

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 to update the Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan started with the county’s first strategic planning session, held on May 30, 2002. During that session, 45 elected leaders, administrators, and other citizens developed a vision of the future, strategic goals, strategies for achieving the identified goals, and priorities for actions. Figure 1-1 presents the county’s vision statement. Two actions that were immediately implemented were publishing a strategic needs list and a county strategic policy statement (Figures 1-2 and 1-3), and creating a coordinated and continuing strategic leadership structure. The leadership structure was implemented in the form of a group of county elected officials, administrators, and citizens that met approximately quarterly (the “Charlotte Ambassadors”). The function of this group 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 actions identified by the Ambassadors was to update the county’s Comprehensive Plan. The Ambassadors formed a joint committee with the Charlotte County Planning Commission that had separately started to review and revise the Comprehensive Plan. The joint committee agreed upon the following two basic principles regarding their work:

1. The revision of the Comprehensive Plan would be based on the results of the county’s strategic planning session, specifically the Vision, the Strategic Needs List, and the Strategic Policy Statement. The joint committee would not “start from scratch,” but would build on the work already accomplished.
2. The joint committee would not hire a consultant or professional planning service to write the plan for them. The consensus of the committee was that a group of dedicated and knowledgeable Charlotte County Planning Commissioners, citizens, and volunteer staff could write a Comprehensive Plan that would capture the vision of the future and address the elements necessary to help reach that vision. Professional help would be utilized only as required. The challenges inherent in this approach were acknowledged;

however, the committee agreed that the cost savings and focused results would outweigh the disadvantages.

The Planning Commission provided the basic guidance in the form of the overall goal of the revised plan (Figure 1-4).

The joint committee formed four sub-committees to consider each of the following planning areas:

1. Agriculture and Forestry
2. Land Use and Housing
3. Economic Development and Energy
4. Public Facilities and Transportation

Each of these subcommittees was comprised of Charlotte County citizens knowledgeable in the specific area. The subcommittee members tapped their friends, neighbors, and work associates for ideas and recommendations. Technical experts and professional data sources were consulted and utilized as required. Professional literature and the comprehensive plans of other small, rural Virginia jurisdictions were also reviewed. The joint committee as a whole conducted two citizens' idea sessions in separate locations in the county to discuss the plan's development with citizens and to receive opinions, advice, and recommendations from them.

The results of the sub-committees' work were guidance and recommendations in the following hierarchy:

1. Issue – The broad area or overall topic of community interest
2. Goal – The desired result to be reached
3. Strategy – The philosophy and methodology for reaching the goal
4. Action – The specific steps to be taken to carry out the strategy

Finally, the Planning Commission staff updated county data, compiled charts and maps, drafted the text, and assembled the final revised plan. The following timeline summarizes this process:

Initial Charlotte County Strategic Planning Session	May 30, 2002
Initial Charlotte Ambassadors Meeting	July 22, 2002
Training for Planning Commission Staff	Fall 2002
Review of Existing Comprehensive Plan	December 2002
Staff Research on Strategic Issues	January-July 2003
Formation and Training of Subcommittees	August 2003
Second Charlotte County Strategic Planning Session	September 5, 2003
Subcommittee Working Sessions	Fall 2003-Fall 2004
First Citizens' Idea Session	October 14, 2004
Second Citizens' Idea Session	October 21, 2004
Third Charlotte County Strategic Planning Session	November 17, 2004
Staff Work	July 2005-June 2006
First Draft Presented to the Planning Commission	June 27, 2006

Charlotte County

A Practical Vision for the Future

By the year 2012, the residents of Charlotte County will enjoy **an improved standard of living**. Poverty will have been significantly reduced and personal and family incomes will approach national averages.

Charlotte County will enjoy a greater degree of **economic growth and stability** than in the past decade. This growth will be fueled by small business development, expanding job opportunities for young people and local entrepreneurs. Farming and other traditional sources have been preserved and strengthened.

Technology related job opportunities will have increased as a result of new industrial growth, a telecommunications center and a technology incubator for small businesses. These accomplishments were brought about by providing the necessary **infrastructure for economic growth** including fiber optic networks, industrial park sites, good highways, water and sewer service and a skilled workforce.

Tourism is an important industry in the county. The county's tourism marketing efforts promote the numerous natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources the area has to offer. A resort motel, a cultural center, numerous shopping opportunities and other resources help attract both visitors and residents alike while providing new job opportunities.

Our educational institutions are known for their **educational excellence**. The county school system is run efficiently and its pupils rank near the top every year on the State Standards of Learning. Southside Virginia Community College now offers four-year degrees and, overall, adult literacy has markedly improved.

Charlotte County has a **strong image and identity**. We communicate our image and stay connected to one another through our local radio station and the internet links we have established.

Our **safe, family-oriented communities** provide recreational opportunities for all ages, including a YMCA park for youth. Our youth are drug free and active in the community, helping to contribute to a safe, clean and healthy place to live and work. **Quality health care** and emergency services are available, and **daycare services** are available throughout the county.

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

Figure 1-1

Charlotte County

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 1-2



Charlotte County Board of Supervisors

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CHARLOTTE COUNTY'S FUTURE

Vision By 2012, Charlotte County will enjoy an improved standard of living, economic growth and stability, technology-related job opportunities, infrastructure for economic growth, an important tourism industry, educational excellence, a strong image and identity, safe and family-oriented communities, quality health care, and county-wide day care service.

Strategic Issues The essential issues that we must focus on in order to attain our vision are:

- Quality of Life
- Economic Development
- Education
- Regional Cooperation

Strategic Policy Statement: All county officers, employees, organizations, boards, commissions, and authorities will use the strategic issues as the basis for their organization's mission, plans, budgets, and decisions. All county organizations will clearly and frequently communicate their activities and accomplishments to other county organizations and citizens.

Adopted by the
Charlotte County Board of Supervisors
November 14, 2002

Figure 1-3

Charlotte County

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.

Source: Charlotte County Planning Commission

Figure 1-4