve new lots. A subdivision in Washington County is defined as the act, process, or result of the apportionment of a lot of land into three or more lots for the purpose whether immediate or future, of sale, transfer or building development, including the establishment of a condominium regime or two lots which involves the extension of any public water or public sewer service and/or that results in the creation of, or change in any street, road, easement or right-of-way. The county's first Subdivision Ordinance was adopted on December 11, 1967, and the most current update was adopted on July 1, 2005. The Subdivision Ordinance is included as Chapter 52 of the County Code. The purpose of the document is to establish standards for the division and subdivision of land and subsequent development. It also establishes standards for boundary line adjustments and the vacation of plats.

Building Code

Washington County enforces the Uniform Statewide Building Code Act, Code of Virginia, § 36-97 et seq. The provisions of the building code apply to existing and proposed buildings or structures in the county and controls all matters concerning the construction, alteration, addition, repair, removal, demolition, use, location, occupancy, maintenance and inspection of all buildings and structures, and all other functions which pertain to the installation of all plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems vital to

all buildings and structures and their service equipment as defined by the building code.

Floodplain Management

Washington County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In order to maintain eligibility of county property owners to purchase flood insurance, the County Zoning Ordinance contains provisions for the regulation of construction and other activities in designated flood hazard areas of Washington County. These designated flood hazard areas are established by FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Washington County which have been incorporated into the official county zoning map available through the county's netGIS database.

Erosion and Sediment Control

The Washington County Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance was adopted in October of 2008. The purpose of this ordinance is to prevent the degradation of properties, stream channels, waters and other natural resources of the county by establishing requirements for the control of soil erosion, sediment deposition and nonagricultural runoff and by establishing procedures by which these requirements are administered and enforced.

Storm Water Ordinance

The Washington County Stormwater Management Ordinance was adopted in 2014. A recent change to the Virginia Stormwater Management Program resulting from House Bill 1065 has mandated that all counties and cities adopt and administer a local stormwater management program. The purpose of the program is to protect water quality and to ensure that adequate measures are in place to effectively handle stormwater flows in natural or manmade channels.

Current Zoning

The zoning map shows current zoning in Washington County. As of 2014, the county utilizes 15 zoning district classifications. The Table titled “Land Use Statistics by Zoning District” provides an analysis of the number of parcels and acreage per zoning classification. The table includes the number of parcels which contain an addressed building and the number of vacant parcels available in each district.

The majority of land in the county in reference to both number of parcels and land mass is zoned A-1, Agriculture, Limited District. As of 2014 there are 11,325 parcels of land zoned A-1, Agricultural, Limited, representing 170,152 acres. The average parcel size in this district is 15.024 acres. The second largest zoning district land mass is the C-R, Conservation Recreation District, which contains much of the county's designated park land. The second largest zoning district in terms of number of parcels is in the A-2, Agricultural, General District, with 8,162 parcels.

Land Use Statistics By Zoning District						
Zoning District	Number of Parcels	Number of Addressed Buildings	Number of Vacant Parcels	Total Acreage in Zoning District	Average Parcel Size Per District	% of Land
A-1, Agricultural, Limited	11,325	6258	5,848	170,152 acres	15.024 acres	48.8%
A-2, Agricultural, General	8,162	5493	3,606	57,075 acres	6.99 acres	16.4%
Airport District	39	15	35	260 acres	6.66 acres	0.07%
B-2, Business, General	804	757	289	1,739 acres	2.16 acres	0.5%
CR, Conservation Recreation	2,437	1431	1,228	61,715 acres	25.32 acres	17.7%
HR, Highland Recreation District	659	266	421	25,978 acres	39.42 acres	7.5%
Konnarock District	303	184	148	3,573 acres	11.79 acres	1.0%
M-1, Industrial, Limited	115	63	60	1,609 acres	13.99 acres	0.5%
M-2, Industrial, General	95	46	56	1,474 acres	15.5 acres	0.4%
MHR, Residential, Manufactured Home	14	45	4	42 acres	3.0 acres	0.01%
P-1, Planned Unit Development, Limited	113	62	51	70 acres	.62 acres	0.2%
R-1, Residential, Limited	2,381	1725	688	4,446 acres	1.87 acres	1.3%
R-2, Residential, General	6,937	4839	2,307	15,082 acres	2.17 acres	4.3%
SR, Shoreland Recreation	986	700	471	4,145 acres	4.20 acres	1.2%
Village District	551	448	154	758 acres	1.38 acres	0.2%
Source: Washington County GIS, 2014						

Summary of Zoning Districts

AGRICULTURAL, LIMITED DISTRICT (A-1) - The A-1 limited agricultural district covers the portions of the county which are occupied by various open uses, such as forests, parks, farms, lakes or mountains. The A-1 limited agricultural district is established for the specific purpose of facilitating existing and future farming operations, conservation of water and other natural resources, reducing soil erosion, protecting watersheds, and reducing hazards from flood and fire. Uses not consistent with the existing character of the A-1 limited agricultural district are not permitted.

AGRICULTURAL, GENERAL DISTRICT (A-2) - Generally, the A-2 general agricultural district covers the portion of the county into which urban-type development could logically expand as the need occurs. As a general rule, it surrounds residential sections. Domestic water and sewerage facilities, police and fire protection, and other services necessary to accommodate urban-type development already exist in the district or can be economically extended as urbanization takes place. The A-2 general agricultural district is established for the specific purpose of providing for the orderly expansion of urban development into territory surrounding incorporated areas within or adjacent to the county, confining such development to such locations as can feasibly be supplied urban-type facilities, and discouraging the random scattering of residential, commercial and industrial uses into the area.

AIRPORT DISTRICT - The airport district is intended for the protection of the utility of the Virginia Highlands airport and the public investment in the facilities located at the airport now and in the future, and to further the economic development of the county through providing necessary air transportation services to the county, to prevent obstructions that have the potential for endangering the lives and property of the users of the airport and the residents of the county, reduce the size of areas available for landing, takeoff and maneuvering of aircraft, or otherwise destroy or impair the utility of the airport. It is declared that in the interest of the public health, safety and general welfare that the creation or establishment of the airport district is of benefit to the county because of the enhanced potential for economic development and interstate commerce derived from the airport facility.

