

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to fulfill the requirements of Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, which states “The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.”

Process

The process that led to the creation of Charlotte County's current Comprehensive Plan began in the Spring of 2002 with the county's first strategic planning session. During that session a group of forty-five elected leaders, administrators and citizens developed a vision for the county's future and a list of goals, actions, and strategies to move the county towards that vision. The session also resulted in the creation of the "Charlotte Ambassadors," a group of county elected officials, administrators, and citizens whose mission was to identify actions necessary to fulfill the county's strategic policy and needs, and to carry out the necessary communication, coordination, and planning.

One of the first needs identified by the Ambassadors was an updated Comprehensive Plan. Towards that end, the Ambassadors formed a joint committee with the Charlotte County Planning Commission who had already begun their own review and revision of the Comprehensive Plan. Rather than hire a consultant to assist with the project, this joint committee decided that Charlotte County Planning Commissioners, citizens, and volunteer staff could develop a Comprehensive Plan that would capture a true vision of the County's future, realistically address the challenges faced by the county, and identify the actions needed to move the county towards the future they envisioned. Under the leadership of volunteer staff planner, R.W. "Jerry" Jerome, the committee collected, reviewed, and compiled input and data into a new Comprehensive Plan that was adopted by the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors in November of 2006.

Virginia State Code § 15.2-2230 requires a review of the Comprehensive Plan every five years. In 2011 the Planning Commission completed a full review of the plan, incorporating new decennial census data and updated data from other sources into the plan and using that data to revise the goals, strategies and actions identified in the plan. In 2016 the Planning Commission elected to update the data once again & also make some organizational changes to the Plan to improve usability. The effort to update the Plan began in the fall of 2015 and the final draft was approved by the Planning Commission in November of 2016.

The 2016 plan review began with County staff updating data tables using new census data and information provided by key stakeholders including the Town Offices, Charlotte County Public Schools, the Charlotte County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Southside Soil & Water Conversation Office, the Charlotte County office of the Farm Services Agency, VDOT, the Department of Forestry and local utility providers. The Commission then used the updated data to track changes in trends; evaluate existing goals; and identify new goals and actions. To encourage public involvement, the Planning Commission conducted a public input session in April of 2016, which approximately twenty citizens attended.

Format

The Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan follows a logical, systematic process to identify anticipated future issues and needs. First, an extensive compilation of facts and statistics related to local resources, demographics and economic development is gathered (Chapter 2). This data is then used to identify existing trends and develop a summary of implications (Chapter 2). By comparing the county's vision for the future with the documented trends and implications, issues and needs are then identified and associated goals and strategies are established (Chapter 3). Finally, these goals and strategies are incorporated into the future land use plan (Chapter 4) and the public facilities plan (Chapter 5) and further developed into a list of recommended actions (Chapter 6).

data→ trends→ implications→ issues→ goals→ strategies→ actions

Figure 1

A Practical Vision for the Future

At the county's first strategic planning session in 2002, elected leaders, administrators and citizens in attendance worked together to establish a vision for Charlotte County's future. This vision was made up of components that, when combined, would provide stability, quality of life, and opportunity. Below is a list of the elements that make up this "practical vision."

Improved Standard of Living

Poverty has significantly declined and personal and family incomes are approaching national averages.

Infrastructure for Economic Growth

Fiber optic networks, industrial park sites, good highways, water and sewer service and a skilled workforce are in place to meet the needs of new businesses.

Economic Growth and Stability

Small businesses have grown in number and in revenues while farming and other traditional industries have been preserved and strengthened. A wide variety of local job opportunities are available for county residents, including young people.

Technology Related Job Opportunities

New industrial growth provides technology related job opportunities.

Tourism

Local tourism marketing efforts promote the numerous natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources the area has to offer. New and existing tourism related businesses help attract both visitors and residents alike while providing job opportunities.

Educational Excellence

The county school system is run efficiently and its pupils rank near the top every year on the State Standards of Learning. Adult literacy has markedly improved. Southside Virginia Community College continues to expand its course offerings and programs.

Availability of Needed Services

Quality health care and emergency services are readily available and daycare services are located throughout the county.

Strong Local Image and Identity

Charlotte County residents stay connected to one another, are actively involved in the community and promote a positive local image.

Safe, Family-oriented Communities

Local recreational opportunities exist for all ages. Youth are drug free and active in the community. Charlotte County is a safe, clean and healthy place to live, work and play.

Source: Summary of Accomplishments, Charlotte County Strategic Planning Workshop, May 30, 2002

Figure 2

Strategic Needs Statement

To prosper in the future, Charlotte County needs:

- Strong regional cooperation
- An equitable tax base
- Quality employment
- An appropriate land use policy
- A modern, responsive education system
- An affordable infrastructure

Source: Charlotte County Strategic Planning Workshop, May 30, 2002

Figure 3

Overall Goal of the Comprehensive Plan

The overall goal of the Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan is to allow suitable economic and physical development while retaining the County's natural assets and quality of life.