

# Understanding Augusta County's Draft Plan

*Citizen comments are due February 5!*

The Comprehensive Plan is your chance to help determine what Augusta County looks like over the next 20 years. Citizens have consistently said that what they value most about Augusta County is its beautiful and productive countryside. They want efficient, compact development that keeps taxes low. They want to keep agriculture strong while still allowing growth. How does this draft plan stack up?

## *Strong Points of the Draft Plan*

- √ **Growth Targets:** The plan calls for directing most of the growth (80%) to the urban service areas (USAs) in and around cities, towns, and highways and reducing growth in the agricultural conservation areas to less than 5% of all new residential lots.
- √ **Priority on Implementation:** A plan is only as good as the actions that back it up—the codes, programs, and investments put in place to make it happen. The inclusion of Growth Targets, an Annual Scorecard, an Implementation Plan, and a Capital Improvements Plan should lend accountability and keep the County moving toward the Plan's goals.
- √ **Protecting Resources:** There is good emphasis on protecting the county's natural resources. Particularly important are strategies to protect water quality and supply and to develop incentives to maintain farm and forest land.
- √ **Redesigning Urban Service Areas:** The goal is to accommodate new growth in compact, walkable, mixed-use developments with access to services and amenities. This pattern would use less land and, by concentrating infrastructure (such as roads, schools, water, and sewer), would be more affordable in the long run for all citizens.
- √ **Small Area Plans** would help design key growth areas. These detailed plans with local input would enable the county to implement compact development, rather than react to proposals.

## *Areas of Concern*

- ☒ **The Map Doesn't Match the Plan.** There is a major disconnect between the Land Use Map and the Plan. Far too much land (nearly 1/5 of the acres that can be planned in the county) is designated for the two most intensive types of development: Urban Service Area (red) and Community Development Area (orange). More than 10,000 acres were moved up to USA status compared to the current plan map. Adding more area prevents efficient focusing of infrastructure and encourages further low density development. Indeed, an additional 20% is designated yellow for potential rural residential (on well and septic). ***This map could undercut the Plan and perpetuate a sprawling pattern of development that eats up farmland, imposes huge fiscal costs, and erases the character of our communities.*** It should be reworked to relate to the amount of population projected and to encourage the desired growth pattern.

- ☒ **Plan Lacks Vision Statement.** The plan should be formed around the citizens' vision for their county but nothing of the sort is presented in this draft. Everyone acknowledges the continuing value of the 1994 vision and goals. These easily could be updated with the results of the citizen survey and the policy maker visioning sessions held in summer and fall 2006.
  
- ☒ **Development Standards Not in Place:** More compact and more livable patterns of development in the Urban Services Areas cannot happen unless the county first invests in the infrastructure and revamps its zoning and subdivision codes to enable them to be built. These need top priority in implementation

## **How to Respond**

1. **Attend a Public Input Session.** The county will present the plan and offer attendees an informal chance to ask questions and make comments. Dates and locations are **Jan. 29 (Buffalo Gap High School)**, **Jan. 30 (Stewart Middle School)**, and **Jan.31 (Stuarts Draft Middle School)**, all at 7 pm.

2. **Understand the Plan.** Hard copies are at libraries and the government center.

Want the condensed version? Valley Conservation Council's website offers a packet of sections from the Draft Plan related to land use issues and natural resources and will post analysis and other information: [http://www.valleyconservation.org/augusta\\_comp.html](http://www.valleyconservation.org/augusta_comp.html)

Want more analysis? Keep checking the [www.valleyconservation.org](http://www.valleyconservation.org) for more updates.

3. **Make Your Comments.** Written comments are due to the county by February 5, by mail, on the county website at [www.co.augusta.va.us](http://www.co.augusta.va.us) or by email [compplan@co.augusta.va.us](mailto:compplan@co.augusta.va.us).

### ***For more information***

Official County information is available at [www.co.augusta.va.us](http://www.co.augusta.va.us) or through the Community Development office at [compplan@co.augusta.va.us](mailto:compplan@co.augusta.va.us) .

Visit the Augusta County page at the Valley Conservation Council website [www.valleyconservation.org/augusta\\_comp.html](http://www.valleyconservation.org/augusta_comp.html), or call 886-3541

This flyer and the January 18 Forum were produced by the Augusta Community Partnership, involving the Augusta Farm Bureau, Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, Valley Conservation Council, and other organizations and individuals. We encourage citizens to understand and participate in land use issues that affect the county's future.

**Augusta Community Partnership is a private group of local citizens that meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Augusta County Government Center in Verona. Meetings are open to the public. Please join us.**