BUSINESS, LIMITED DISTRICT (B-1) - The primary purpose of the B-1 limited business district is to establish and protect a business district that will serve the surrounding residential districts. Traffic and parking congestion in the B-1 limited business district is to be held to a minimum to protect and preserve property values in the surrounding residential districts, and insofar as possible all neighborhood business development shall take place in a limited business district. The minimum

area of such the B-1 limited business district shall be one block and only include such activities as are necessary for the day-to-day operation of a normal household. In most instances the B-1 limited business district is not located on major traffic arteries. (Note: No property within Washington County is zoned B-1)

BUSINESS, GENERAL, DISTRICT (B-2) - Generally the B-2 general business district covers that portion of the community intended for the conduct of governmental, professional and general commercial (predominately retail) business to which the public requires direct and frequent access, but which is not generally characterized either by constant heavy trucking other than stocking and delivery of light retail goods or by any nuisance factors other than occasioned by incidental light and noise or congregation of people and passenger vehicles. Other uses of a predominately nonretail commercial character or those which may significantly contribute to nuisance factors may be permitted in the B-2 general business district by special exception on a case-by-case basis after evaluation of the relative impact of such uses or activities on the surrounding area and establishing mitigating conditions for such uses where deemed necessary.

CONSERVATION RECREATION DISTRICT (CR) - The objective of the CR conservation and recreation district is the preservation of open space for recreation and other compatible uses consistent with some of the present characteristics. In order to prevent future indiscriminate development, it is the intent of this division to promote orderly, but limited, growth. Since much of the land area in this district has slope steepness in excess of 20 percent, it precludes intensive development for most uses. This district includes, but is not limited to, all of the land north of the north fork of the Holston River. Any new growth that occurs in this district should not be in conflict with the existing public recreation facilities. Thus, such development must be of particular interest to the whole community, and it must be planned for before development occurs. In all instances, the development should be limited to sparse occupation for purposes of safety, health, convenience, order, etc., of the community.

HIGHLAND RECREATION DISTRICT (HR) - The HR highland recreation district consists of all of the National Recreation Area (NRA) within the county as designated by the United States Congress. In order to accomplish the necessary controls for this area, the boundaries of this district shall be concurrent with those of the national recreation area. The intent is to keep the use of privately owned land within the national recreation area and on this designated perimeter in harmony with the rural American theme of the national recreation area. It is not intended that these lands should develop intensively for residence, either year round or second homes. It is the intent that the primary uses will be forestry and

agriculture together with certain recreational activities appropriate to the mountains.

KONNAROCK DISTRICT - Konnarock, by its proximity to the main attractions of the National Recreation Area around Whitetop Mountain and Mount Rogers, must be guarded from development that would be detrimental to the natural beauty and culture of the region. It is the intent of this division to help with maintaining its uniqueness while still permitting orderly development.

INDUSTRIAL, LIMITED DISTRICT (M-1) - The primary purpose of the M-1 limited industrial district is to permit certain industries and businesses that may have an adverse effect in the business districts, which with appropriate restrictions should not detract from adjacent residential uses. The limitations on or provisions relating to height of buildings, horsepower, heating, flammable liquids or explosives, controlling emission of fumes, odors or noise, landscaping, buffering requirements, restrictions on proximity to adjacent uses, and the number of persons employed in the M-1 limited industrial district are imposed to protect and foster adjacent residential desirability.

INDUSTRIAL, GENERAL DISTRICT (M-2) - The primary purpose of the M-2 general industrial district is to establish an area where the principal use of land is for heavy commercial and industrial operations, which may create some nuisance and businesses that may have an adverse effect in the business districts, and which are not properly associated with, nor particularly compatible with, residential, institutional and neighborhood commercial service establishments. The specific intent of the M-2 district is to:

- (1) Encourage the construction of and the continued use of the land for heavy commercial and industrial purposes and

businesses that may have an adverse effect in the business districts.

- (2) Prohibit residential and neighborhood commercial use of the land and prohibit any other use which would substantially interfere with the development, continuation and expansion of commercial and industrial uses in the district.

- (3) Encourage the discontinuance of existing uses that would not be permitted as new uses under the provisions of this chapter.

RESIDENTIAL, MANUFACTURED HOME DISTRICT (MHR)

- The MHR manufactured home residential district is composed of certain quiet, low- to medium-density residential areas plus certain open areas where similar residential development appears likely to occur. The regulations for the MHR manufactured home residential district are designed to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of the district, to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life and to discourage all activities of a commercial nature. To these ends, development in the MHR manufactured home residential district is limited to relatively medium concentration, and permitted uses are limited basically to single-family and two-family dwellings, manufactured homes, plus certain additional uses which are complementary to the residential uses.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT, LIMITED, DISTRICT (P-1)

- The planned unit development (PUD) is a concept which encourages and permits variation in residential developments by allowing deviation in lot size, bulk or type of dwelling, density, lot coverage, and open space from that required in any other residential district. The purpose of deviation is to permit the developer to create a unique residential environment in terms of character, amenities and spatial elements.



Appropriate commercial uses may be provided in addition to a variety of residential uses. It is intended that commercial development if provided be limited to a scale appropriate to the support of the residential uses within the planned unit development; provided that additional commercial activity may be permitted upon a finding that the area in which the planned unit development is to be located is not adequately served by such uses.

RESIDENTIAL, LIMITED DISTRICT (R-1) - The R-1 limited residential district is composed of certain quiet, low-density residential areas plus certain open areas where similar residential development appears likely to occur. The regulations for this district are designed to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of the district, to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life where there are children, and to prohibit all activities of a commercial nature. To these ends, development in the R-1 limited residential district is limited to relatively low concentration; and permitted uses are limited basically to single-unit dwellings providing homes for the residents plus certain additional uses, such as schools, parks, churches, and certain public facilities that serve the residents of the district. No home occupations (including room renting) are permitted in the R-1 limited residential district.

RESIDENTIAL, GENERAL DISTRICT (R-2) - The R-2 general residential district is composed of certain medium to high concentration of residential uses, ordinarily located between residential and commercial areas, plus certain open areas where similar development appears likely to occur. The regulations for the R-2 general residential district are designed to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of the district; to promote and encourage, insofar as compatible with the intensity of land use, a suitable environment for family life composed of an adult population with some children; and to permit certain commercial uses of a character unlikely to develop general concentration of traffic, crowds of customers, and general outdoor advertising. To these ends retail activity in the R-2 general residential district is sharply limited, and this district is protected against encroachment of general commercial or industrial uses. All residential types of structures for both permanent and transient occupancy, including institutions, are permitted, plus structures for commercial uses conforming to the pattern of the district. The R-2 general residential district is not completely residential as it includes public and semipublic, institutional and other related uses. However, the R-2 general residential district is basically residential in character and, as such, should not be spotted with commercial and industrial uses.

