

CHAPTER 4

LAND USE PLAN

Purpose

The Land Use Plan establishes the broad outline for managing future land use in Charlotte County. The plan designates specific areas of the county for various types of use and development and then establishes land use and development policies for each area. The Land Use Plan is the primary means of accomplishing the Comprehensive Plan's overall goal "...to allow suitable economic and physical development while retaining the County's natural assets and quality of life" (Figure 3). The guidelines, policies and maps included in the plan are carefully aligned with the vision, goals and strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. This ensures that the plan promotes a rational, systematic strategy for future land development.

The Land Use Plan serves as a fundamental part of the legal basis for land management actions. While the Land Use Plan contains broad policies rather than specific regulations, it plays a key role in developing and changing local land use laws. Regulations contained in the county zoning and subdivision ordinances should support the policies of the county's Land Use Plan and, in turn, the overall vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Background and Philosophy

Charlotte County is a predominately rural jurisdiction whose citizens wish to maintain its rural character. However, the need for and the inevitability of growth and the resulting physical development is recognized. Therefore, a basic land use plan is required.

The Planning Commission has determined that "directed land use" in Charlotte County is neither necessary nor desirable. Therefore, the approach of this land use plan is to encourage development in the most logical areas, and to encourage rural activities and preservation in the remainder of the county.

The term "development" encompasses the following:

- Commerce and industrial parks
- Medium to large commercial establishments
- Medium to large residential subdivisions

The term "most logical areas" are those areas with:

- Access to major public roads
- Access to rail service
- A public water supply system
- A public sewer collection and treatment system
- Other necessary utilities

The terms “rural activities and preservation” encompass the following:

- Agriculture and forestry
- Home-based and farm-based businesses
- Small commercial establishments
- Small residential subdivisions
- Historically-significant buildings and sites
- Scenic areas
- Outdoor recreation areas
- Watersheds
- Unique environmental features

Guiding Principles

This Land Use Plan is also guided by several widely-accepted principles of development presented in the publication *Better Models for Development in Virginia*, by Edward T. McMahon, with Sara S. Hollberg and Shelley Mastran, The Conservation Fund, Arlington, Virginia, September 2001. These principles link economics, the environment, and physical development. Of the six principles presented in that publication, the following four apply to Charlotte County’s future land use:

- Conserve Virginia’s Natural and Scenic Assets
- Maintain a Clear Edge between Town and Countryside
- Preserve Historic Resources
- Respect Local Character in New Construction

Several concepts discussed in *Better Models for Development in Virginia* provide the background for these four principles and form the basis for how the principles were utilized in the Land Use Plan. (All statements in quotation marks are from *Better Models for Development in Virginia*.)

- “Development does not have to mean destruction of the things that people love. The models presented ... prove that economic development and environmental protection can be compatible.” “The key is for each community to develop its own shared vision for the future”
- “Preservation of Virginia’s unique character relies on a few key actions:
 - Identifying and preserving important natural, scenic, and historic assets
 - Building local economic development and land use plans around the preservation and enhancement of key assets”
- “The key to protecting the natural environment is first to protect critical environmental areas such as rivers, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes, then to protect the working landscapes: the farms and forests that automatically enhance scenic views and protect natural habitat. Keeping large tracts in productive use is also essential to assure the critical mass needed to support a resource-based economy.”

- “Conserving natural and scenic assets is also important because farmland, forests, and scenic landscapes contribute to the economic vitality of our communities.”
- “Safeguarding the rural character of Virginia means maintaining a clear edge between cities, town, and countryside. This can be done by protecting open space...”
- “Historic resources should be identified and protected...” “Protecting historic resources...is also important because historic preservation is a powerful tool for economic revitalization that generates jobs and attracts tourists and investors.” Several methods to foster historic preservation are to acknowledge the value of history, identify and designate historic sites, and find new uses for old buildings.
- “Virginia communities should do more to ensure that new construction...respects local character.” “By identifying what makes each community unique, and what harms that uniqueness, localities can develop standards that encourage new construction to complement existing community character.” Charlotte County’s public buildings set high standards, and public buildings constructed in the future should meet these standards. The county, and the towns, should actively encourage private entities to follow these standards as well.

Implementation

The Land Use Plan will be implemented by the Future Land Use Map (Figure 24 and Figure 25), recommended land use and development policies, recommended specific actions (Chapter 6), the County Zoning Ordinance, the County Subdivision Ordinance, other county ordinances, and by specific planning activities with local, regional, state, and national governmental and private organizations. In particular, the Master Plan for the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, should be consulted.

Future Land Use

The land use and development purposes and policies for the areas shown in Figure 24 and Figure 25 are established as follows:

1. Rural, Agricultural, and Forestry Area:

- Purpose: To provide maximum flexibility and freedom for uses compatible with the rural environment while safeguarding against such uses as might be objectionable to most rural residents.
- Policy: Not encourage development (as previously defined in this chapter) in this area, while encouraging activities that will help maintain the profitability of agriculture and forestry enterprises.

2. Crossroads Communities:

- Purpose: To allow cluster development of residential, commercial, and public uses to provide local residents with convenient access to community services and shopping, and to create a community identity.
- Policy: Encourage the development of these communities by appropriate provisions in the zoning ordinance.

3. Significant Watersheds:

- Purpose: To delineate the watersheds of lakes, rivers, and streams that are or will be used for municipal water supply, or have a significant role in the local environment. See Figure 26 and Figure 27 for detailed maps of the Keysville Lake and Drakes Branch Lake watersheds.
- Policy: Protect these areas from detrimental and polluting activities.

4. Town/County Boundary Areas:

- Purpose: To delineate county areas immediately adjacent to town corporate limits in which growth and development (as previously defined) may occur.
- Policy: Plan for and guide development in these areas by requiring close cooperation and joint planning by both town and county governments to avoid detrimental consequences to the residents of either jurisdiction.

5. Areas of Anticipated Near-Term Growth:

- Purpose: To delineate areas in which development (as defined above) is expected to occur during the next 5-10 years.
- Policy: Encourage development by providing appropriate facilities and services in these areas.

6. Areas of Potential Long-Term Growth:

- Purpose: To delineate areas in which development (as defined above) is expected to occur during the next 10-20 years.
- Policy: Plan for long-term development in these areas by planning for appropriate facilities and services in the next 10-20 years.