SHORELAND RECREATION DISTRICT (SR) - The SR shoreland recreation district contains the land area adjacent to the South Holston Reservoir. The regulations for this

district are designed to provide standards for the orderly development of land surrounding the reservoir, to protect the public access to the reservoir and to prevent pollution, including sedimentation. This district should be low-density development from the maximum contour elevation of 1,747 feet to State Route 664; and in all other areas surrounding the lake, the outside boundary line shall be located 500 feet from the Tennessee Valley Authority easement boundary line. This district shall also include all land located below the 1,747-foot elevation subject to flowage easements rights required by the Tennessee Valley Authority for the operation of South Holston Reservoir.

VILLAGE DISTRICT - Certain conglomerate communities exist in the county, and for the most part these communities remain as crossroad developments. In order to prevent the continuation of such haphazard development of mixed uses in a limited space, it is proposed to control the potential growth by these regulations. This is necessary because none of these communities is large enough to institute effective controls adequately and efficiently by its own contrivances. In these smaller compacted communities, it is desirable to establish a set of standards for expanding growth. The basic elements contained in this division are created to permit orderly growth to occur so that these communities may become viable local trade and service centers of the county. Included in this array of smaller unincorporated communities are Clinchburg, Emory, Greendale, Meadowview, Mendota and Taylor's Valley.

FLOOD HAZARD DISTRICT (FH) - The purpose of the FH flood hazard district is to prevent the loss of life and property, the creation of health and safety hazards, the disruption of commerce and governmental services, the extraordinary and unnecessary expenditure of public funds for flood protection and relief, the impairment of the tax base, and the loss of recognizable ecological values, by:

- (1) Regulating uses, activities and developments that, acting along or in combination with other existing or future uses, activities and developments, will cause unacceptable increases in flood heights, velocities, and frequencies.
- (2) Restricting or prohibiting certain uses, activities and development from locating within areas subject to flooding.
- (3) Requiring all those uses, activities and developments that do occur in floodprone areas to be protected and/or floodproofed against flooding and flood damage.
- (4) Protecting individuals from buying lands and structures that are unsuited for intended purposes because of flood hazards.

Development Patterns and Trends

Development trends can be examined through several sources including building permit data, aerial photography, and land use (rezoning, special exception and plat) applications. Over the past decade, Washington County has seen trends in rezoning proposals, special exception applications and plat applications as illustrated in the following tables.

In the ten year time frame between 2004 and 2014, 70 rezoning applications were filed and 65 were approved. Applications requesting rezoning from R-2 to A-2 were most numerous with 15 requests. Requests from A-2 to B-2 were second with 11 requests. The peak year for rezoning requests was 2008. 17 applications were filed that year. The most common rezoning requests made during that year were from R-2 to A-2 (15 requests) and from A-2 to B-2 (11 requests).

114 Special Exception Permit applications were filed between 2004 and 2014. 101 of those applications were approved. An analysis of Special Exception Permit data shows that similar requests were made multiple times between 2001 and 2014. The most frequent request, six in total, was for mini storage warehouse. This was followed by requests for manufactured housing units (five requests) and applications to operate a day care (four requests). Repeat applications were made for the expansion of a rest home, telecom uses, RV parks, restaurant and a horse barn.

Between 2005 and 2013, the Washington County Office of Zoning Administration processed 1,547 plats. This total includes plats processed for the purpose of creating new parcels and plats processed to adjust a boundary line. An analysis of all plats show that 787 new parcels were created in Washington County between 2005 and 2013. 161 parcels of the 787, were created from family divisions.

Washington County Rezoning Applications 2004-2014

2004	1 Application	1 Approved
2005	15 Applications	12 Approved
2006	11 Applications	11 Approved
2007	2 Applications	2 Approved
2008	17 Applications	16 Approved
2009	1 Application	1 Tabled
2010	7 Applications	7 Approved
2011	1 Application	1 Approved
2012	2 Applications	2 Approved
2013	13 Applications	13 Approved
2014	2 Applications	2 Approved
2004 - 2014	72 Applications	67 Approved

Source: Washington County Zoning Department, 2014

Special Exception Applications and Approvals 2004-2014

Year	Number of Applications	Result
2004	26 Applications	23 Approved
2005	17 Applications	17 Approved
2006	21 Applications	19 Approved
2007	9 Applications	7 Approved
2008	11 Applications	11 Approved
2009	10 Applications	8 Approved
2010	6 Applications	5 Approved
2011	3 Applications	3 Approved
2012	2 Applications	2 Approved
2013	10 Applications	10 Approved
2014	17 Applications	14 Approved, 1 Tabled, 2 Continued
2004 - 2014	132 Applications	119 Approved

Source: Washington County Zoning Department, 2014

The population forecast in Washington County suggests growth through 2040. To accommodate population growth, it is important to consider the approximate number of dwelling units that may be needed to house additional population. It is possible to project a simple approximation of units that may be needed in the future. This assessment is based on assumptions: population estimates and the premise that current household size will be maintained in the future. It is also important to note that this estimate does not account for unknown variables, positive or negative, which may drive housing needs. These factors may include economic circumstances, natural disasters, and external private factors, such as the location or vacation of a large business or industry. The formula to determine an estimate for the additional number of housing units needed is summarized as follows:

$$\text{Population Estimate (By Year)} - \text{2010 Population} = \text{Population Increase}$$

$$\text{Population Increase} / \text{Household Size} = \text{Additional Number of Housing Units Needed}$$

Population Estimate Year	Population Estimate (Weldon Cooper)	2010 Population (U.S. Census)	Population Increase	2010 Household Size (U.S. Census)	Additional Number of Housing Units Needed
2020	57,040	54,876	2,164	2.32	932
2030	58,800	54,876	3,924	2.32	1691
2040	60,402	54,876	5,526	2.32	2382

Based on these projections and the number of vacant lots available in Table "Land Use Statistics", adequate buildable lots are likely available through 2040. The residential zoning districts alone, R-1 and R-2, contain almost 3,000 vacant parcels however it is important to note that many zoning districts allow for single family residential homes. Only the R-2 zoning district allows multi-family development by right. It may be appropriate to consider rezonings to provide additional space for multi-family units should market demand it. The B-2, Konnarock, and Village Districts provide a special exception process for approval of multi-family projects. By-right subdivisions will continue to occur during the planning period which will provide additional inventory and other mixed use projects which include a housing component may be desirable.

Building permit data shows a decline in residential building permits since 2000 as was the trend across much of the nation. Between 2000 and 2014, 2,262 new single family homes were permitted in Washington County. 1,811 mobile homes were added to the county's housing stock. Approximately 4,213 total housing units were added between 2000 and 2013.

LAND USE

Building Permit Data 2000-2013				
Calendar Year	Residential - New Single Family Permit	Residential – New Multifamily Permit	Residential – Other*	Mobile Homes
2000	247	9	101	259
2001	200	16	144	210
2002	212	16	122	194
2003	186	9	119	187
2004	246	17	103	152
2005	238	5	98	136
2006	202	18	33	128
2007	179	8	101	100
2008	133	23	96	94
2009	92	4	86	97
2010	91	7	79	73
2011	95	4	124	47
2012	72	3	86	75
2013	69	1	81	59
2014	54	2	93	59
Total	2316	142	1466	1870
Source: Washington County Department of Building and Development Services, 2014 *Permits issued to existing units for repairs, rehabilitation, additions.				

Approximately 3,083 acres of land or 210 parcels in the county is zoned for industrial uses. 109 parcels of this land are utilized and 116 parcels are vacant. The county has five established industrial parks with vacancies in Oak Park and Highlands Business Park. With vacancies available in existing parks and industrial zoned parcels available, the amount of land needed for industrial development may be adequate. Additional need may be driven by manufacturing or industry requests. The county should monitor market demand and consider rezoning additional prime industrial tracts, especially those with rail access, as needed to support economic development efforts.

1,739 acres of land is currently zoned B-2 or Business, General, District. 289 parcels out of 804 are vacant. B-2 zoning is currently the only defined commercial zoning in the county but i other zoning classifications, including M-1 and M-2, allow for commercial uses. A-1 and A-2 allow some business uses by right or through special exception approval. The Zoning Ordinance contains a defined zoning classification of B-1, or Business, Limited District but no parcel in the county is zoned B-1. The purpose of the B-1 District is to establish a business district that will serve surrounding residential districts. The district allows business uses which support residential areas and do not generate noise or traffic. Should the Zoning Ordinance be amended in the future, careful study should be undertaken to determine the best use for the B-1 zoning district.

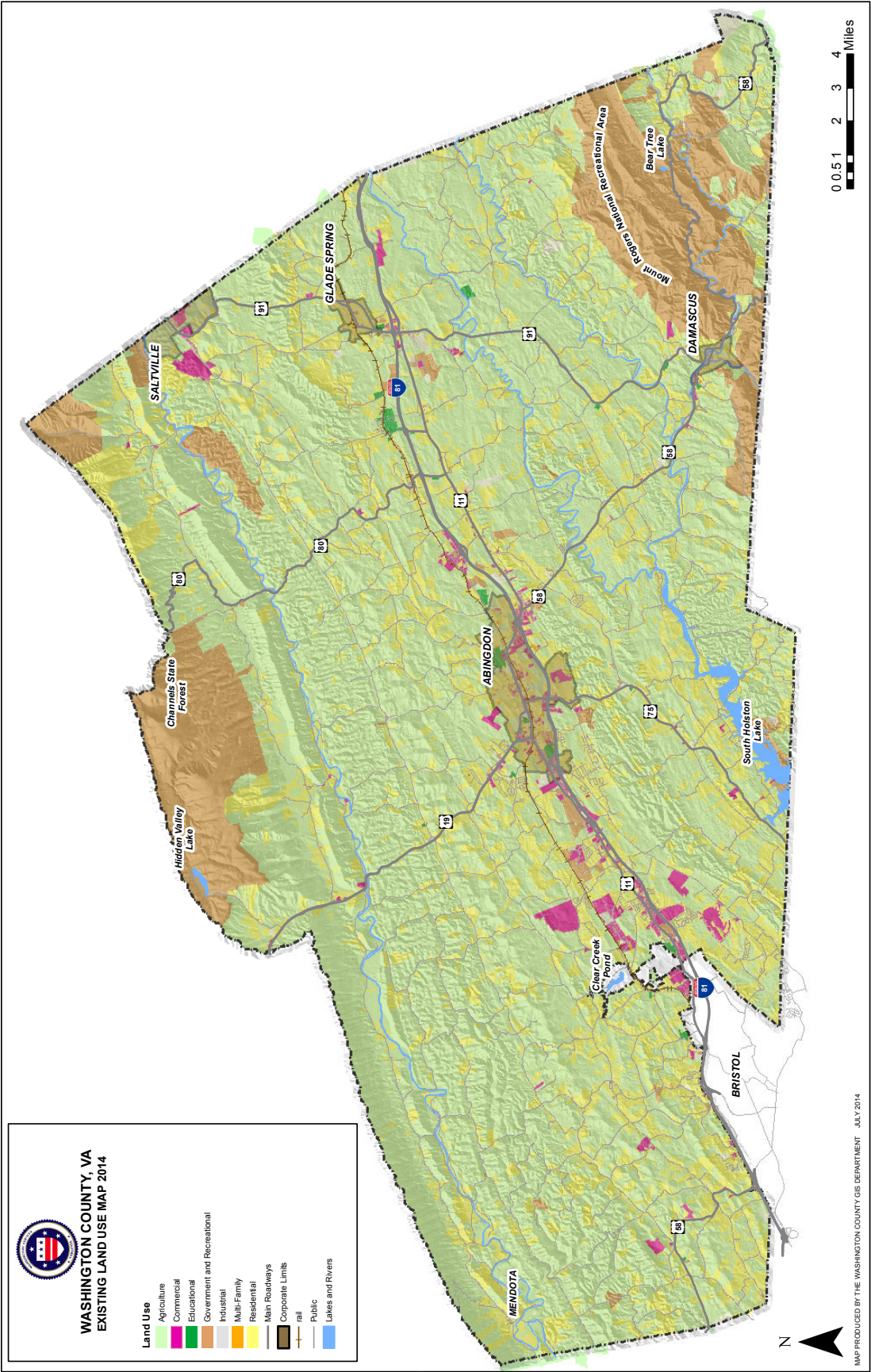
Existing Land Use Map

The existing character and land use pattern in Washington County is semi-rural and with commercial growth along a few key corridors. The more rural areas of the county are characterized by small farms, forests and residential development and the majority of growth in the county has occurred in the past three decades. Commercial growth has occurred along the U.S.11/Lee Highway corridor and around the exits along Interstate 81. Several suburban style subdivisions have been located in the more rural areas of the county as large family farms and estates have occasionally been subdivided into smaller lots to provide additional single-family development.

Since adoption of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, the county has seen more concentrated develop occur along the central corridor of the county, along Interstate 81 and Lee Highway/U.S. 11. The County has witnessed commercial growth along the Lee Highway/U.S. 11 corridor with the development of the Highlands Shopping Center near Exit 7 and the adjacent to the new Johnson Memorial Hospital between Exit 19 and 22. Two truck stops have been approved at Interstate 81 Exits 24 and 29. The truck stop approved at Exit 29 has been constructed. Major commercial projects have included large shopping strip centers with big box retailers, smaller strip centers with neighborhood retail and business development in industrial parks. Small businesses which serve the neighborhood centers are scattered throughout the county.

The existing land use map illustrates current land uses utilizing real estate assessment data obtained in 2013. and existing zoning information.

LAND USE



Future Growth

Factors that Impact Growth and Development

Washington County's location, physical features, transportation network, business climate, and quality of life are assets to drive future growth and development. As the county focuses on economic development and population forecasts suggest an increase, growth is inevitable. However, natural features can also impact potential growth. Natural features are important because they provide a sense of place but they may influence development. Examples of these features are wetlands, bodies of water, karst formations, flood plain areas and steep slopes. These features are described in the Natural and Cultural Resources chapter of this document.

In addition to physical features, water and wastewater infrastructure are important determinants of future growth. Development should be encouraged in areas that are served by public utilities, are planned for service within a rational timeline or can be economically extended. A discussion of current and planned infrastructure projects is included in the Community Facilities chapter of the document.

Planning Challenges and Opportunities

AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION

The county has roots as a rural community where farming was, and still is, very important to the overall character and economic strength of the county. Preserving our agricultural resources also provides opportunities to conserve and efficiently use other resources such as water, scenic, and environmentally sensitive features. It is evident from community participation results that working to minimize the loss of agricultural land and preservation of rural character is important to the citizens of Washington County. The rural areas of the county provide space for agriculture, forestry and open space.

Between 2007 and 2012, the number of farms in the county decreased from 1,791 in 2007 to 1,602 in 2012. The total acreage of farm land in the county also decreased from 198,850 in 2007 to 192,123 acres in 2012. The average size of farms in Washington County as of 2012 is 120 acres.¹

As discussed in other chapters, the cost of providing infrastructure to rural areas is great and residential development of agricultural land can cause conflict between residential and agricultural uses. The county should develop a program to promote appreciation of agriculture in the community. The program could educate county residents about economic value, the importance of preserving large, un-fragmented parcels and tools available for land conservation. Because rural living is attractive to many people relocating to the area, the program could educate potential residents in rural areas that there may be disagreeable aspects to rural living such as noise, odor and slow moving farm equipment in roadways but that our rural areas are places for agricultural business as well as countryside to be enjoyed.

One of the most important ways to minimize the loss of agricultural land and maintain rural land uses is to maintain large, un-fragmented tracts of land. Large lot zoning is farmland protection technique utilized by some municipalities. It establishes a large minimum lot size for non-agricultural residential development. Past efforts to increase the minimum parcel size have been unsuccessful therefore other tools must be utilized to minimize development pressure in rural areas. Such tools may include:

- Continue the Land Use program which helps preserve rural lands by reducing tax rates for qualifying lands utilized for agricultural or open space purposes. A minimum of five acres without a dwelling is required in order to qualify for the program. If there is a home on the property, six acres is required to qualify for the program.
- Developing a guide for conservation development or cluster development in rural areas and revise zoning ordinance if needed to allow for such development. Such development can reduce the impact of residential development in rural areas by encouraging effective land use and maximizing open space. Cluster development may allow development on smaller parcels in exchange for open

¹ Census of Agriculture, 2012.

LAND USE

space which protects agricultural land. This style of development can reduce lower development costs to the landowner or developer.

- Study ways to offset financial pressure to subdivide land through alternative land use opportunities such as home occupations, farm stands, wineries, special event facilities or businesses related to outdoor or heritage tourism.
- Encourage agricultural preservation through voluntary easement programs.
- Study means to amend zoning ordinance to allow farm structures on land that is currently farmed to be rebuilt without requiring special exception or rezoning approval.
- Consider a sliding scale for number of dwelling units permitted large tracts of land regardless of type of dwelling unit. This could provide opportunity for farm or land management housing by allowing additional mobile homes on large parcels. Such a technique should not be used to encourage manufactured home parks without appropriate infrastructure.

WESTERN WASHINGTON COUNTY

The western portion of Washington is poised for potential growth, generated by additional wastewater capacity provided by a new wastewater treatment facility planned along Bordwine Road, between Lee Highway and Clear Creek Road, and the development of the area west of Interstate 81, adjacent to the Virginia/Tennessee state line. Potential exists for a commercial, office, residential or a mixed-use project in this area. The county should work to study this area to anticipate future development needs.

INTERSTATE 81, EXIT 7

Exit 7, west of Interstate I-81, near U.S. 11, has continued to experience commercial growth. Recent Washington County projects include the Highlands Shopping Center and Southwest Virginia Clean Energy Research and Development Center. Development will be encouraged by transportation improvements in the area and a water line upgrade. The county should continue to monitor this area and anticipate future development needs.

INTERSTATE 81, EXIT 10

Possibility for redevelopment and expanded commercial development exists near the Exit 10 area. Development may be stimulated by transportation improvements and waste water upgrades.

INTERSTATE 81, EXIT 13

Potential exists for redevelopment and/or commercial development in the vicinity of Exit 13. This exit provides primary access for Oak Park and the Virginia Highlands Airport. Improved wastewater capacity in the area will present commercial prospects for large, vacant commercial sites between Exits 13 and 14.

INTERSTATE 81, EXIT 19

Significant commercial development has occurred in the vicinity of Exit 19 in the past ten years. Opportunity exists for additional commercial development but the county should monitor need and impact in the area for traffic and access given that Exit 19 is in need of upgrades. The Johnson Memorial Hospital, constructed along U.S. 11, between Exits 19 and 22, will continue to spur development in the area.



U.S. ROUTE 58

Road improvements along Route 58 from Abingdon to Damascus may create development pressure along the corridor. Consideration and study should be given to the type development that should be encouraged to take place along the corridor.

OFFICE LAND USE CLASSIFICATION

Currently the Zoning Ordinance does include general office as an allowed use in the business, B-2 District. This should be remedied should a corporate office or office complex desire to locate in Washington County.

ENERGY RESOURCES

Significant advances in energy research have occurred in the past ten years and present opportunity for the production or extraction of wind, solar, biomass and natural gas sources in Washington County. The county should investigate and implement ordinances as appropriate to allow for exploration of these energy sources while protecting environmentally sensitive areas and minimizing impact on adjacent residential and commercial areas.



Solar Panels located at the Clean Energy Research and Development Center.

NEW VILLAGE DISTRICTS

Consider opportunities for new Village Districts or crossroad areas suitable for rezoning to the Business, Limited, District (B-1). The Village District zoning district acknowledges need for commercial development at certain crossroads in smaller communities. The ordinance establishes standards to permit orderly growth in certain communities so that they may become local trade and service centers of the county. Included as examples are Clinchburg, Emory, Greendale, Meadowview, Mendota and Taylor's Valley. Due to the rural nature of the county, additional village nodes may be appropriate in other areas of the county. Additional study is required to determine appropriate location and uses for new commercial crossroads.

UTILIZATION OF BUSINESS, LIMITED, DISTRICT (B-1)

The Zoning Ordinance contains a defined zoning classification of B-1, or Business, Limited District but no parcel in the county is zoned B-1. The purpose of the B-1 District is to establish a business district that will serve surrounding residential districts. A study should be undertaken to determine the if there are areas that may be better suited for the B-1 zoning district, defined as a commercial activity serving a neighborhood rather than general commercial activity as defined by the B-2, Business, General District.

CONSIDERATION OF DESIGN STANDARDS FOR COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The county should consider creating voluntary design standards for commercial projects along primary corridors such as Lee Highway/U.S. 11, Porterfield Highway/U.S. 19 and U.S. 58 and in the vicinity of I-81 Exits. Design Standards can guide and accommodate growth while maintaining and enhancing the character of the county.

CONSIDER ADDITION OF MIXED USE, TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN ORDINANCE AND REVISE EXISTING PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Consider addition of Mixed Use, Traditional Neighborhood Design Ordinance and/or revise Planned Unit Development Ordinance to allow different products if the market demands it. These projects can be efficient in terms of land use and service delivery but should only be encouraged where infrastructure is available.

CONSIDER ADDITION OF MODERN MANUFACTURING DEFINITIONS FOR USE IN THE BUSINESS, GENERAL, DISTRICT (B-2).

Manufacturing has changed in recent years and consideration of modern manufacturing uses that do not result in nuisance to adjacent properties should be considered in the B-2 District. Several sites in the B-2 District, in proximity to Exit 13 as an example, could be potential sites for manufacturing use once wastewater capacity is available. Modern manufacturing should be approved through the special exception permit process.

DEVELOP REVIEW STANDARDS FOR REZONING/SPECIAL EXCEPTION PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Develop standards of review to aid in evaluation of rezoning or special exception permit applications. These standards should be based on the "Matters to be considered in drawing and applying zoning ordinances and districts" as listed in Virginia Code §15.2-2284.

DEVELOPMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE INDEXING SYSTEM.

Develop administrative indexing system for all land use applications submitted to better collect, analyze and report information on land use activity.

Consider collaborating with nearby colleges and universities to conduct planning and design studies.

Future Land Use Map

The future land use map establishes a preferred land use pattern that proposes development in areas that are presently served by public utilities or planned for service. The map is general in nature and is not intended to be parcel specific. It does not prescribe specific land uses for parcels but describes an overall desirable pattern for future development within Washington County. The map directs development towards areas that can accommodate growth.

Future Land Use Classifications

COMMERCIAL – Commercial land use within the county provides goods and services needed to support suburban development, and generates tax revenues that enable the local government to perform necessary functions in support of the population.

Local consumer oriented commercial uses are not recommended to be located away from established surface transportation facilities and service centers. These are located at Interstate intersections with public services, and near established towns or existing development centers. Smaller scale convenience stores located near neighborhoods should be accommodated and encouraged.

Higher density residential projects, including apartments, condominiums, planned unit developments and mixed use projects should be considered in this land use classification.

INDUSTRIAL – Industrial land use provides employment opportunities for the county residents and the region, as well as a basis for supporting economic activity. Care should be taken that industrial land is maintained for industry. Introducing residential uses in and around industrial properties can create conflict between commercial and residential traffic.

OPEN SPACE – The Open Space category generally includes land with prime agricultural soils, working farms, agricultural accessory uses, forestry uses or currently zoned agricultural properties. This classification also includes rural residential areas of moderately low-density rural/suburban development patterns.

Agricultural land is valuable both as a commodity and as a natural resource, and this category is intended to help maintain and strengthen the agricultural economy as well as a way of life. Agriculture should remain the predominant use in these areas. However, non-farm uses may be considered acceptable if such areas are designed to conform to the rural atmosphere found in the surrounding area. It is recommended that the agricultural lands in the county continue to be divided into two zoning classifications: Agricultural, Limited (A-1) and Agricultural, General (A-2). The purpose of this recommendation is to acknowledge that certain farmlands in the county may transition to non-farm uses. These areas will provide some housing opportunities for the county as well as provide a buffering area for active farming operations.

- **AGRICULTURE, LIMITED (A-1)** will identify those lands, which should remain in farming for the foreseeable future. Non-farm commercial or industrial uses should not be permitted.
- **AGRICULTURE, GENERAL (A-2)** should apply to those areas that will preferably remain in farming but could experience some transition to non-farm use. Developments in these areas should incorporate open space into the developments and make use of planned unit development regulations or other site design tools whenever possible. Planned development regulations allow for the developer, or property owner, and the county to work together to design site plans that preserve the rural character while offering a variety of dwelling types and lot sizes. Industrial uses should not be encouraged.

HIGHLANDS – Open space and conservation uses are encouraged in the Highlands classification to preserve agricultural, forest, steep slopes (over 20% relief), flood plains, and karst topographic areas. Much of these areas are currently and will in the future be protected in varying degrees by other governmental agencies and regulations. Washington County should encourage protection of these sensitive lands through zoning, voluntary easements, and public open space initiatives.

RESIDENTIAL – The residential category includes residential developments of a variety of densities in areas where public water service is available, planned, or can be economically extended. This includes Traditional Neighborhood Developments, PUDs, and Planned Villages/Hamlets, and traditional single family detached housing. The areas having greatest potential for such expansion are those, which have relatively easy access to surface transportation, public utilities and suburban support services. These lie along the central growth corridor for the most part in close proximity to Bristol, Abingdon, and Glade Spring. The following conditions should be present for residential development:

1. The development should have access to a major roadway without using adjacent street or road. This would be necessary to accommodate the traffic volumes created by higher density development.
2. The development should be adequately serviced by public water facilities. Higher density developments should be encouraged in areas with adequate infrastructure.
3. Development should be in proximity to other high-density residential, commercial or industrial uses. The developments should be located adjacent to compatible uses to encouraged orderly growth, and should avoid building that is out of scale in size and density with the surroundings.

VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS AIRPORT - This category includes land occupied by the Virginia Highlands Airport and land needed for future airport facilities. The intention for this classification is to protect the utility of the Virginia Highlands Airport, preserve airspace, preserve access and prevent obstructions that have the potential for endangering the lives and property of airport users and residents of the county.

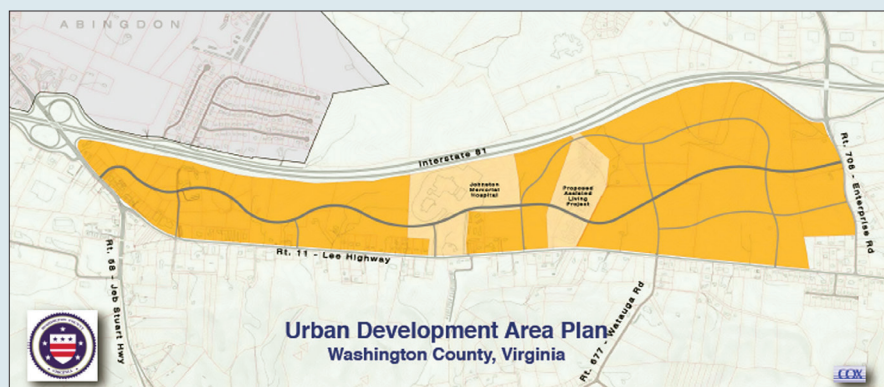
Urban Development Area

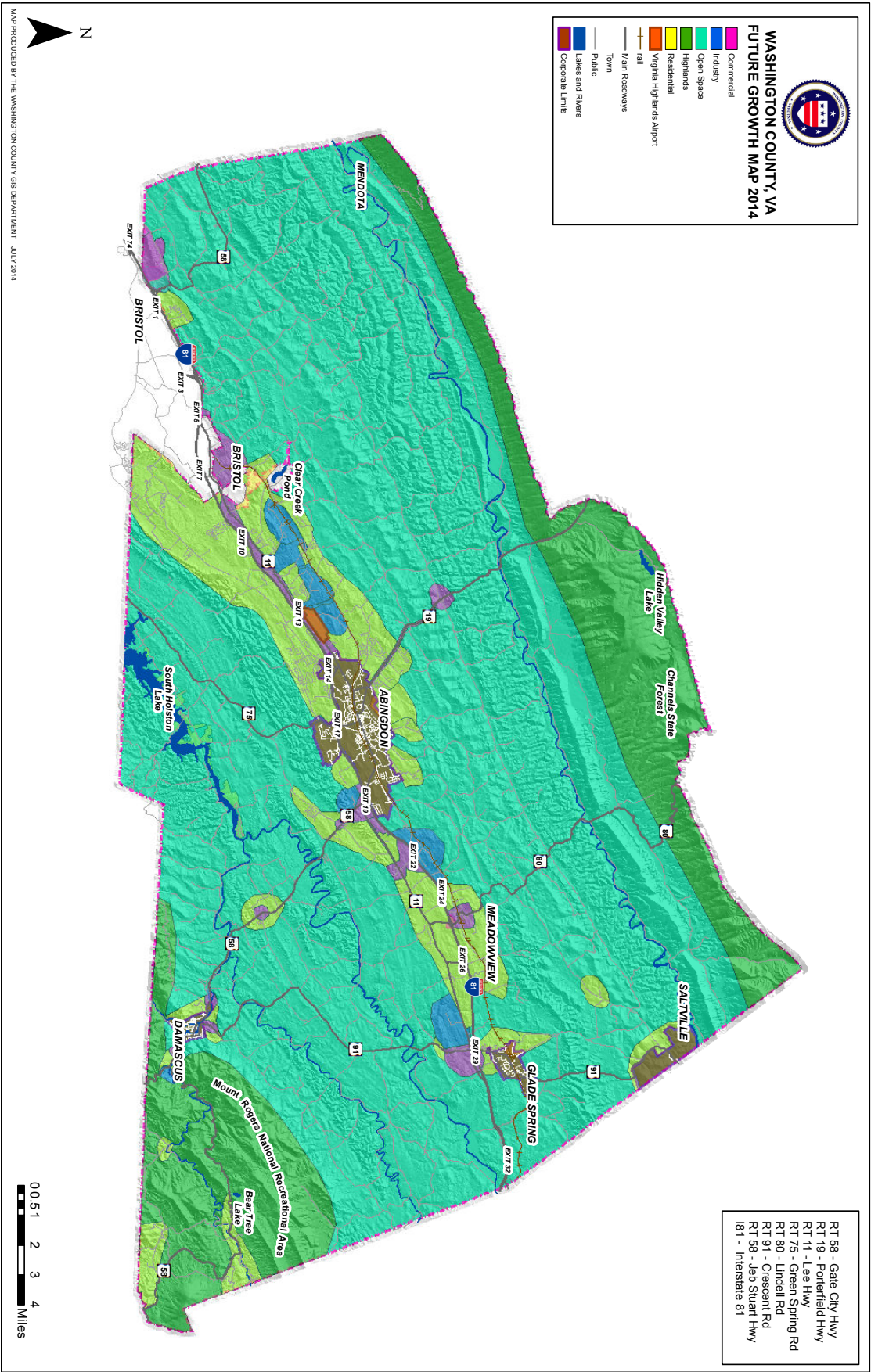
The Code of Virginia states that any locality may amend its comprehensive plan to incorporate one or more urban development areas. This legislation was added to the Code in 2007 for the purpose of addressing some of the negative effects of suburban sprawl and strip development, particularly on traffic and transportation. High-growth localities (those with a 5% growth rate or having a population of 20,000) were encouraged to amend their comprehensive plans to incorporate one or more Urban Development Areas (UDAs). UDAs were to be reasonably compact and should accommodate 10 to 20 years of projected growth.

To assist communities in revising their comprehensive plans and ordinances, the Virginia Department of Transportation created the Urban Development Area Local Government Assistance Program, providing consultant assistance to qualifying Virginia localities. Washington County was awarded a grant and Cox and Associates was selected to help Washington County study the issue.

Cox and Associates suggested a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) implementation program and suggested a new zoning district to plan, manage, and regulate the essential elements of TNDs: a mix of uses, different lot types and sizes, densities, neighborhood structure, phasing, and transportation elements. The goal of the TND District is to produce village-scaled development which could produce transportation benefits and balanced development. The area proposed for the TND District is in the vicinity of the new Johnson Memorial Hospital, along Lee Highway, between Exit 19 and 21.

The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission held a joint meeting on April 23, 2012, to discuss the UDA concept but no action was taken to amend the Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance at that time.





Land Use Objectives and Recommended Strategies

The purpose of the Land Use chapter is to suggest a framework to encourage a balanced land use system that provides sufficient and compatible land areas to accommodate growth while protecting the natural environment and minimizing public facility and service costs. The following objectives and strategies are recommended to help facilitate this goal.

Guiding Vision Statement

LAND USE: Rural, residential, retail, and industrial endeavors prosper throughout Washington County in a mutually respectful and non-invasive fashion.

Washington County is a preserve of heritage and historical beauty. A drive through the county provides opportunity for relaxation and enjoyment of natural environments including flowing rivers, mountains, lakes, creeks, hills, and pastures. Historic landmarks are lovingly preserved and farmland and rural ambience are protected and productive. Residential neighborhoods are attractive, orderly, and serene with children playing safely in their yards. Commercial and industrial developments prosper without interrupting the peace and quiet in residential and rural areas. Visitors are delighted by the cleanliness of the county. Nestled within the hills and valleys of the county, distinct rural communities add unique character to the county's personality and create opportunity for socializing, entertainment, and grassroots involvement and education among local residents.

Objectives and Strategies

OBJECTIVE: To encourage development patterns that are aligned with the intent of the comprehensive plan, compatible with public service delivery and facilities, and protect natural features.

STRATEGIES

1. Promote well-planned developments that minimize public facility and service costs, preserve open space, and are sensitive to the natural environment.
2. Coordinate development with existing or proposed public facilities and services.
3. Encourage land uses that are in harmony with adjacent uses.
4. Consider physical constraints such as flooding, steep slopes and hydrology when considering development proposals as they may threaten the safety, health and welfare of residents.
5. Encourage infill development and reuse of vacant buildings as they likely possess adequate utility and transportation infrastructure.

OBJECTIVE: Preserve agricultural land and minimize adverse impacts of growth on farmland and rural character.

STRATEGIES

1. Work with partner agencies to promote appreciation of agriculture in the community. Formally recognize that farm land is a valuable and limited resource for Washington County, and is both a major industry and the basis of the of the county's unique rural character.
2. Educate residents about economic importance of agriculture in our county, the need for large unfragmented parcels and tools available for voluntary land conservation and use value taxation. Educate prospective residents about the nature of living in a rural area.
3. Develop guide for conservation development or cluster development in rural areas where appropriate and revise Zoning Ordinance to allow for this type of development.

4. Study ways to offset financial pressure to subdivide land through land use opportunities such as home occupations, farm stands, wineries, special event facilities or businesses related to outdoor or agricultural tourism.
5. Consider zoning amendment to allow farm structures on land that is actively farmed to be rebuilt without rezoning or special exception permit applications.
6. Encourage preservation of open space, forest and agricultural lands through voluntary conservation easement programs.
7. Consider implementation of a sliding scale for density of dwelling units dispersed over large tracts of land.

OBJECTIVE: Revise the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances as needed to implement strategies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

STRATEGIES

1. Revise the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances as needed to reflect recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Amend the Zoning Map as needed to implement desired future land use.
3. Direct higher density, compact projects to locations adjacent to developed areas.
4. Consider an amendment to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to add provisions and specific criteria for traditional neighborhood design elements and mixed use projects and consider revising current Planned Unit Development Ordinance.
5. Protect residential areas from encroachment by incompatible or inappropriate land uses. Introduce landscape buffers to serve as screening to minimize potential conflicts.
6. Encourage new developments to provide stub roads to adjacent vacant property to facilitate future expansion of property and through road connection.
7. Encourage inter-parcel access on all projects.
8. Create voluntary design standards for commercial projects along primary corridors to guide growth while maintaining and enhancing the character of the county.
9. Consider expanding "manufacturing" definition to allow modern manufacturing in additional zoning districts.
10. Consider adding "offices" and "institutions" as permitted uses to appropriate zoning districts.
11. Consider opportunities for new Village Districts or B-1 zoning in appropriate locations for neighborhood commercial development throughout the county.
12. Study impact of housing density requirements if added to Zoning Ordinance.

OBJECTIVE: Develop and improve administrative practices to ensure implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and county's land use planning program.

STRATEGY

1. Refer to policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan and the Plan's future land use map when evaluating development or rezoning proposals.
2. Review the Comprehensive Plan on a biannual basis with a particular emphasis on the Land Use Section and Development Guide to determine the need for amendments. Present report on

LAND USE

comprehensive plan implementation progress to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission on a binannual basis.

3. Work cooperatively with adjacent jurisdictions and nearby cities to coordinate planning activities that transcend political boundaries and to serve as a “voice” of the region on State and Federal issues.
4. Consider collaborating with nearby colleges and universities to conduct planning and design studies.
5. Develop standards of review to aid in evaluation of rezoning or special exception permit applications.
6. Develop standard checklist for application materials needed for review of rezoning and special exception permit applications.
7. Develop administrative indexing system for all land use applications submitted to better collect, analyze and report information on land use activity.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK