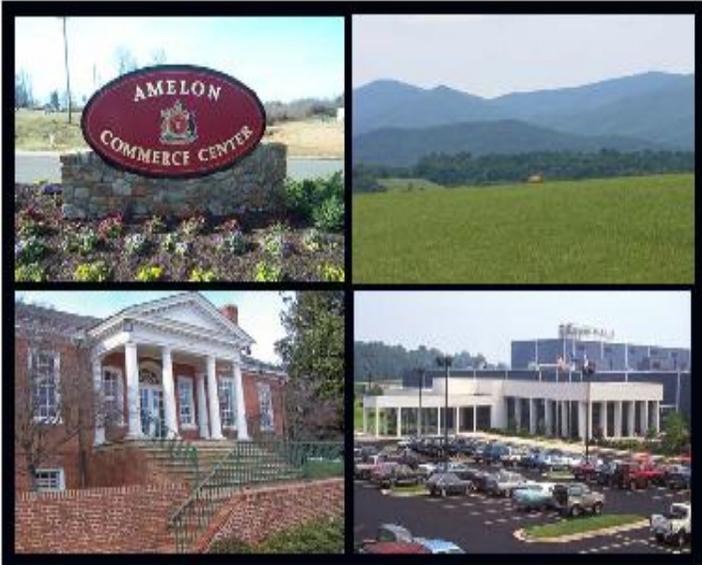


AMHERST COUNTY, VIRGINIA

# AMHERST COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



2007-2027

# **AMHERST COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2007-2027**

**ADOPTED BY:**

**AMHERST COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
JUNE 21, 2007**

**AMHERST COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
MAY 3, 2007**

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**UPDATED BY:**

**AMHERST COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
MAY 21, 2013**

**AMHERST COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
MAY 21, 2013**

**PREPARED BY: AMHERST COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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**CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION**

**Purpose**

This document is the Comprehensive Plan for Amherst County, Virginia. As the master plan for governing the County, it is a guide for critical land use decisions that will determine growth and development within the County. It is also available to the private sector for decision-making and investment. The management objectives of the plan are intended to accomplish a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the community in accordance with the values and aspirations of Amherst County's citizens. It was prepared and adopted as an update to the County's current comprehensive plan. The 2007 plan was written under the direction and guidance of the Amherst County Planning Commission and a Citizens Advisory Committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors. It is an official public document adopted by the Amherst County Board of Supervisors on June 21, 2007. An update of the plan was adopted by the Amherst County Board of Supervisors on May 21, 2013.

**Community Involvement**

Community involvement was one of the guiding principles that governed the preparation of this plan. Many citizens contributed to its development. A citizens planning academy, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, solicitation of written citizen comments, a citizen advisory committee, citizen task forces, planning commission work sessions, and public hearings were techniques used to effectively engage Amherst County citizens in the development of this important document.

**Authority to Plan**

Authority for local government planning in Virginia is contained in Section 15.2-2223 through 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia. This plan was prepared in accordance with these provisions.

By law, the Amherst County Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility of preparing and recommending a comprehensive plan to the Amherst County Board of Supervisors for adoption. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the Commission is required to conduct surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of county citizens. The Board has the legal responsibility to adopt a plan that covers all territory within the unincorporated areas of the County.

A comprehensive plan, by law, shall be general in nature. It shall designate the approximate location, character, and extent of each feature shown and may indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

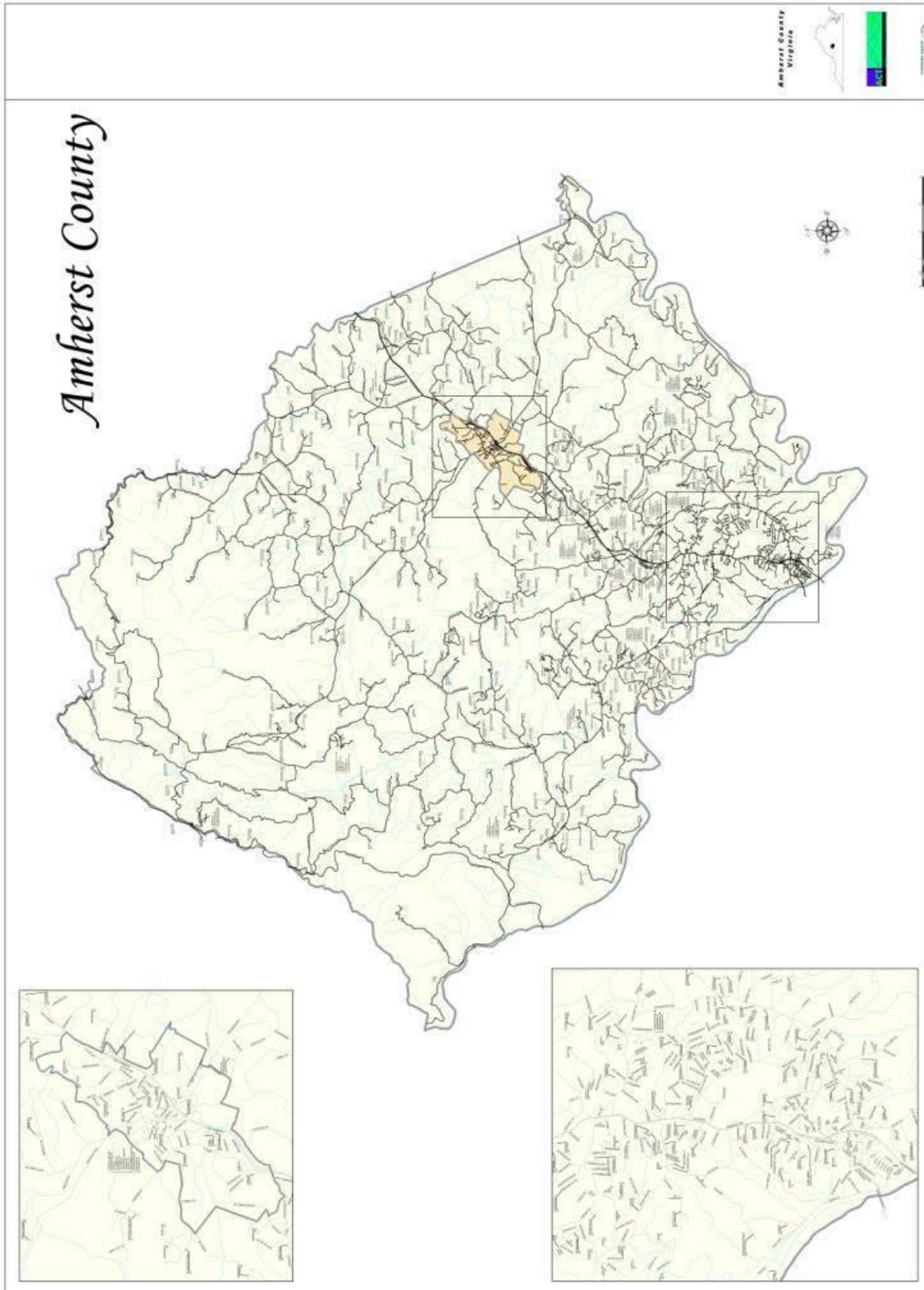
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A plan, with accompanying maps, charts, and descriptive matter, may include, but need not be limited to:

- The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, business, industrial, agricultural, mineral resources, conservation, recreation, public service, flood plain and drainage, and other areas;
- The designation of a system of transportation facilities such as streets, roads, highways, parkways, railways, bridges, viaducts, waterways, airports, ports, terminals, and other like facilities;
- The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;
- The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;
- The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable surface water and ground water protection measures;
- An official map, a capital improvement program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forest district maps, where applicable;
- The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;
- The designation of areas for the implementation of measures to promote the construction and maintenance of affordable housing, sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated; and
- The designation of Urban Development Areas (UDAs) which are sufficient to accommodate projected residential and commercial growth in a locality for a period of at least ten (10) years but not more than twenty (20) years. Such an area shall incorporate Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), that may encourage and foster: (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.

**Planning Horizon**

Typical planning horizons for comprehensive plans range from approximately 20 to 50 years with 20 years being the most common. This plan contemplates growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. Projections for population contemplate growth up to 2035. By law, this comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the Amherst County Planning Commission at least once every five years. Each review will serve as the basis to evaluate the continued appropriateness of the plans' goals, objectives, and policies.



**CHAPTER II - PROCESS**

**Identification of Success Factors**

In the autumn of 2003, a work session was held to “kick-off” the plan update process. At this work session, the Amherst County Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and key County staff began the formal comprehensive plan update process by identifying a number of factors and conditions key to a successful planning process and a successful plan.



The participants in this work session identified the following factors key to a successful plan update process. In summary, they stated there must be:

- Good communication with the citizens;
- Good public participation;
- Good public education on community planning and the planning process;
- Strong leadership;
- Citizen buy-in;
- Clearly defined growth patterns identified;
- A strong consensus on plan policies;
- Clear direction for zoning amendments;
- Well defined goals and objectives; and
- Accountability measures.

In addition, they stated that the plan must be responsive to public needs, provide for flexibility, and be easy to read and understand.

**Community Participation**

Many techniques were used to ensure that Amherst County citizens were knowledgeable of the plan update initiative and had the opportunity to contribute ideas throughout the process.

A Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed by the County to oversee the plan update process. Comprised of approximately 25 citizens, including representatives of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the CAC played a vital role in defining community issues; approving meeting formats and agendas; reviewing information; and developing the plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies. They also reviewed and offered comments on successive drafts of this plan.

Early in the planning process, approximately 45 county citizens participated in an Amherst County *Citizens Planning Academy*. The academy, held over a six-week period at Sweet Briar College, was an opportunity for participants to learn the tools and

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

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techniques of community planning in Virginia. In addition, the academy allowed participants to discuss local planning issues and participate in exercises that were designed to encourage thought about the County's future.

In August of 2004, stakeholder interviews were held with approximately 20 civic and community leaders. Interviewees were asked their general impressions of the county, their opinions on short and long-term community issues, and their views on community strengths and weaknesses. The consultant team used the information gained from these interviews to better understand Amherst County and to design a community meeting format and agenda that was relevant to Amherst County. In general, the interviews identified recurrent themes - common topics discussed by the interviewees. These themes were one source of data used by the staff, the CAC, and the Planning Commission in the development of the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies.

Broader community involvement was obtained through a series of six community-wide workshops held in September 2004. To obtain geographic dispersion, these workshops were held in six of the County's elementary schools. Each workshop began with participants having the opportunity to review and discuss Amherst County demographic information. Participants were asked to offer their ideas on the county's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities the County should pursue, and perspectives on threats to the county's quality of life.

The majority of each workshop was devoted to small group discussions on a broad range of community issues. Participants undertook a community SWOT analysis, identifying county Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Participants also engaged in a Change Analysis exercise, offering their ideas on what aspects of the county should stay the same and which should change. Significant commonality of ideas and opinions emerged from the small group discussions. In addition, many of the comments expressed at the community meetings paralleled those expressed in the stakeholder interviews. The Planning Commission and CAC reviewed a summary of the six workshops and considered the citizens' comments in the development of this plan.

The CAC held a series of work sessions in late 2004, through 2006. These work sessions were open to the public. The CAC used the work sessions to discuss the content and direction of the new plan. Ideas for the plan emerged from many sources, including the demographic analysis, citizen comments, CAC and Planning Commission discussions and Amherst County staff perspectives. During this same time period, seven subject specific task forces were appointed and convened. These task forces<sup>1</sup> comprised of CAC members and other interested Amherst County citizens, developed the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in this plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Plan task force committee sections: Transportation, Environment, Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Community Facilities and Services, Cultural Resources and Community Aesthetics.

### **Plan Development and Adoption**

In early 2006, a rough draft of the plan was made available to the general public, and all citizens who had contributed to the plan's development were contacted and given the opportunity to comment on the plan. All citizen comments on the draft plan were reviewed by the CAC and Planning Commission. The CAC concluded their work sessions in August 2006. The Planning Commission commenced weekly meetings to review and modify the plan in beginning in September. Much of their work was influenced by discussions with county and state officials after the aforesaid officials had an opportunity to review the draft plan.

A Planning Commission public hearing on the plan was held on March 27, 2007 and the Planning Commission recommended approval of the plan to the Board of Supervisors on May 3, 2007. The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on June 11, 2007 and thereafter adopted this plan.

Per 15.2-2230 of the Code of Virginia, the Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed and updated every five years. The process to update the plan began in 2012. The Amherst County Planning Department updated the plan based on comments from County departments and the Planning Commission. Census figures in the plan were also updated from the most recent Census. A meeting was held by the Planning Department on March 12, 2013 to update and answer questions from the public concerning the updated plan. The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors held a joint public hearing and thereafter adopted the updated plan on May 21, 2013.

**CHAPTER III – DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH TRENDS**

**Cost of Providing Services**

Growth in a community is generally perceived as a positive and even necessary occurrence. Growth in employment, income, and tax base are considered to be indicators of a good place to live. From a public service and facility perspective population growth means an increase in demand for schools, roads, law enforcement, recreational opportunities, and the staffing to operate and maintain them all. These services and facilities are largely paid for by taxes generated by real estate values. Communities must balance their demand for services (and consequent costs) with the income (taxes) that are generated primarily by the property tax; therefore it becomes important to understand the relationship that exists, with a given type of land use, between the services needed by that given land use and the taxes generated by it. The question becomes “does the use pay for itself?” For example; on the surface a new subdivision may be considered a positive thing since it is a component of a growing community. Raw unimproved land generates a taxable value of  $x$ . The same land with new homes on it generates a taxable value of  $x$  plus the added value of all the lots, the roads, the utilities and the houses that were constructed. The taxable value of the original property could be from three to ten times higher after being developed. If, however, the additional taxes do not meet the associated costs required by the new residents, such as the need for more teachers, classrooms, police, fire protection, road maintenance, soccer fields, etc., then the new growth has placed a strain on the public sectors ability to maintain the quality of life in that community.

In 2004, a “Cost of Land Use Study” was performed for Amherst County by Tischler and Associates. The study clearly showed the relationship between land use and provision of public services. Open space/agricultural lands, most business properties, and industrial developments proved to be paying more in taxes than the demand they created for services. Some business properties and most residential developments did not pay their equivalent costs. It should be noted that these results reflected the allocation of capital expenses for schools, which totaled ninety percent of capital expenditures in the study. When the costs of indebtedness for schools were removed from consideration, all classifications of land use generated positive returns. This study is referenced as an associated document and considered part of the plan.

The results of the aforementioned study are repeated in many communities throughout the United States. For example, in a study of the fiscal impacts of major land uses in Culpeper County, Virginia, it was found that “for every dollar of revenue collected from residential land, \$1.25 is spent on county services; for every dollar collected from industrial/commercial land, 19 cents is spent on services; similarly, for every dollar collected from farm/forest/open space, 19 cents is spent on services.” Farm/forest/open space generates revenues of \$1.9 million and expenditures of \$350,000. Even with the deferral for current-use taxation, farm/forest/open space land provides a net tax benefit to

the County<sup>2</sup>. Studies such as this were considered when developing the future land use map.

In consideration of these anticipated costs, this plan recommends that realistic estimates be made of each new proposed development, in order to evaluate the cost impact of maintaining desired county Levels of Services (LOS) in such areas as public schools, public water and sewer, transportation, fire and rescue, etc. It is recommended that proffers be encouraged to help defray these anticipated costs. County planners should establish the desired LOS to facilitate this process. This plan offers basic LOS factors for schools, public water service, and transportation routes in chapter IV.

The remainder of this chapter contains information and discussions on population, income, housing, employment, the economy, and education. An understanding of a community's demographic characteristics – its past trends, current conditions and future projections - can be a vital component of community planning. An analysis of this data helps a community identify emerging community issues and allows a community to respond proactively to these emerging trends.

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<sup>2</sup> Vance and Larson, 1988. Rural By Design, Randall Arendt

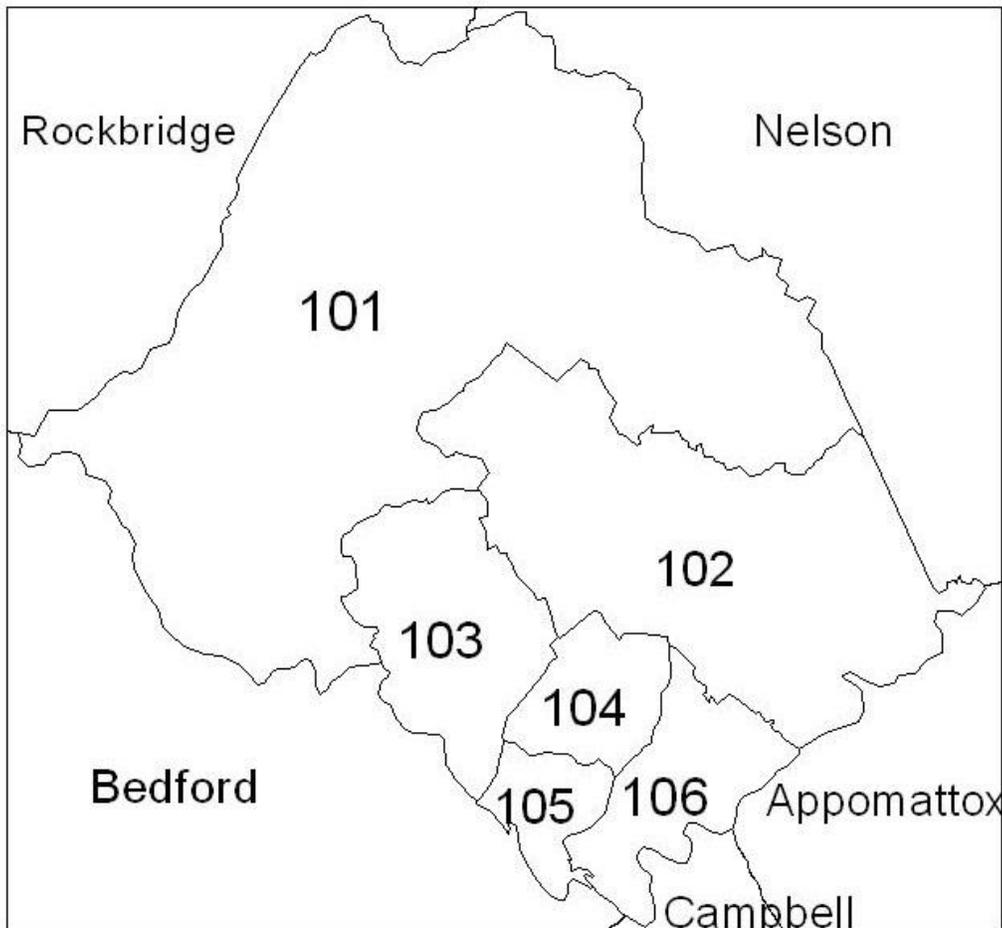
**Population**

*Geographic Definition*

For analysis purposes, Amherst County’s demographics were evaluated based on six Census tract divisions (see Figure 1). The northern part of the county contains Census tract 101 and a small portion of Census tract 102. The southern part of the county includes Census tracts 102, 103, 104, 105, and 106. In the 2010 Census, tract 104 consisted of Census tracts 104.01 and 104.02 and tract 105 consisted of Census tracts 105.02, 105.03 and 105.04. Census tract 102 contains the town of Amherst. Neighboring communities include Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Nelson, and Rockbridge Counties, and the City of Lynchburg.

**Figure 1**

**AMHERST COUNTY CENSUS TRACTS  
AND NEIGHBORING COUNTIES**



**Population Trends**

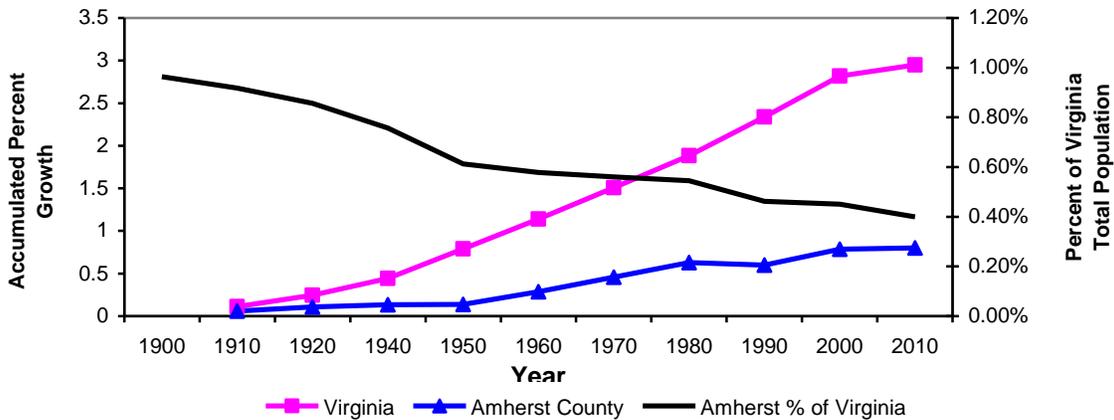
In 1790 the population of Amherst County was 13,703; the state, 691,737. Ninety years later the population of both places had increased to 18,709 and 1,512,565 respectively. That represented a 36.5 percent increase for Amherst and a 118.7 percent increase for the state. Between 1880 and 1950 Amherst increased to 20,332 or by 8.7 percent. The state grew to 3,318,680 or 119.4 percent. The next thirty years represented the most significant continuous period of growth for Amherst. In 1980 the county population had risen by 43.2 percent to 29,122. Statewide the numbers increased by 61.1 percent to 5,346,797. Since 1980 the Census Bureau indicates that Amherst lost a few hundred persons by 1990 but rebounded in the 2000 count with 31,895. The 2010 census put our 2010 population at 32,353. Comparatively, the state’s 2000 census was 7,078,515 and the latest 2010 census showed that the state’s population had grown to 8,001,024. Table 1 and Figure 2 further demonstrate the county’s growth relative to the state’s growth.

**TABLE 1: VIRGINIA AND AMHERST COUNTY  
POPULATION GROWTH AND PERCENT CHANGE, 1900-2010**

Census Year	Virginia		Amherst County		
	Total Population	Percent Change	Total Population	Percent Change	Percent of Virginia Population
1900	1,854,184		17,864		0.96%
1910	2,061,612	11.19%	18,932	5.98%	0.92%
1920	2,309,187	12.01%	19,771	4.43%	0.86%
1930	2,421,851	4.88%	19,020	-3.80%	0.79%
1940	2,677,773	10.57%	20,273	6.59%	0.76%
1950	3,318,680	23.93%	20,332	0.29%	0.61%
1960	3,966,949	19.53%	22,953	12.89%	0.58%
1970	4,651,448	17.26%	26,072	13.59%	0.56%
1980	5,346,797	14.95%	29,122	11.70%	0.54%
1990	6,187,358	15.72%	28,578	-1.87%	0.46%
2000	7,078,515	14.40%	31,894	11.60%	0.45%
2010	8,001,024	13.00%	32,353	1.40%	0.40%

Note: These figures are the published decennial census counts and are not adjusted for census count revisions, boundary adjustments, or other changes. Source: U.S. Census, Weldon Cooper Center

**FIGURE 2: VIRGINIA AND AMHERST COUNTY ACCUMULATED PERCENT POPULATION GROWTH AND PERCENT OF VIRGINIA POPULATION FROM 1900 TO 2010**



To roughly demonstrate how Amherst compares with the parts of the state that are not overly influenced by the Washington, DC area, the following analysis is provided. After excluding the DC Metro population from state totals (the DC Metro area is defined here as Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, King George, Loudoun, Prince William, Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties, plus the cities within their borders\*), the county growth becomes comparable to the balance of the state, as shown in Table 2.

CENSUS YEAR	VIRGINIA EXC NO. VA	PCT CHNG	AMHERST	PCT. CHNG
1950	2,979.1		20.3	
1960	3,352.6	12.5%	23.0	13.3%
1970	3,712.6	10.7%	26.1	13.5%
1980	4,241.1	14.2%	29.1	11.5%
1990	4,721.0	11.3%	28.6	-1.7%
2000	4,962.3	5.1%	31.9	11.6%
2010	5,405.9	8.9%	32.3	1.2%

Source: Weldon Cooper Center

\*Prior to the 2010 census, the northern Virginia/DC Metro area was defined as being Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties, plus the cities within their borders.

**Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

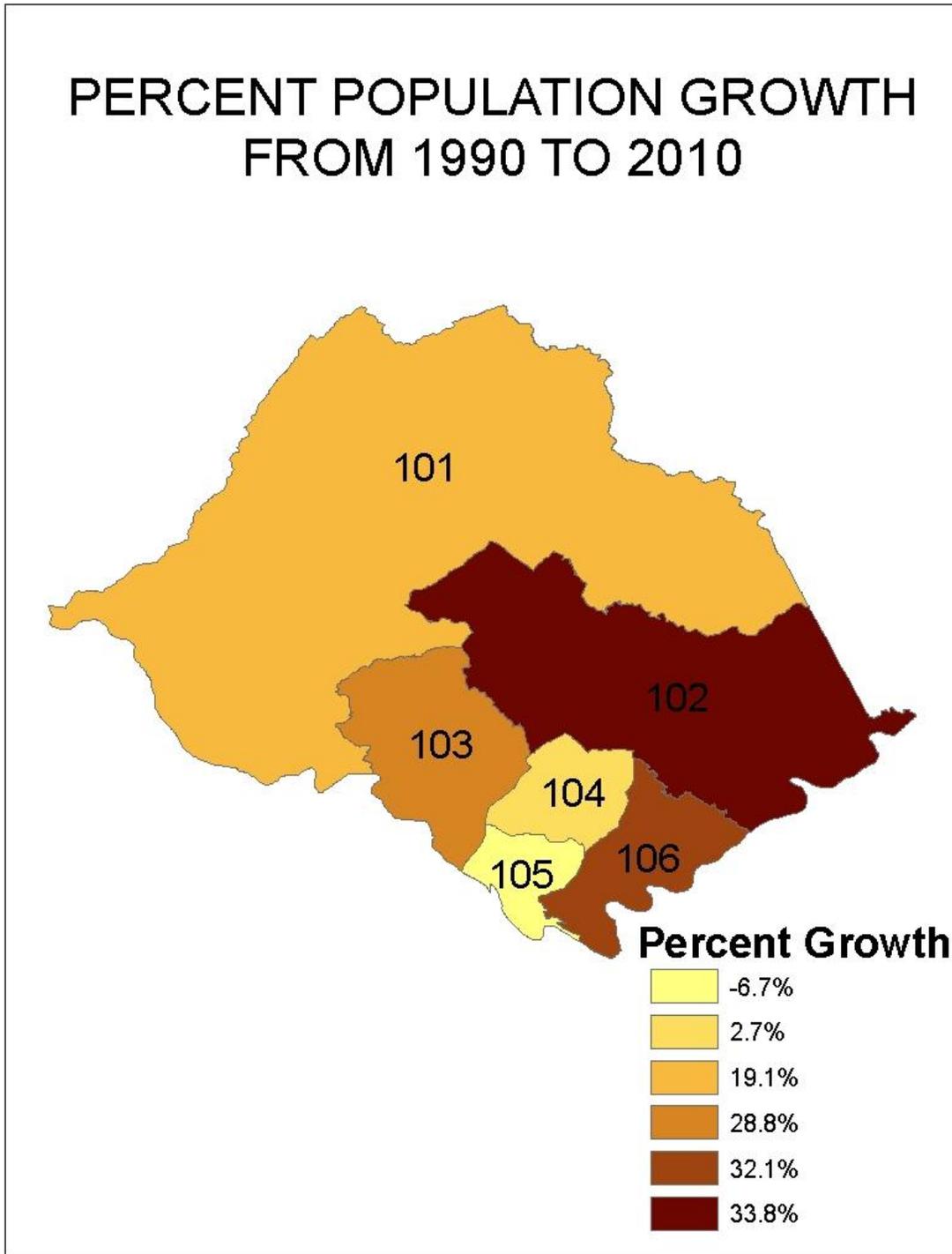
Generally, areas closer to Lynchburg and the Town of Amherst have experienced the greatest amount of growth between 1990 and 2010. A notable exception is Census tract 105. From 1990 to 2000, the south-eastern portion of the county experienced higher rates of growth than the north (see Table 3 and Figure 3). From 2000 to 2010, the more rural north-central and south-eastern portions of the County experienced higher rates of population growth, altering a historic trend of higher population growth in the immediate Madison Heights area. This trend is made even more evident as, for the first time, Census tract 102 is now more populous than Census tract 105 (which was predicted by the 2007 Comprehensive Plan). Overall, Census tracts 102 and 106 experienced the greatest amount of growth during the twenty year monitoring period.

**TABLE 3: AMHERST COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION BY CENSUS TRACT FROM 1990 TO 2010**

Census Tract	1990		2000		2010		Percent Growth
	Population	Percent of Population	Population	Percent of Population	Population	Percent of Population	
101	4,439	16%	5,064	16%	5,288	16%	19.1%
102	5,408	19%	7,135	22%	7,238	22%	33.8%
103	2,699	9%	3,336	10%	3,477	11%	28.8%
104	6,238	22%	6,287	20%	6,408	20%	2.7%
105	7,707	27%	7,253	23%	7,184	22%	-6.7%
106	2,087	7%	2,819	9%	2,758	9%	32.1%
Total	28,578	100%	31,894	100%	32,353	100%	13.2%

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tracts 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Figure 3



**Population Density**

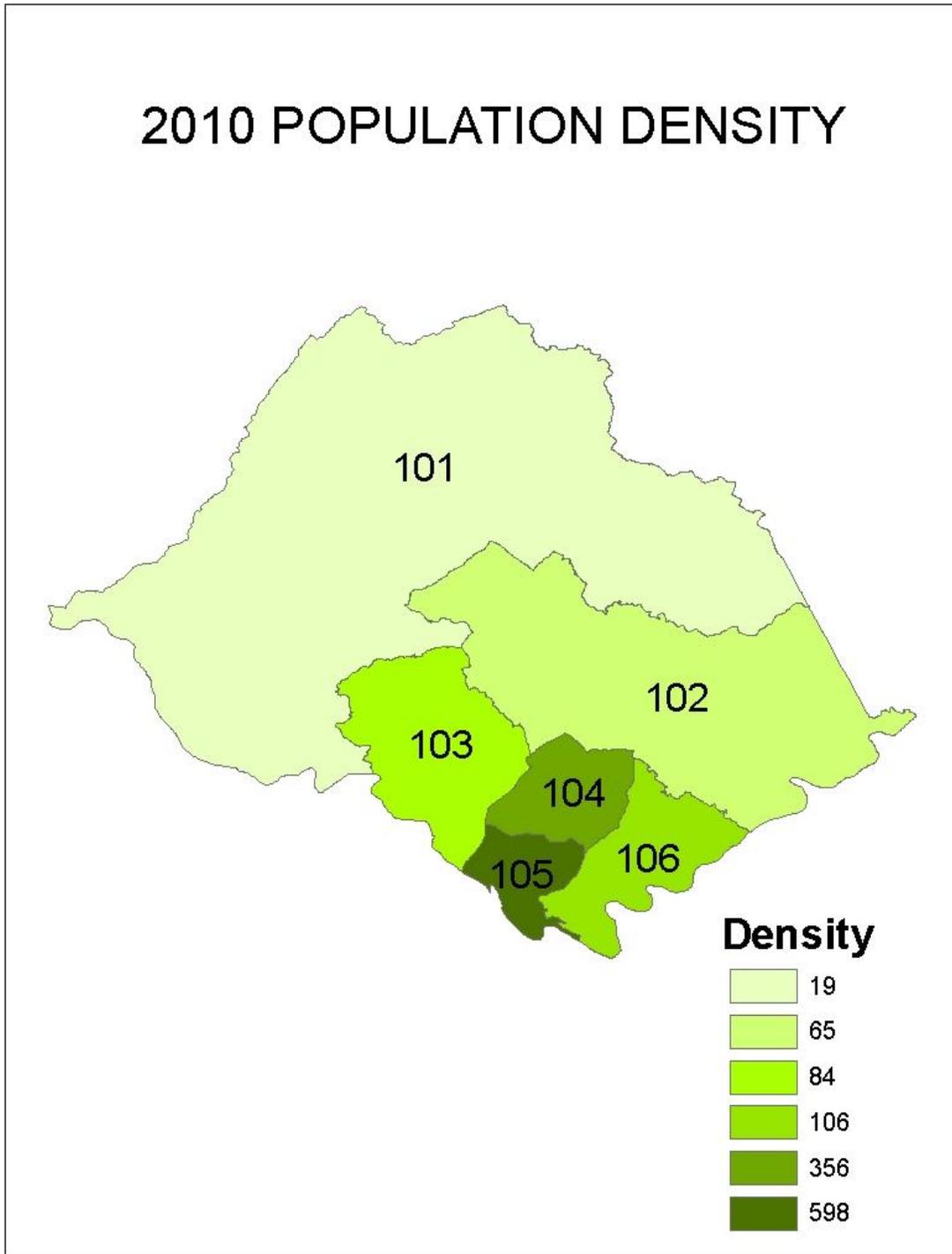
The overall county population density is 68 people per square mile (see Table 4). Population densities are highest in the southern portions of the county (see Figure 4). The northern Census tract 101 has the smallest population and greatest square miles with a density of 19 people per square mile. The greatest population density is in Census tract 105 with 598 people per square mile followed by Census tract 104 with 356 people per square mile.

<b>Table 4: 2010 POPULATION DENSITIES BY CENSUS TRACT</b>							
	Census Tract						County
	101	102	103	104	105	106	
Total population	5,288	7,238	3,477	6,408	7,184	2,758	32,353
Square Miles	267	111	41	18	12	26	474
Population per Square Mile	19	65	84	356	598	106	68

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tracts 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Figure 4



**Population Age**

The population of all county age cohorts increased from 1990 to 2010 with the exception of the population age cohort 25 to 44 years old (see Table 5). A slight decline in population occurred for this age grouping. Overall, Amherst County’s population that is younger than 24 years old has increased at a rate much lower than the population above 44 years old. The mean age in Amherst between the last three census counts has increased from 35 to 42.

**TABLE 5: AMHERST COUNTY POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND CHANGE FROM 1990 TO 2010 BY AGE**

Age Cohort	1990		2000		2010		
	Total Population	Percent of Population	Total Population	Percent of Population	Total Population	Percent of Population	Percent Change
Under 15 years	5,480*	19%	6,123	19%	5,581	17%	1.8%
15 to 24 years	4,394*	15%	4,478	14%	4,629	15%	5.3%
25 to 44 years	8,935	31%	8,867	28%	7,262	22%	-18.7%
45 to 54 years	3,421	12%	4,571	14%	5,081	16%	48.5%
55 to 64 years	2,819	10%	3,481	11%	4,470	14%	58.5%
65 to 74 years	2,119	7%	2,566	8%	3,034	9%	43.1%
75 to 84 years	1,114	4%	1,406	4%	1,702	5%	52.7%
85 years and over	296	1%	402	1%	594	2%	100.6%
Total population	28,578	100%	31,894	100%	32,353	100%	13.2%

\* Population estimated from Census group data

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Virginia Employment Commission, Amherst County Community Profile

**Population Projections by Age**

Virginia Employment Commission estimates that the county’s population will increase approximately 2.4 percent every ten years from 2010 to 2030 (see Table 6). These projections indicate that the age cohort 75 years old and above will have the greatest amount of growth (43.8 percent) over the twenty-year period. In 2010, the population within the age cohort 45 to 59 years old was greater than any other age cohort of the county population (22.9 percent). In 2020, the 30 to 44 year old cohort is projected to be the largest percentage of the population. Overall, the age cohorts 15 to 29 and 45 to 59 are projected to decline in the county over the twenty-year period. The projections indicate that if the current growth trends continue, the population of Amherst County will

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mostly be growing in the 60 years old and above cohorts in the next twenty years. The implications of long term growth in the under 15 age cohort should be considered relative to our public schools and preschool child care.

TABLE 6: AMHERST COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS: 2010 TO 2030								
	Age (Years)	Under 15	15 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 and Above	Total
2010	Population	5,581	6,238	5,653	7,417	5,168	2,296	32,353
	% Pop	17.2%	19.3%	17.5%	22.9%	15.9%	7.2%	100.0%
2020	Projections	5,740	6,075	6,706	6,218	5,890	2,537	33,166
	% Pop	17.3%	18.3%	20.3%	18.7%	17.8%	7.6%	100.0%
	% Change from 2010	2.8%	-2.6%	18.6%	-16.1%	13.9%	10.4%	2.5%
2030	Projections	5,977	6,098	6,590	6,109	5,846	3,303	33,923
	% Pop	17.6%	18.0%	19.4%	18.1%	17.2%	9.7%	100.0%
	% Change from 2010	7.0%	-2.2%	16.6%	-17.6%	13.1%	43.8%	4.8%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Amherst County Community Profile

### **Population Racial Representation**

Overall, the racial makeup of Amherst County is slowly becoming more diverse and multiracial. The racial distribution of the county has changed from 2000 to 2010 with the white and black percentage of the total population decreasing 1.1 percent and 3.3 percent respectively (see Table 7). As in 2000, the most interesting changes occurred in other race categories. The American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut population continued to steadily rise, increasing by 14.2 percent during the ten year period. Asians or Pacific Islanders increased by 34.4 percent. The Hispanic population more than doubled and increased by 104.2 percent. The Census Bureau introduced for the first time in 2000 the ability for respondents to choose more than one race. For comparison purposes, multiracial respondents were included only within the other race category. With this in mind, the number of individuals who identified themselves as being within the other race category increased by 56.3 percent.

**TABLE 7: AMHERST COUNTY RACIAL AND HISPANIC ORIGIN DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2000 AND 2010**

RACE	2000		2010		Percent Change
	Population	Percent of Population	Population	Percent of Population	
White	24,772	77.7%	24,491	75.7%	-1.1%
Black	6,311	19.8%	6,104	18.9%	-3.3%
Hispanic Origin	306	1.0%	625	1.9%	104.2%
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	259	0.8%	296	0.9%	14.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	119	0.4%	160	0.5%	34.4%
Other race*	433	1.4%	677	2.1%	56.3%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>31,894</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>32,353</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

\* Other race includes more than one race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

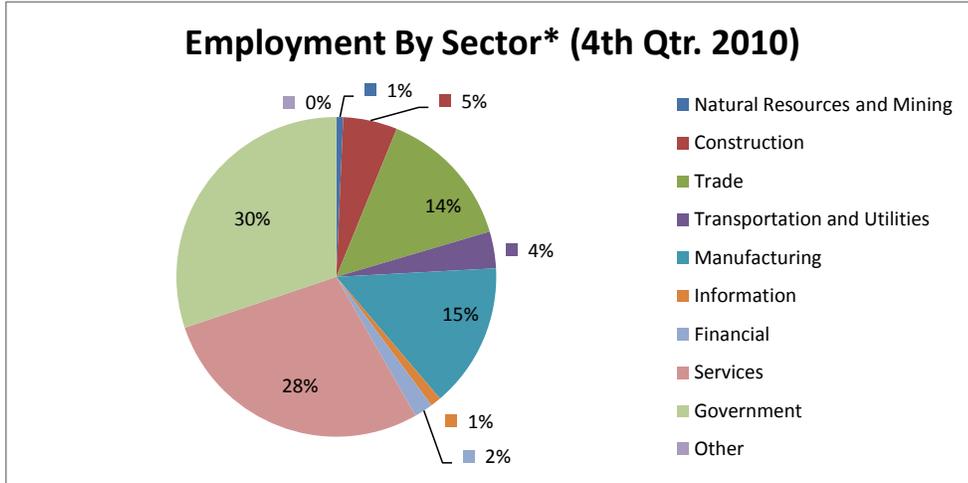
**Impact on Development**

Population growth or decline in a community generally dictates the amount of new development. All things being equal, there is a minimum threshold of population increase necessary for additional businesses, such as restaurants or doctors, to be successful. Housing is somewhat different, however. The U.S. Census indicates that in 1980 the average number of persons per household in Amherst County was approximately 3. That number decreased by 1990 and continued downward to 2.5 persons per household in the 2000 census and 2.3 in the 2010 census. During that thirty year period, our population increased by approximately 3220, and the total number of additional housing units increased by approximately 5,300. Even with a recognition that “households” are decreasing in size, it is reasonable to note that the housing stock is increasing at a disproportional rate to our population and other types of development. More housing means more roads, utilities, higher maintenance costs, and environmental disturbances. While there is little a government can do to affect sociological changes, such as the number of persons living in a dwelling, the number of children couples have, etc., it can plan to accommodate these phenomena in a responsible fashion to minimize the tax burden on all County residents.

**Employment and Employers**

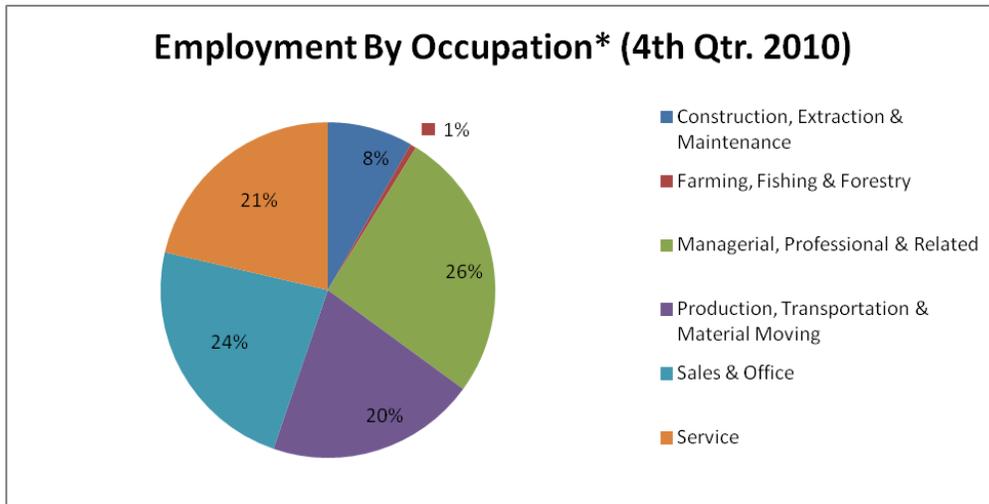
Employment within the county is broken down as shown in Figures 5 and 6 by sector and occupation:

**Figure 5**



Employment By Sector	Number of Individuals	Percentage
Natural Resources and Mining	61	0.7
Construction	481	5.5
Trade	1,255	14.3
Transportation and Utilities	327	3.7
Manufacturing	1,287	14.6
Information	95	1.1
Financial	166	1.9
Services	2,471	28.1
Government	2,653	30.2
Other	0	0
Total:	8,797	100

**Figure 6**



Employment By Sector	Number of Individuals	Percentage
Construction, Extraction & Maintenance	627	8.2
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	44	0.6
Managerial, Professional & Related	2,001	26.2
Production, Transportation & Material Moving	1,541	20.2
Sales & Office	1,782	23.4
Service	1,629	21.4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7,624</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: VA Economic Development Partnership

Approximately one-third of the people employed in the county reside in the county; the remainder commutes into the county from other locales. The following table from the 2010 census shows commuting patterns:

Live and work in Amherst County	2,854
Total In-Commuters	4,870
Total Out-Commuters	10,379

*In-Commuters From:*

Lynchburg, Campbell Co., Bedford Co., Appomattox Co., & Nelson Co.

*Out-Commuters To:*

Lynchburg, Campbell Co., Nelson Co., Bedford Co., & Albemarle Co.

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Table 9 shows total employment of County residents where they work:

<b>Table 9: Amherst County Employment from 1990 to 2010</b>						
Year	Labor Force	Labor Force Growth	Employed	Employment Growth	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
1990	14,359		13,639		720	5.0%
1991	14,865	3.5%	13,961	2.4%	904	6.1%
1992	14,848	-0.1%	13,863	-0.7%	985	6.6%
1993	14,728	-0.8%	14,101	1.7%	627	4.3%
1994	14,846	0.8%	14,187	0.6%	659	4.4%
1995	15,078	1.6%	14,524	2.4%	554	3.7%
1996	14,515	-3.7%	13,942	-4.0%	573	3.9%
1997	14,132	-2.6%	13,668	-2.0%	464	3.3%
1998	14,382	1.8%	14,055	2.8%	327	2.3%
1999	14,677	2.1%	14,416	2.6%	261	1.8%
2000	15,320	4.4%	14,996	4.0%	324	2.1%
2001	15,047	-1.8%	14,501	-3.3%	546	3.6%
2002	15,265	1.4%	14,439	-0.4%	826	5.4%
2003	15,381	0.8%	14,626	1.3%	755	4.9%
2004	15,377	0.0%	14,697	0.5%	680	4.4%
2005	15,692	2.0%	15,073	2.6%	619	3.9%
2006	15,549	-0.9%	15,050	-0.1%	499	3.2%
2007	15,575	0.1%	15,034	-0.1%	541	3.5%
2008	15,967	2.5%	15,304	1.8%	663	4.2%
2009	15,865	-0.6%	14,616	-4.5%	1,249	7.9%
2010	15,848	-0.1	14,503	-0.7	1,345	8.5%

*LAUS Unit and Bureau of Labor Statistics*

### **Unemployment Trends**

As shown in Table 10, beginning in the early 1990s, unemployment rates dropped steadily in the county from 6.3 percent in 1992 to a low of 1.8 percent in 1999. The

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

recession that began in late 2000 pushed unemployment rates upward for two years, peaking at 5.4 percent in 2002. From 2002 until 2006, unemployment rates decreased prior to the late-2000s financial crisis (which is informally referred to as the “Great Recession”) which caused unemployment rates to spike upward, reaching a peak of 8.5 percent in 2010. Unofficially, in January 2011, according to the *LAUS Unit and Bureau of Labor Statistics* monthly unemployment data (not seasonally adjusted), the unemployment rate within the county decreased slightly to 8.2 percent. From 1990 to the present, unemployment rates in the county have closely tracked unemployment rates in the Lynchburg MSA, which comprises the counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Campbell, and Bedford plus the cities of Bedford and Lynchburg. During the 1990s county and regional unemployment rates were lower than the rate for the state as a whole. Since the recession of the early 2000s, however, county and regional unemployment rates have been higher than that of the state average.

Year	Virginia	Lynchburg MSA	Amherst County
1990	4.3	5.2	5.0
1991	5.9	6.0	6.1
1992	6.4	6.4	6.6
1993	5.1	4.5	4.3
1994	4.9	4.1	4.4
1995	4.5	3.7	3.7
1996	4.4	3.8	3.9
1997	4.0	3.6	3.3
1998	2.9	2.6	2.3
1999	2.8	2.1	1.8
2000	2.2	2.2	2.1
2001	3.4	3.8	3.6
2002	4.1	5.3	5.4
2003	4.1	4.8	4.9
2004	3.7	4.3	4.4
2005	3.5	3.8	3.9
2006	3.0	3.3	3.2
2007	3.0	3.4	3.5
2008	4.0	4.2	4.2
2009	6.8	7.6	7.9
2010	6.9	7.8	8.5

### **Industry Employers**

The greatest single industry employer in the county in 2000 was the educational, health, and social services sector (see Table 11). This sector was dominated by women and employed the greatest number of female workers. The second largest sector was manufacturing which employed the greatest number of male workers. Next, retail trade employment was almost equal between male and female employees. The construction

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industry hired the second greatest number of male workers and was the fourth largest industry employer in the county.

**TABLE 11: 2000 NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES PER INDUSTRY BY SEX**

	Male		Female		Total	
Employed civilian pop. 16 years and over	7,580	52%	7,054	48%	14,634	100%
Educational, health, and social services	554	16%	2,897	84%	3,451	23.6%
Manufacturing	2,392	75%	805	25%	3,197	21.8%
Retail trade	767	45%	934	55%	1,701	11.6%
Construction	1,075	92%	90	8%	1,165	8.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	672	84%	130	16%	802	5.5%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	197	25%	594	75%	791	5.4%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	249	36%	445	64%	694	4.7%
Other services	285	45%	346	55%	631	4.3%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	337	57%	259	43%	596	4.1%
Wholesale trade	430	73%	162	27%	592	4.0%
Public administration	296	56%	235	44%	531	3.6%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	216	84%	40	16%	256	1.7%
Information	110	48%	117	52%	227	1.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### **Average Income**

Median household income in the 2010 census for the County was \$44,757, which trailed the state level average (which was \$61,406). Per capita income was \$21,097, below the state level average of \$32,145. In 2010, the county had a moderately higher percentage of its population living in poverty (13.1 percent) compared to the state (10.3 percent). \*Note: 2010 income data from the U.S. Office of Budget and Management (OMB) was not available for the Lynchburg MSA as of the adoption of this plan.

### **Household Income**

Average household income within Amherst County varies by geographic area, with the western portions of the county having higher household incomes than the east. The trend is especially pronounced in the southern region of the County. Census tract 103 has the highest median household income, \$62,477, and the highest per capita income, \$21,985, in the county (see Table 12). In addition to having the highest density and single householders above the age of 64, Census tract 105 has the lowest median household income, \$36,972. Census tract 105, also has the lowest per capita income, \$16,241, in the county.

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Note: Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tracts 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04; the figures given for “Census Tract 105” represent an average of the three smaller geographic Census Tracts.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Survey

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**TABLE 12: AMHERST COUNTY 2010 HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY  
CENSUS TRACT AND COUNTY WITH PERCENT DISTRIBUTION PER GEOGRAPHIC REGION**

Geographic Region	101		102		103		104		105		106		County	
Households	2,145		2,675		1,383		2,603		2,844		1,056		12,706	
Household Income	HH	% Dist.												
Less than \$10,000	110	5.1%	351	13.1%	16	1.2%	193	7.4%	243	8.5%	91	8.6%	1,004	7.9%
\$10,000 – \$14,999	138	6.4%	196	7.3%	15	1.1%	170	6.6%	207	7.3%	58	5.5%	784	6.2%
\$15,000 – \$24,999	205	9.6%	345	12.9%	143	10.3%	306	11.7%	408	14.4%	160	15.2%	1,567	12.3%
\$25,000 – \$34,999	200	9.3%	320	12.0%	135	9.8%	326	12.5%	329	11.6%	155	14.7%	1,465	11.5%
\$35,000 – \$49,999	420	19.6%	339	12.7%	184	13.3%	414	15.9%	617	21.7%	123	11.6%	2,097	16.5%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	455	21.2%	496	18.5%	369	26.7%	822	31.6%	595	20.9%	264	25.0%	3,001	23.6%
\$75,000 – \$99,999	268	12.5%	305	11.4%	214	15.5%	240	9.2%	194	6.8%	115	10.9%	1,336	10.5%
\$100,000 – \$149,999	260	12.1%	222	8.3%	252	18.2%	106	4.2%	232	8.2%	61	5.8%	1,133	8.9%
\$150,000 – \$199,999	52	2.4%	55	2.1%	55	4.0%	26	0.9%	6	0.2%	13	1.2%	207	106%
\$200,000 – more	37	1.7%	46	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	0.4%	16	1.5%	112	0.9%
Median household income	\$49,948		\$39,083		\$62,477		\$42,999		\$36,972		\$41,250		\$44,757	
Per capita income	\$23,632		\$18,197		\$29,466		\$19,470		\$16,241		\$22,270		\$21,097	

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tracts 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04. The figures given for “Census Tracts 104 and 105” represent an average of their respective smaller geographic Census Tracts.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Survey

**County Income Comparison**

Personal income in Amherst County from 1970 to 2000 was not growing at the same rate as its neighbors. Neighbors to the west experienced the most growth. Bedford County had the largest percent personal income growth from 1970 to 2000, which was more than twice as large as Amherst’s percent growth (see Table 13). Bedford’s relative income was nearly three times greater than Amherst’s relative income in 2000. Campbell County and Rockbridge County grew at a smaller rate than Amherst did, but because these counties started with personal incomes that were greater than Amherst’s was in 1970, they maintained a greater relative personal income in 2000. Neighbors to the east experienced higher rates of growth from 1970 to 2000, but maintained a lower relative personal income, which was approximately half of Amherst’s personal income in 2000. Similar to the distribution of wealth in Amherst County Census tracts, the wealthier population is in the southwest while the less wealthy population is in the east.

**TABLE 13: RELATIVE PERSONAL INCOME TO AMHERST COUNTY, 1970 PERSONAL INCOME, \$69,367,000, AND PERSONAL INCOME PERCENT GROWTH FROM 1970 FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTIES AND COMBINED AREAS: 1970-2000**

Year	Amherst		Appomattox		Bedford, Bedford City		Campbell, Lynchburg		Nelson		Rockbridge, Buena Vista, Lexington	
	Relative Income	Percent Growth	Relative Income	Percent Growth	Relative Income	Percent Growth	Relative Income	Percent Growth	Relative Income	Percent Growth	Relative Income	Percent Growth
1970	1.00		0.43		1.46		4.98		0.41		1.25	
1975	1.68	68%	0.70	64%	2.46	68%	7.90	59%	0.64	55%	1.81	45%
1980	2.74	174%	1.26	197%	5.19	255%	14.11	183%	1.37	234%	3.24	159%
1985	4.12	312%	1.89	344%	8.34	471%	20.96	321%	2.00	386%	4.64	271%
1990	5.62	462%	2.57	505%	12.96	786%	28.79	479%	2.59	530%	6.66	433%
1995	6.80	580%	3.06	620%	17.81	1118%	34.37	591%	3.29	700%	8.09	548%
2000	8.63	763%	4.04	849%	25.70	1658%	40.55	715%	4.45	982%	10.73	760%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Accounts Data. CA1-3: Personal Income 1997-2001. Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

**Income and Poverty Status**

Poverty in Amherst County is growing quicker than the population with an increase of 3.7 percent. The population between the ages of 18 and 64 years old experienced the greatest amount of increase in poverty from 2000 to 2010 (see Table 14), which comprised 14.2 percent of the total amount of individuals classified as living in poverty. 14.2 percent of the population between 18 and 64 years old were living in poverty in 2010 compared to just 8 percent in 2000. People under 18 years old experienced a decline in poverty in 2010. The relative percentage of the population 65 years old and older living below the poverty level slightly increased from 11 percent to 12.5 percent.

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Census tract 102 has the greatest percent of the county’s population living below poverty within all age groups (see Table 15 and Figure 7). The majority of people living below poverty in Census tract 102 are the population under 18 years old and above 64 years old. Census tract 106 has the greatest percent of population below the poverty level between 18 and 64 years old in 2010 (64.3 percent). Census tract 102 has the greatest percent of population below the poverty level. Census tracts 103 and 106 contain the lowest percent of the county population below poverty.

**TABLE 14: AMHERST COUNTY POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY AND PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2000 TO 2010**

	Total Population		Below Poverty Level				Total % Change of Individuals Living in Poverty
	2000	2010	2000		2010		
			Population	% of Pop	Population	% of Pop	
Total Population	31,894	32,353	3,238	10%	4,433	13.7%	3.7%
Under 18 years old	7,476	6,689	1,090	15%	897	13.4%	-1.6%
18 to 64 years old	20,044	18,650	1,654	8%	2,649	14.2%	6.2%
65 years old and above	4,374	7,014	494	11%	877	12.5%	1.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2008 to 2010 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

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**TABLE 15: AMHERST COUNTY 2010 POVERTY DISTRIBUTION BY CENSUS TRACT AND COUNTY\***

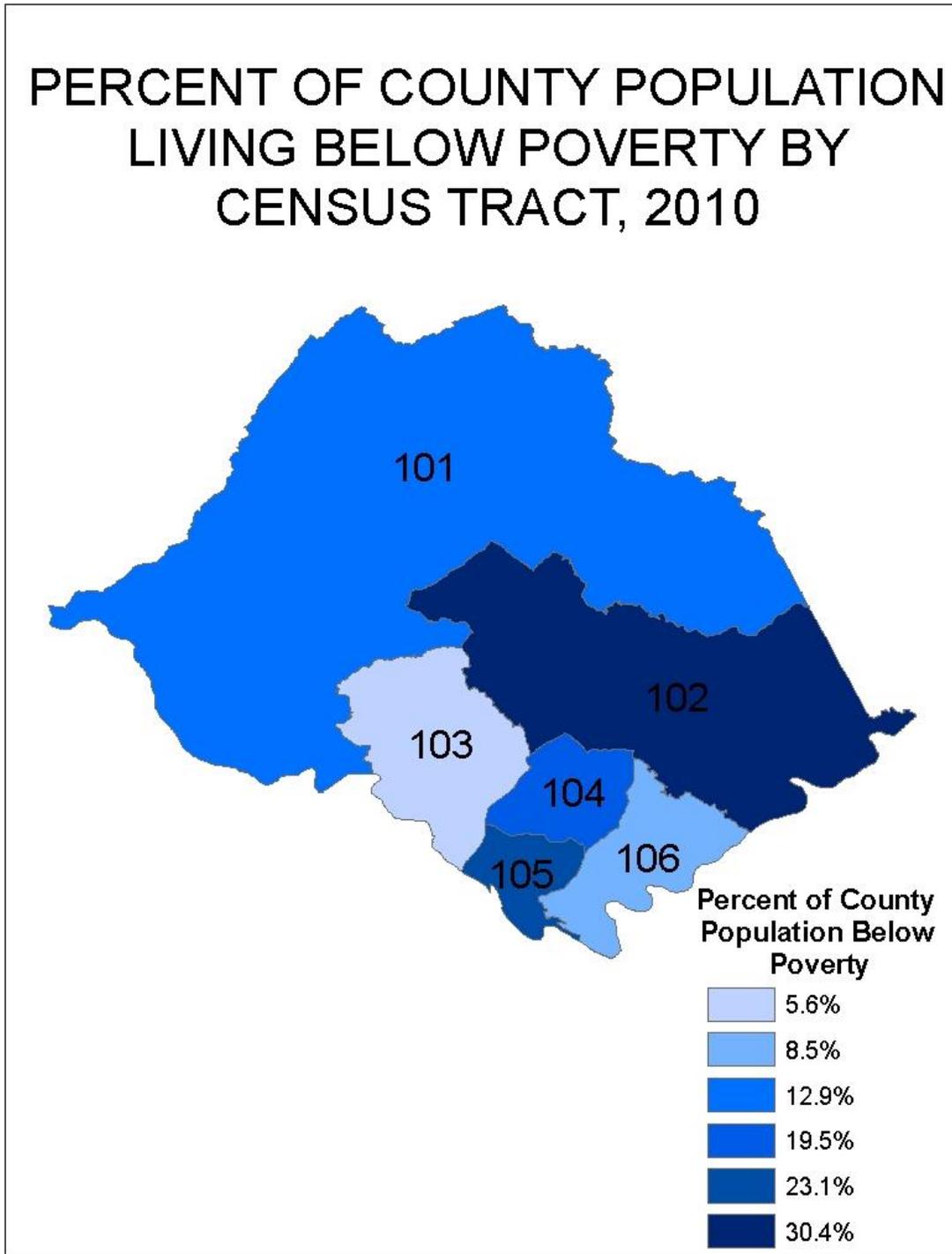
Census Tract	Total Population	Population Below Poverty											
		Total Population			Under 18 years old			18 to 64 years old			65 years old and above		
		Pop Below Poverty	% of Total Pop	% of County Pop Below Poverty	Pop Under 18 years	% of Total Pop Below Poverty	% of County Pop Below Poverty	Pop 18 to 64 years	% of Total Pop Below Poverty	% of County Pop Below Poverty	Pop 65 years and over	% of Total Pop Below Poverty	% of County Pop Below Poverty
101	5,288	515	9.7%	12.9%	171	33.2%	4.3%	231	44.9%	5.8%	113	21.9%	2.8%
102	7,238	1,218	16.8%	30.4%	226	18.5%	5.6%	739	60.6%	18.4%	253	20.7%	6.3%
103	3,477	225	6.5%	5.6%	125	55.5%	3.1%	85	37.7%	2.1%	15	6.6%	0.3%
104	6,408	782	12.2%	19.5%	249	31.8%	6.2%	468	59.8%	11.7%	65	8.3%	1.6%
105	7,184	925	12.9%	23.1%	126	13.6%	3.1%	586	63.3%	14.6%	213	23.0%	5.3%
106	2,758	339	12.3%	8.5%	56	16.5%	1.3%	218	64.3%	5.4%	65	19.2%	1.6%
County	32,353	4,004*	8.1%*	100%	953	23.8%	23.8%	2,327	58.1%	58.1%	724	18.1%	18.1%

\* Population data is derived from population data estimates created from the 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and should not be construed as exact poverty data numbers.

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 7



**Household Type**

While the population increased by 1.4 percent, the number of households increased by 5 percent from 2000 to 2010 due largely to the increase of non-family households, most of whom live alone (see Table 16). The majority of households in Amherst County consist of families, specifically married-couple families, although from 2000 to 2010, traditional married couple families experience a negative growth trend of negative 5 percent. Non-family household types increased the most significantly. Single male and female-headed family households increased by 1 percent each, and maintained the same relative percent of the population. Non-family householders living alone increased by 1 percent, and householders 65 years old and above experienced the largest percentage growth at 21 percent. As the 65 years old and above population increases, this trend in non-family household growth will continue.

Census tract 103 had the highest percentage of family households and married-couple family households in 2010 (see Table 17). Census tracts 101 and 106 also contain a large percentage of family households. Population growth in Census tracts 101, 103 and 106 are most likely due to family household growth. Census tracts 104 and 105 have the highest percentage of non-family households. Similar to the county as a whole, 27 percent and 30 percent of householders living alone are over age 64 in Census tracts 104 and 105, respectively.

**TABLE 16: AMHERST COUNTY PERCENT CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE FROM 1990 TO 2010**

HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE	2000		2010		Percent Change
	Population	Percent of Total Households	Population	Percent of Total Households	
Family households* (families)	8,715	N/A*	8,793	N/A*	1%
Married-couple families	6,833	57%	6,499	52%	-5%
Other family, male householder	502	4%	606	5%	1%
Other family, female householder	1,380	12%	1,688	13%	1%
Non-family households*	3,213	N/A*	3,767	N/A*	17%
Householder living alone	2,866	24%	3,193	25%	1%
Householder 65 years and over	1,189	10%	3,839	31%	21%
Total households	11,928	100%	12,560	100%	5%

\*“N/A” represents the two main categories (Family Households and Non-Family Households) from which the subcategory types are derived.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010

**TABLE 17: 2010 NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS (HH) PER CENSUS TRACT BY TYPE**

			Family HH (families)	Married- couple families	Other family, male HHR*	Other family, female HHR	Non- family HH	HHR living alone	HHR 65 years and over	Total HH	Persons per HH
Census Tracts	101	HH	1,538	1,215	109	214	567	487	693	2,105	2.50
		% of HH	73%	58%	5%	10%	27%	23%	33%	100%	
	102	HH	1,729	1,333	109	287	833	705	850	2,848	2.41
		% of HH	61%	47%	4%	10%	29%	25%	30%	100%	
	103	HH	1,067	887	42	138	319	274	435	1,386	2.51
		% of HH	77%	64%	3%	10%	23%	20%	31%	100%	
	104	HH	1,833	1,269	153	411	800	686	725	2,633	2.43
		% of HH	70%	48%	6%	16%	30%	26%	27%	100%	
	105	HH	1,848	1,252	140	456	945	784	840	2,793	2.41
		% of HH	66%	45%	5%	16%	34%	28%	30%	100%	
	106	HH	778	543	53	182	303	257	296	1,081	2.55
		% of HH	72%	50%	5%	17%	28%	24%	27%	100%	

\*HHR = Householder

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04. For 1990: Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tracts 105.01 and 105.02.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010

### **Housing – Year Built**

The majority of occupied housing units in Amherst County were built after 1969 (see Table 18). For all occupied housing units, the median year the unit was built was 1976. For Census tracts 101, 102, 103, and 106, the greatest percentage of occupied housing was built between 1990 and 2000. Census tracts 101 and 106 have the highest number of occupied houses built before 1940. Census tracts 103, 104, and 105 have the lowest number of occupied housing built before 1940.

**TABLE 18: AMHERST COUNTY DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY CENSUS TRACT AND YEAR BUILT, 2010**

Census Tract	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2010	Total Housing Units
101	411	293	260	459	282	622	354	2,681
	15%	11%	10%	17%	11%	23%	13%	100%
102	294	342	264	707	384	657	200	2,848
	11%	12%	9%	25%	13%	23%	7%	100%
103	111	182	126	176	349	369	153	1,466
	8%	12%	9%	12%	24%	25%	10%	100%
104	212	461	404	741	552	281	135	2,786
	8%	17%	14%	26%	20%	10%	5%	100%
105	283	660	354	535	740	274	148	2,994
	9%	22%	12%	18%	25%	9%	5%	100%
106	143	114	191	229	102	273	57	1,109
	13%	10%	17%	21%	9%	25%	5%	100%
County	1,378	2,040	1,854	2,871	2,409	2,201	1,185	13,938
	10%	15%	13%	21%	17%	16%	8%	100%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2008-2010 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates: Selected Households Characteristics

**Housing Size and Facilities**

Overall, the county has a variety of housing unit size and they average approximately six rooms per unit. As previous population trends and year built statistics indicate growth in Census tracts 101, 102, and 103, new and larger housing units are being built to accommodate this growth. Census tract 103 has the largest percentage of housing units with six rooms, eight rooms, and nine or more rooms. Census tracts 101 and 102 have greater percentage of housing units with more than six rooms. Census tract 104 had the most number of one room housing units.

Few occupied units in the county lack plumbing facilities, kitchen facilities, or telephone service (see Table 19). Relative to the county, Census tract 101 lacks a greater percentage of plumbing facilities, kitchen facilities, or telephone service. Housing units in the other Census tracts do not lack plumbing or kitchen facilities.

**TABLE 19: 2010 AMHERST COUNTY OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS LACKING PLUMBING FACILITIES, KITCHEN FACILITIES, OR TELEPHONE SERVICE**

	101	102	103	104	105	106	County
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	14	0	0	0	0	0	14
	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
No telephone service	118	122	16	154	99	11	520
	5.5%	4.6%	1.2%	5.9%	3.5%	1.0%	4.1%

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Housing Characteristics

**Housing Occupancy**

The majority of housing units in the county are owner occupied. Occupied housing and the number of housing units increased by roughly the same percent (6 to 7 percent) while vacancy rates increased more dramatically (16 percent) from 2000 to 2010 (see Table 20). Between 2000 and 2010, the largest percentage growth in housing units occurred in Census Tracts 101 and 103, while the largest percentage growth of renter occupied units occurred in Census tract 104. Consistent with population trends between 2000 and 2010, Census tract 106 had the smallest percent of housing unit growth and Census tracts 104 and 105 contained the greatest percentage of renter occupied housing units. Census tract 101 has the greatest vacancy rate with 20 percent of housing units being classified as vacant housing. Figure 8 depicts the vacancy rates through the County’s Census tracts.

**Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

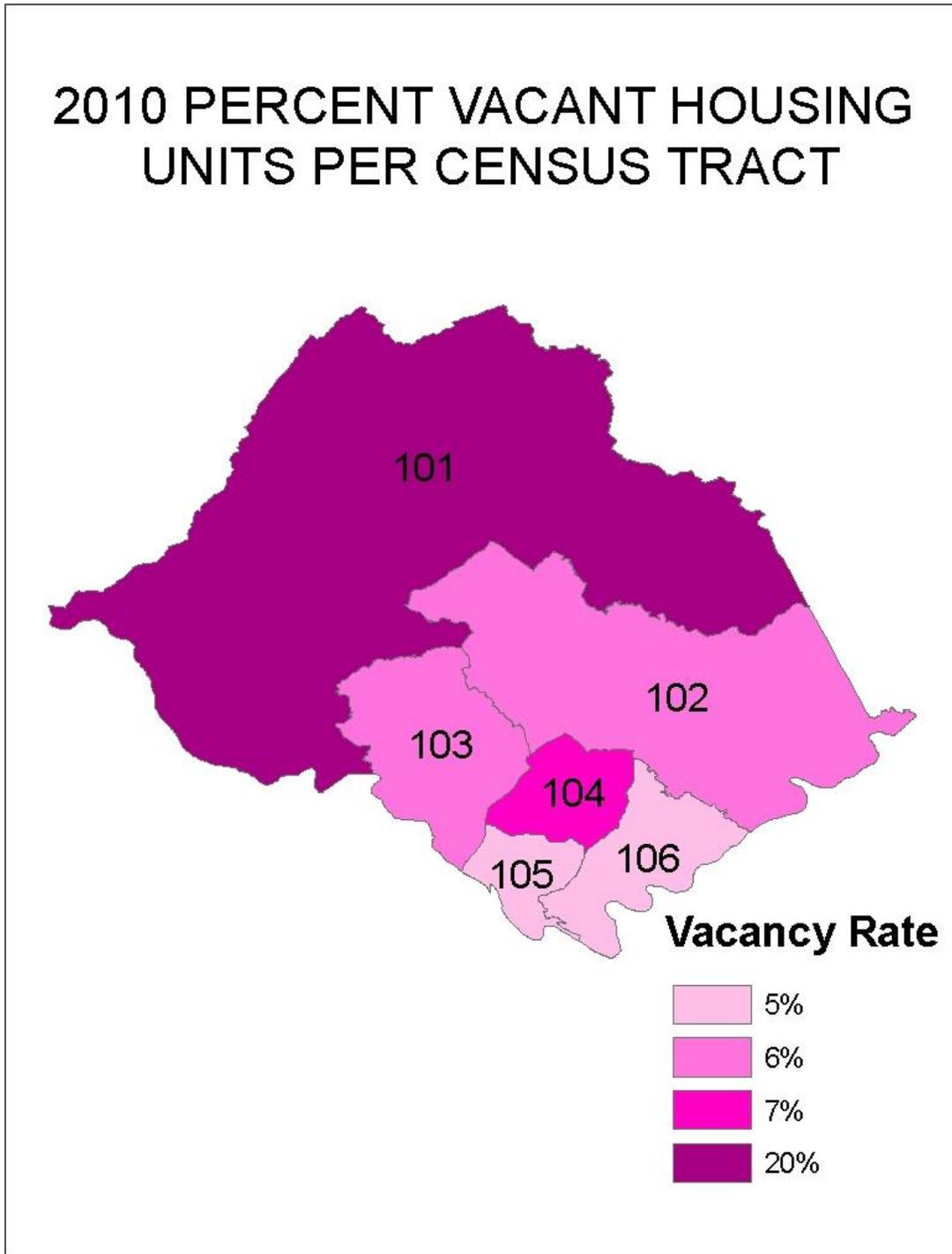
**TABLE 20: 2000 and 2010 Housing Occupancy by Census Tract and County**

	Census Tract	Housing Units	Occupied		Vacant		Owner occupied		Renter occupied	
2000	101	2,404	1,990	83%	414	17%	1,678	84%	312	16%
	102	2,610	2,411	92%	199	8%	1,820	75%	591	25%
	103	1,320	1,239	94%	81	6%	1,105	89%	134	11%
	104	2,628	2,507	95%	121	5%	1,935	77%	572	23%
	105	2,888	2,727	94%	161	6%	1,909	70%	818	30%
	106	1,108	1,067	96%	41	4%	878	82%	189	18%
	County	12,958	11,941	92%	1,017	8%	9,325	78%	2,616	22%
2010	101	2,681	2,145	80%	536	20%	1,790	84%	355	16%
	102	2,848	2,675	94%	173	6%	1,947	73%	728	27%
	103	1,466	1,383	94%	83	6%	1,263	91%	120	9%
	104	2,786	2,603	93%	183	7%	1,836	71%	767	29%
	105	2,994	2,844	95%	150	5%	1,880	66%	964	34%
	106	1,109	1,056	95%	53	5%	860	81%	196	19%
	County	13,884	12,706	92%	1,178	8%	9,576	75%	3,130	25%
Percent Change from 2000 to 2010	101	11%	8%		29%		7%		14%	
	102	9%	11%		-13%		7%		23%	
	103	11%	12%		2%		14%		-10%	
	104	6%	4%		51%		-5%		34%	
	105	4%	4%		-7%		-1%		18%	
	106	0%	-1%		29%		-2%		4%	
	County	7%	6%		16%		3%		20%	

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Housing Characteristics

Figure 8



### **Housing Types**

For purposes of discussion, the terms “single family”, “multi-family”, “mobile home”, and “other” will be used to describe housing types. In Table 21, “Multi-family homes” are considered to be structures comprising 3 or more units in accordance with the definition of a “multi-family dwelling” in the County’s Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance and the category “Other” units include single family attached and duplex units. From 2000 to the present there has been very little change in the housing type ratio throughout the county. Single family dwellings account for 76 percent of all housing, multi-family constitutes 7 percent, and mobile homes pick up the remaining 13 – 14 percent. Census tract 103 (the Elon area) has the highest proportion of single family dwellings and the lowest proportion of mobile homes. Conversely census tract 101 has the highest proportion of mobile homes, and low proportions of multi-family, and single family structures. That entire area is zoned A-1 Agriculture where, currently, mobile homes are a “by-right” use and multi-family dwellings are not permitted. Table 21 compares 2000 and 2010 census data on housing type by census tract.

Using state data (Weldon Cooper Center) and local permit data, the housing type trend can be followed through the end of 2011. According to the Building Department’s Yearly Building Permit’s by Year Report, from 2006 through 2011, permits were issued for 375 single family dwellings, 28 multi-family dwellings, and 156 manufactured home dwellings. It is not known how many dwellings were completed or how many were replacement homes. What can be inferred, however, is that manufactured homes continue to be a viable part of the Amherst County housing industry. Manufactured homes represent a “double-edged sword” for many communities. On one hand, they represent a reasonable, affordable home for lower income households. On the other hand, they have a relatively low assessed value which results in low real estate taxes which means the costs of providing services by local government are not met by the owner of the home. This point was discussed previously in “Cost of Providing Services”.

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**TABLE 21: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE FROM 2000 TO 2010 BY CENSUS TRACT AND COUNTY**

	Census Tract	Single-Family		Multi-Family*		Manufactured Home		Other*		Total
2000	101	1,835	76%	12	<1%	523	22%	34	1%	2,404
	102	2,056	79%	311	12%	243	9%	0	0%	2,610
	103	1,203	90%	49	4%	85	6%	0	0%	1,337
	104	2,017	78%	148	6%	413	16%	0	0%	2,578
	105	2,224	76%	411	14%	275	9%	13	<1%	2,923
	106	924	84%	30	3%	152	14%	0	0%	1,106
	County	10,259	79%	961	7%	1,691	13%	47	>1%	12,958
2010	101	2,131	79%	0	0%	526	20%	24	1%	2,681
	102	2,006	70%	314	11%	344	12%	184	7%	2,848
	103	1,421	97%	0	0%	18	1%	27	2%	1,466
	104	1,941	70%	213	8%	459	16%	173	6%	2,786
	105	2,167	72%	397	13%	259	9%	171	6%	2,994
	106	871	79%	0	0%	180	16%	58	5%	1,109
	County	10,537	76%	924	7%	1,786	13%	637	4%	13,884
Percent Change from 2000 to 2010	101	16%				1%				12%
	102	-2%				42%				9%
	103	18%				-79%				10%
	104	-4%				11%				8%
	105	-3%				-6%				2%
	106	-6%				18%				<1%
	County	3%				6%				7%

\*"Multi-family units" are defined as being structures comprising 3 or more units in accordance with the definition of a "multi-family dwelling" in the County's Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance. "Other" units include single family attached and duplex units. Given this categorization of units, the "Percentage Change from 2000 to 2010" is not given for these 2 categories since the current category criteria may be different from the unknown criteria used in previous Comprehensive Plan.

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Housing Characteristics

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

### Housing Value and Cost

The majority of housing units in the county have a value between \$100,000 and \$149,999 with a median value of \$137,970 (see Table 22). Census tract 103 has the highest median value of \$179,600. Census tract 106 has the lowest median value of \$100,300.

The median contract rent value for the county is \$592 per month (see Table 23). The highest contract rent values are in Census tracts 103 and 106 and the cheapest are in Census tracts 101 and 102. Census tracts 103 and 106 also have the lowest numbers of renters in the county. Census tracts 104 and 105 have the highest number of rent values reported in the county between \$1,000 and \$1,499.

Value	101	102	103	104	105	106	County
Less than \$50,000	189	129	47	259	173	154	951
	11%	7%	4%	14%	9%	18%	10%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	349	405	124	340	476	275	1,969
	20%	21%	10%	19%	25%	32%	21%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	294	313	243	648	556	171	2,225
	16%	16%	19%	35%	30%	20%	23%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	291	381	309	433	499	80	1,993
	16%	20%	24%	23%	27%	9%	21%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	253	525	265	122	149	131	1,445
	14%	27%	21%	7%	8%	16%	15%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	344	139	247	34	27	21	812
	19%	7%	20%	2%	1%	2%	9%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	51	46	25	0	0	12	134
	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%
\$1,000,000 or more	19	9	3	0	0	16	47
	1%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	2%	<1%
Median	\$161,200	\$160,200	\$179,600	\$122,650	\$103,867	\$100,300	\$137,970

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2006 to 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Housing Characteristics

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**TABLE 23: 2010 AMHERST COUNTY CONTRACT RENT DISTRIBUTION BY CENSUS TRACT**

	101	102	103	104	105	106	County
Less than \$200	0	94	0	0	0	0	94
	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
\$200 to \$499	169	171	0	174	250	26	790
	50%	31%	0%	27%	29%	13%	29%
\$500 to \$749	121	240	67	292	432	94	1,246
	36%	44%	62%	44%	49%	48%	46%
\$750 to \$999	47	24	10	134	168	76	459
	14%	4%	9%	20%	19%	39%	17%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	0	19	32	53	15	0	119
	0%	4%	29%	8%	2%	0%	4%
\$1,500 or more	0	0	0	8	10	0	18
	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Total	337	548	109	661	875	196	2,726
Median	\$500	\$506	\$636	\$594	\$601	\$713	\$592

Note: Census Tract 104 consists of Census Tracts 104.01 and 104.02. Census Tract 105 consists of Census Tract 105.02, 105.03, and 105.04.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Approximately ninety percent of non-manufactured housing (mobile homes) residential building permits issued since 1990 was used to build single-family housing units and 10 percent were for multifamily (see Table 24). The number of building permits issued for single-family housing dropped precipitously after 1999, and gradually increased through the end of 2007, before spiraling downward during 2008 to present which can be associated with the “Great Recession”. Local permit information for 2011 shows 64 issued. Multi-family units continue to represent a minor portion of housing. It is anticipated that, assuming the economy will gradually improve, with the growing number of retirees, this trend may change, making town homes and patio homes a more popular option with the construction community. 2011 figures show that 4 multi-family structures were constructed. The cost of single family units more than doubled from 1990 through 2006, increasing from \$84,000 to \$170,552. However, after 2006 to the present, values decreased by an average of \$35,000 per single family unit.

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Year	Single Family Units			Multi-Family Units		
	Number of Units	Average Cost per Unit	% of Total	Number of Units	Average Cost per Unit	% of Total
1990	135	\$84,087	81%	32	\$24,545	19%
1991	167	\$61,579	83%	34	\$23,253	17%
1992	163	\$71,604	96%	6	\$0	4%
1993	195	\$72,404	87%	30	\$0	13%
1994	173	\$73,569	84%	32	\$45,313	16%
1995	191	\$72,350	97%	6	\$30,500	3%
1996	202	\$76,731	94%	12	\$33,833	6%
1997	179	\$77,727	89%	23	\$34,152	11%
1998	217	\$83,237	97%	6	\$44,500	3%
1999	166	\$98,923	89%	21	\$52,857	11%
2000	93	\$101,605	88%	13	\$29,385	12%
2001	109	\$113,286	86%	18	\$57,056	14%
2002	118	\$131,244	100%	0	\$0	0%
2003	107	\$129,674	88%	14	\$46,143	12%
2004	117	\$170,388	89%	14	\$39,142	11%
2005	124	\$144,264	100%	0	\$0	0%
2006	142	\$170,552	58%	6	N/A	N/A
2007	147	\$146,636	95%	11	\$62,273	5%
2008	115	\$171,532	93%	9	\$65,556	7%
2009	109	\$130,640	96%	4	\$61,000	4%
2010	100	\$107,534	100%	0	\$0	0%
2011	60	\$122,284	94%	4	\$68,750	6%

\*The category "Multi-family units" consists of townhouses, apartments, duplex, quadplex, and multi-family structures as found in the Yearly Building Permits by Year Report.

Source: Amherst County Building Official's Office Yearly Building Permits by Year

**CHAPTER IV: COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**Introduction**

This chapter presents a brief discussion of Amherst County community facilities and services. General community facility goals, objectives, and strategies are presented, followed by descriptive summaries of specific service areas and facilities. Goals, objectives, and strategies are provided for the areas of parks and recreation, education, library, public safety, water and waste water facilities, emergency services, solid waste management, and broadband technology.

Several key community facility concepts are presented in this chapter. First, adequately funding community facilities is a key to providing effective services. Second, the location and timing of planned community facilities has a major impact on land use patterns and third, the private sector can contribute fair share funding towards the capital construction of community facilities through the use of proffer legislation.

The goals, objectives, and strategies contained in this chapter are not laws. Planned community services and facilities are a function of the Board of Supervisors' and Amherst County School Board's annual decisions pertaining to capital and operating expenditures. County ordinances, such as zoning and subdivision, and the building code, are the legal mechanisms by which land development is controlled.

However, decisions made in general accordance with this comprehensive plan will hold great legal weight in Virginia. Making decisions that conform to a comprehensive plan demonstrates to the citizens of a community that elected and appointed officials have thought about the future of their community and are willing to plan for a future that is desired.

Finally, a comprehensive plan is not a static document. In addition to periodic five year reviews, a plan may be formally amended at any time to address unanticipated community conditions or new or emerging community objectives.

**GENERAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal # 1**

Develop (or maintain) the programs, facilities, and services necessary to satisfy the needs and demands of Amherst County residents, employees, and visitors.

**Objective #1**

Maintain high quality service and facility standards in Amherst County.

**Strategies:**

Incorporate the recommendations of various plans for specific areas of community facilities and services (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Public Education,

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Emergency Services, Public Libraries, Law Enforcement/Jails/Judicial Systems, Solid Waste, Waste and Wastewater Utilities, Broadband Internet Access/County Information Technology) into the five (5) year Capital Improvements Program.

Consider funding for Capital Improvement Plan and non-capital projects referenced in the Comprehensive Plan each year during the budget process.

Under applicable provisions of the Code of Virginia, establish a cash proffer system to accept voluntary cash contributions from individuals who rezone property for new development in order to off-set the County's cost of providing capital improvements to serve the property.

### **Objective #2**

Use community facilities and services as a growth management tool.

#### **Strategies:**

Plan community facilities and services for designated growth areas to maximize efficiencies and cost-effectiveness.

Establish a boundary where public water and sewer will and will not be extended over the next twenty years. Require all major subdivision developments to use public water if they are developed within 2000 feet of existing water lines and within the designated growth boundary.

Create cost sharing strategies (such as proffers) to ensure that new commercial, industrial, and residential developments bear their "fair share" of the cost to provide community facilities and services needed by such development.

Accommodate future facility expansion demands through renovation of existing or the construction of new facilities that are capable of containing other County departments and agencies (i.e., multi-use buildings). Design these facilities to be efficient and promote the pride of the community.

The remaining community facility goals, objectives, and strategies are presented within the specific community facility or service area of concern.

**PUBLIC WATER AND WASTEWATER**

The Amherst County Service Authority (ACSA) is a public water and wastewater utility, governed by a Board made up of the same individuals who serve on the Amherst County Board of Supervisors. While ACSA has the legal authority to extend utilities throughout the county, services are concentrated in the medium density/commercial/industrial portions of southern Amherst County. ACSA's centralized water distribution system consists of approximately 165 miles of lines, from the James River in the South to Union Hill Road, and interconnection with the Town of Amherst, in the north. Water lines also extend from the Galts Mill Rd. /Brightwells Mill Rd. area in the east to the village center of Elon in the west. The Authority's centralized wastewater collection system consists of approximately 36 miles of lines from the James River in the south, to South Coolwell Road in the north. Wastewater service is currently concentrated in the Williams Run drainage basin and this portion of the South Amherst Highway corridor.

ACSA's 3.0 MGD triple water source withdrawal permit includes the following sources, Harris Creek and Graham Creek Reservoir, with the James River as an emergency back-up supply. When the Mill Creek Reservoir was constructed, Amherst County invested additional local funds in expanding the project to include public water supply storage. This reservoir currently serves as an emergency back-up supply for the Town of Amherst and as a designated future water supply for ACSA. The Authority's Henry L. Lanum, Jr. Water Filtration Plant and Graham Creek reservoir currently produces an annual average of 1.1 MGD (million gallons daily) of treated water. The filtration plant produces an average of 1.25 MGD during summer use periods and has a design capacity of 2.0 MGD. This would enable service to ten thousand accounts. There are currently 6,670 total connections to the water system, using an average of 165 gallons per day per connection. ACSA is a regional partner in the Lynchburg Wastewater Treatment Facility. Current wastewater flows to the regional plant average 0.30 MGD, while ACSA owns 2.2 MGD of the treatment facility's capacity.

**ACSA FACILITY PLAN:**

ACSA recently updated its Facility Plan, which was adopted by its Board on March 6, 2012. This is a fifty-year utilities planning document, projecting community water and wastewater needs, and how they should be met over that period. Following the analysis and evaluation of several alternative plan approaches to fulfilling these needs, the Authority Board found it appropriate to continue to provide utility service through only centralized water distribution and wastewater collection systems. Such centralized systems are generally the most reliable, more cost effective, and better community planning tools than isolated community wells, or prefabricated "package" wastewater treatment facilities.

Under this Facility Plan, ACSA-owned capacity at the regional wastewater treatment plant is sufficient to meet the current demand projections of the fifty-year planning period. As a result, the plan's wastewater emphasis is on collection system expansion.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Such expansions would occur over several decades throughout the drainage basins on either side of the South Amherst Highway, south of South Coolwell Road.

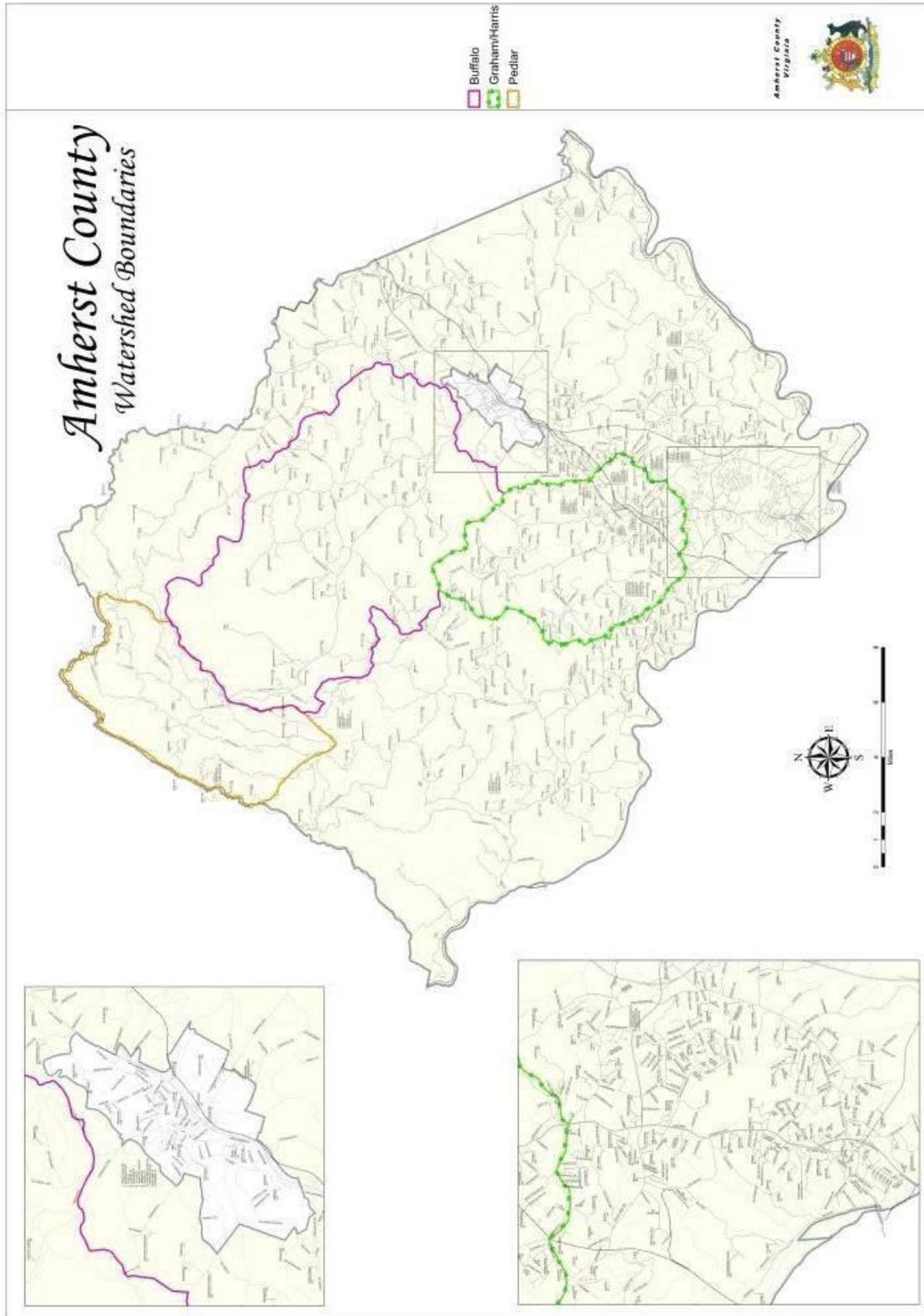
The Authority Board has determined that the most appropriate public water supply plan alternative is to first expand the Lanum Water Filtration Plant to its maximum site capacity of 4.0 MGD. The 4 MGD sources would include construction of a permanent James River Intake and distribution system modifications. This work is estimated to likely be necessary between 2020 and 2025. That equates to service for approximately twenty thousand customer accounts. Community water demand beyond that point would be met through water line interconnection with the City of Lynchburg. Under this approach the Mill Creek Reservoir will estimate to serve as an emergency back-up supply for the Town of Amherst for the foreseeable future. Use of this reservoir as an ACSA source remains one of the Authority's alternate plans. As currently planned, development of the Mill Creek Reservoir's source will most likely take place well beyond the fifty year planning period of ACSA's 2012 Facility Plan.

Extension of public water and wastewater service should be used as a growth management tool. As such, public wastewater service would only be extended into areas where more intensive development, with higher densities, is desired. This would include industrial, commercial, and selected medium density residential areas. Public water would be made available throughout industrial, commercial and medium density areas. In rare instances, public water service may be determined to be appropriate for very small portions of the rural low-density residential areas, when bordered by more intensive land uses.

Because the presence of public water and wastewater services stimulates higher densities and more intensive land uses, neither water nor wastewater service would be extended beyond the boundaries of the designated growth areas. To this end Amherst County's 2007 Comprehensive Plan established the County's first Designated Growth Areas to further reinforce existing zoning regulations.

### **Amherst County's Watershed Protection Program**

Amherst County, the Amherst County Service Authority (ACSA), the Town of Amherst, the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District and local colleges work in partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to preserve and enhance water quality within the watersheds of the county's public drinking water sources. The program consists of enhanced land use controls, an ongoing program of watershed land use surveys by Soil and Water District personnel and college interns, and a best management practice (BMP) promotional program. The 75 percent BMP "cost share" funds available through the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Chesapeake Bay Initiative are leveraged with 25 percent local grants from ACSA, providing BMPs at no cost to the agricultural landowner. While this program could be further strengthened through adoption of additional land use controls consistent with the Chesapeake Bay Program, it has twice received national recognition from Region III of EPA.



**PUBLIC WATER AND WASTEWATER  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal # 1**

Continue to provide water and wastewater utilities in a manner that supports the County's growth management, land use, environmental, and economic development goals and objectives.

**Objective #1**

Use the planned presence, or absence, of public water and wastewater services as a growth management tool.

**Strategies:**

Extend centralized public water service throughout the designated water service growth area, as opportunities arise.

Restrict the extension of public water service beyond the boundaries of the designated water service growth area.

Extend public wastewater service only into the designated water service growth area where more intensive growth is desired.

**Objective # 2**

Provide adequate and reliable water distribution and wastewater collection systems in geographic areas identified for growth.

**Strategies:**

Utilize existing and emerging technologies to better serve the customers of the utility system.

Maintain water and wastewater revenues at levels which support the operation, maintenance, and capital improvement needs of the utility system.

Maintain utility system fees at levels to off-set the cost to provide water and wastewater service to new development.

Use availability fees to fund system capacity improvements and to fund debt service for long term infrastructure improvements.

Continue to require 100% reserve drain fields for new development and promote responsibilities of property owners in areas without public sewer. Coordinate Board of Supervisors activities to promote community economic growth and development with the provision of the ACSA public water and wastewater services necessary to support those efforts.

**Objective # 3**

Continue to participate with other local governments in regional water and wastewater utility planning and participate with those projects that meet future needs.

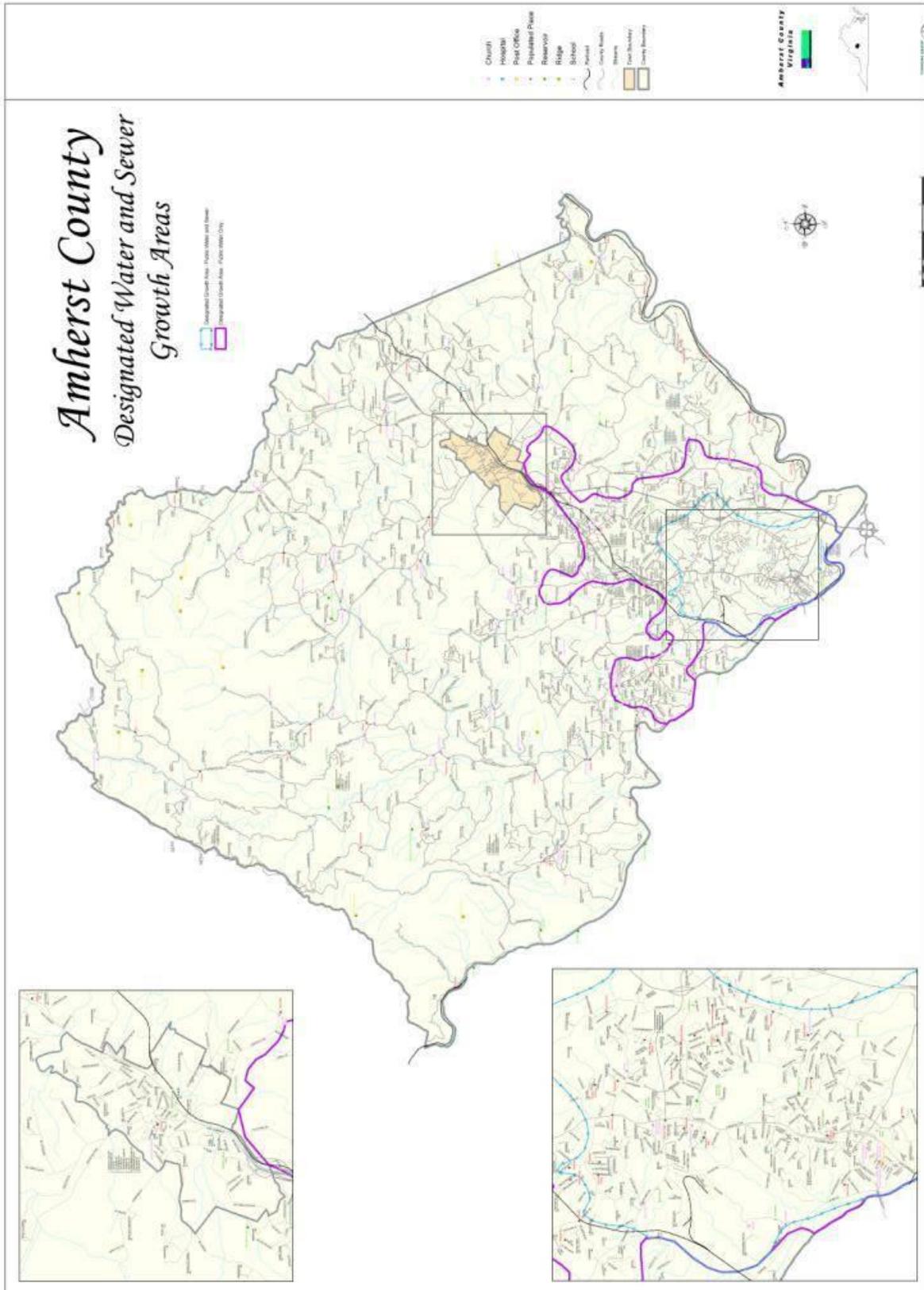
**Strategies:**

Develop mutually beneficial joint ventures with the Town of Amherst and the City of Lynchburg to interconnect existing and future water and wastewater utilities within the designated growth areas, in ways determined to be desirable and cost effective.

Continue regular meetings of the Directors/Administrators of the Region 2000 water/wastewater utility organizations, to discuss shared services (regional wastewater treatment plant and wholesale water), the rapidly changing regulatory environment, and other matters of mutual concern.

Participate with the Region 2000 Local Government Council and other jurisdictions in the development of a regional water supply plan for Central Virginia.

Implement the County Water and Wastewater Facility Plan.



**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

The Amherst County Solid Waste Department handles all non-hazardous solid waste generated in the county. The facilities consist of a Subtitle D landfill, four green-box rural trash container sites, four recycling drop-off centers, four manned convenience centers with recycling containers, and a closed landfill in post-closure care.



Dumpsters overflowing with trash



Convenience center located off Coolwell Road

The active landfill consists of approximately 275 acres, which are divided into four sections. Section one houses the current fill area with a footprint of thirty-eight acres (including buffer areas) that has been permitted for four trenches by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. At the current rate of receiving 84 tons of waste per day, section one has 23 years of service remaining. Sections two and four are potential fill areas and section three, due to shallow bedrock, can be used as a borrow site.

Solid-waste management is an essential service for residents and businesses in the county. These services are delivered through a public/private partnership as outlined in the Solid Waste management Plan for Amherst County and the Town of Amherst. The plan was adopted by the Amherst County Board of Supervisors on May 4, 2004 and by the Town of Amherst Council on June 9, 2004. It is the plan of record for the most recent submittal to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.



Amherst County Landfill, 2006

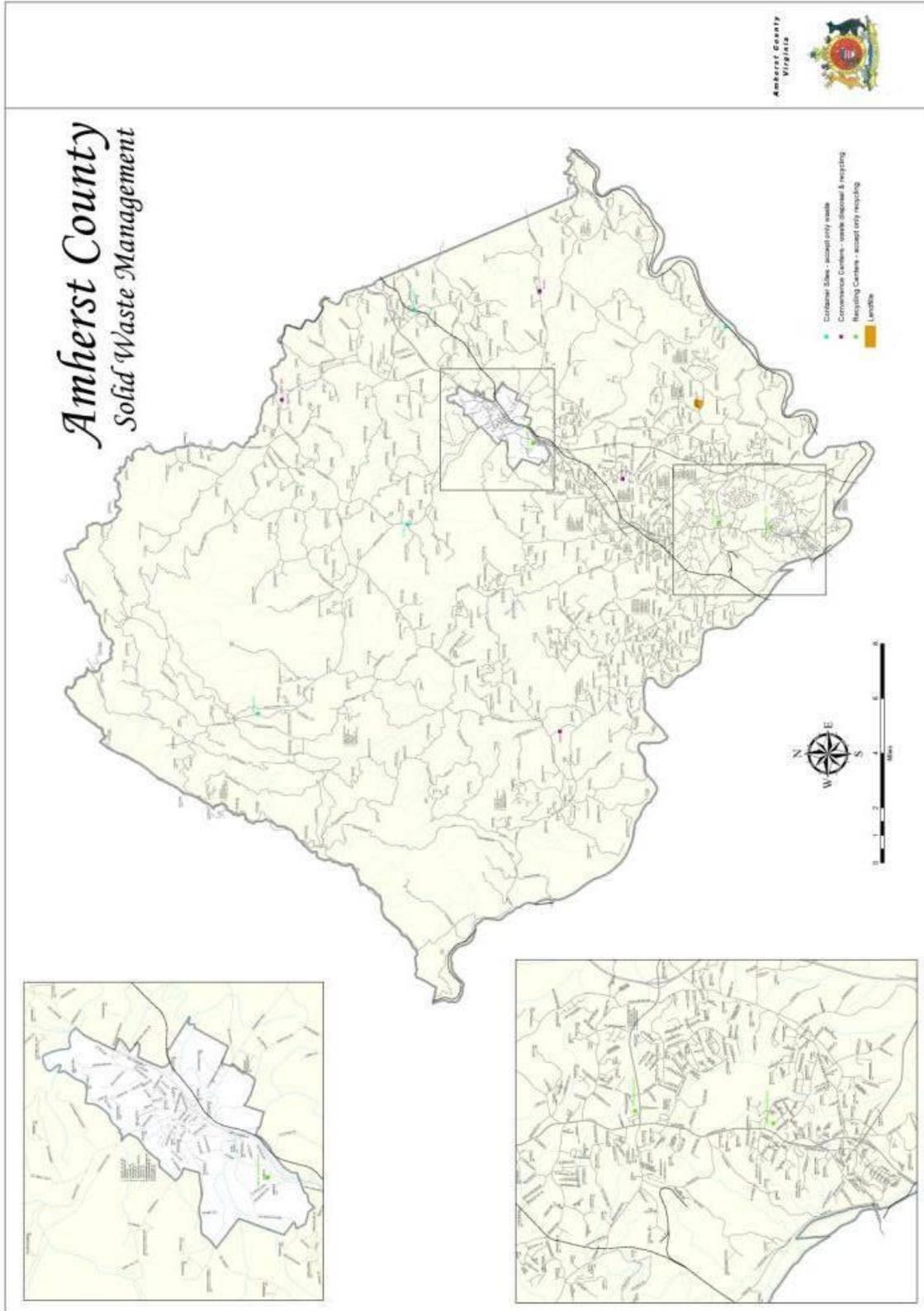
The County encourages recycling by providing containers throughout the county of plastics #1 and #2, cardboard, mixed paper, aluminum cans, steel food cans, newspaper, and the three colors of glass. At the landfill, residents and businesses can recycle scrap metal, yard waste, and tires. Through partnership with the City of Lynchburg, County residents can now participate in a household hazardous waste program.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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The green-box system of rural waste collection is being phased out and replaced with manned convenience centers. These centers are staffed and provide a means for residential household waste disposal and waste segregation such as: scrap metal, appliances and yard waste and is also furnished with recycling centers, making this a more efficient and environmentally sound way of handling residential waste.

An immediate concern this plan wishes to address is littering and trash accumulation. The county should take necessary measures to discourage both of these practices. Requisite ordinances and enforcement staff may be needed to keep Amherst County litter and trash free.



**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Maintain the focus on the County's long-term solid waste management needs.

**Objective #1**

Maintain enough landfill capacity to handle growth in the County.

**Strategies:**

Continue to monitor the landfill's capacity and proceed with design and construction at the appropriate time.

Explore other cost sharing or saving opportunities.

Identify alternative future solid waste and collection options.

**Goal #2**

Reduce County's waste stream.

**Objective #1**

Continue to implement and explore opportunities to expand recycling programs and increase efforts in waste reduction, sustainable building, and resource conservation.

**Strategies:**

Encourage residential and business participation in waste reduction programs.

Continue to provide recycling and waste segregation at all convenience centers as site conditions permit.

Promote reuse through waste exchange program, new drop-off opportunities, and second hand outlets.

Encourage "green Procurement" (using recycled materials).

Continue promoting household hazardous substances program with scheduled period for turning in hazardous material.

Consider adding hazardous waste collection capability to the county landfill.

Explore composting on a larger scale and incentives to reduce the amount of organic material disposed.

Provide educational and technical assistance to help businesses and residents reduce waste.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Develop partnerships with other agencies and environmental organizations to maximize the impacts of waste reduction and conservation message.

Consider developing a staffed recycling center in Madison Heights.

### **Goal #3**

Facilitate a clean, safe, and beautiful community.

#### **Objective #1**

Work with citizens, businesses, and other agencies to improve litter prevention, beautification, and community improvements.

##### **Strategies:**

Monitor the effectiveness and applicability of the existing solid waste and litter ordinances and identify recommendations for improving its effectiveness.

Expand community partnerships to help citizens keep their neighborhoods clean and safe.

Implement the Assign-A-Highway Program.

Expand volunteer outreach, especially to youth.

Encourage Amherst County to participate in the adopt-a-spot program.

#### **Objective #2**

Decrease the number of inoperative motor vehicles and junk.

##### **Strategies:**

Educate the public to better understand the inoperative motor vehicle ordinance and program.

Strengthen the inoperable motor vehicle ordinance by contracting with a company to remove inoperative vehicles from properties that are in violation of the ordinance.

Participate in the State of Virginia Department of Motor Vehicle reimbursement program.

Aggressively enforce the removal of inoperative motor vehicles that are in violation of the Amherst County ordinance.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Introduction**

§15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires the planning commission of every locality to prepare a comprehensive plan for consideration by the governing body and for the governing body of every locality to adopt a comprehensive plan. Localities must review their comprehensive plan and associated transportation plan at least every five years, pursuant to §15.2-2230 of the Code, to determine whether it needs to be updated.

The comprehensive plan must include a specific section dedicated to transportation planning or reference a separate document that serves as the community's transportation plan (§15.2-2223).<sup>3</sup> The comprehensive plan, therefore, provides policy guidance and criteria for making both land use and transportation decisions and recommendations. This section of Amherst County's comprehensive plan is intended to meet the letter and spirit of Chapter 527 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly.

### **Linking Transportation to Land Use Patterns and Plans**

The efficiency and safety of the County's transportation system is highly dependent upon County land use patterns – existing and proposed. Future County transportation plans should be developed with a full understanding of, and respect for, the County's growth objectives as expressed in this plan. Future land use decisions should be made with consideration of the impact of the land use on the County's transportation system. Linking transportation and land use decisions is a critical component of a community planning program.

### **Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization**

A portion of Amherst County stretching from Madison Heights to the Town of Amherst is included within the boundaries served by the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization (the federally-designated transportation planning agency for the Lynchburg urbanized area). The primary activities of the CVMPO are developing and updating the Central Virginia Long Range Transportation Plan, developing and updating the Central Virginia Transportation Improvement Program, and developing and executing the annual Central Virginia Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

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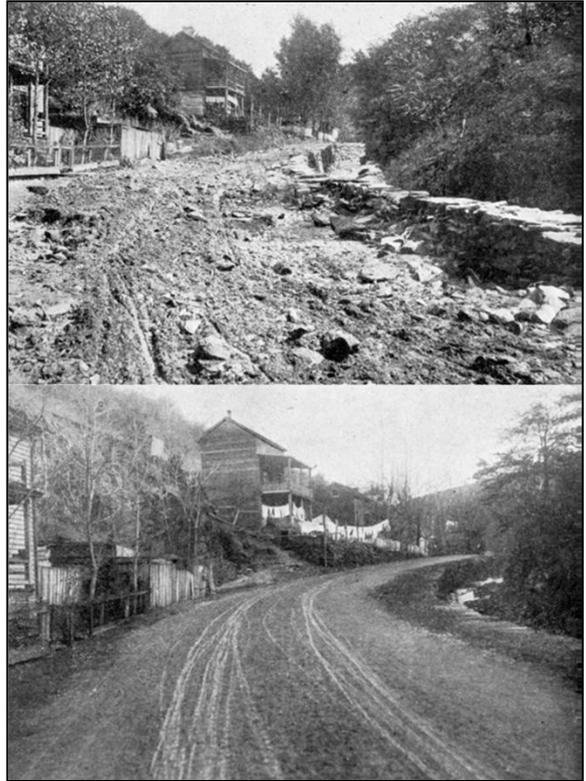
<sup>3</sup> Chapter 527 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly added § 15.2-2222.1 to the *Code of Virginia*. The amendment establishes procedures by which localities submit proposals that will affect the state-controlled transportation network to the VDOT for review and comment. The chapter also directs VDOT to promulgate regulations to carry out the provisions of the statute.

### Development of Amherst County's Transportation Network

The James River facilitated the settlement of Amherst County in the eighteenth century and linked it to eastern markets. In 1832 the James River and Kanawha Company was incorporated to construct a more advanced canal for most of the length of the river above Richmond with the ultimate purpose of linking to the Kanawha (New) River and the Ohio River basin. The canal entered Amherst County at its eastern tip and crossed the river to the Campbell County side near Joshua Falls. That allowed direct service to Lynchburg on the south side and avoided the bluffs at Madison Heights. The course then continued upstream from Lynchburg through Bedford County before crossing back to the Amherst side near Rope Ferry/Snowden. The company constructed a number of massive stone locks in the county as well as aqueducts to carry the canal across creeks.

Nearby Lynchburg was a rail hub by the mid-nineteenth century; the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad constructed its eastern terminus in the city in 1850 and by the end of 1852 had trains running as far west as Salem. Whereas Amherst County indirectly benefited from the Virginia and Tennessee and another antebellum line that connected to Lynchburg, the Southside Railroad, the county was directly served by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which was completed through the county in 1860 to link Charlottesville and Lynchburg. The Orange and Alexandria eventually became part of the Southern Railway and is today a link in the Norfolk Southern system.

Roads were an important component of local transportation networks and they improved in quality with the creation of turnpike companies in the antebellum period. Amherst County was a leader in the better roads campaigns of the early twentieth century. By 1910-11, at the dawn of the Automobile Age, it had funded the construction of twenty-two miles of macadamized roads. A nationally significant highway construction project to affect the county was the building of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1930s and connected the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks.<sup>4</sup>



**Lynch's Ferry Road in Old Madison Heights before and after state aid improvements ca. 1907 (photo credit: Virginia Transportation Research Council)**

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from "Amherst County Historic Resources Survey Report" by HistoryTech and Landmark Preservation Associates, 2010.

### **Transportation Network Inventory & Existing Conditions**

Amherst County is served by two arterial highways: U.S. Routes 29 and 60. U.S. Route 29 is a multi-lane highway passing from Baltimore, Maryland, through Amherst County and southward to Lynchburg, Danville and on to Pensacola, Florida. Just south of the James River, Route 29 intersects with U.S. Route 460, a major east-west highway. Route 29 intersects with Interstate 64 approximately 50 miles to the north of Amherst County. The U.S. Route 29 bypass travels along the eastern edge of the communities of Madison Heights, Monroe, Sweet Briar, and the Town of Amherst.

**U.S. Route 60**, a two-lane roadway through the county, is an east-west highway stretching from the Atlantic Ocean at Virginia Beach to the Pacific Ocean at Los Angeles. Route 60 provides both a direct route of travel from Amherst to the state capital in Richmond to the east as well as to westward to Interstate 81, a north-south interstate that passes through the Shenandoah Valley. U.S. 60 intersects with the Blue Ridge Parkway at the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the western portion of the county.

**U. S. Route 29** is a part of the National Highway System (NHS) as designated by the Congress of the United States. This designation stresses the importance of NHS highways to the economic and defensive well-being of the nation. Interstate highways are now classified as a sub-group of NHS highways.

The **U.S. Route 29 Bypass** (also known as the Madison Heights Bypass or Monacan Parkway) in Amherst County



was completed in 2005. Extending from the James River on the south to the Southern corporate limits of the Town of Amherst, this new four-lane divided highway provides quick and easy access to the central portions of Amherst County and points north along Route 29. Users of this new highway are able to avoid the commercial development and periodic traffic congestion in southern Amherst County along Route 29, specifically in the Madison Heights area of the County.

**The U.S. 29 Bypass and Monacan Bridge looking northward to Amherst County (photo credit: D. Allen Covey, VDOT)**

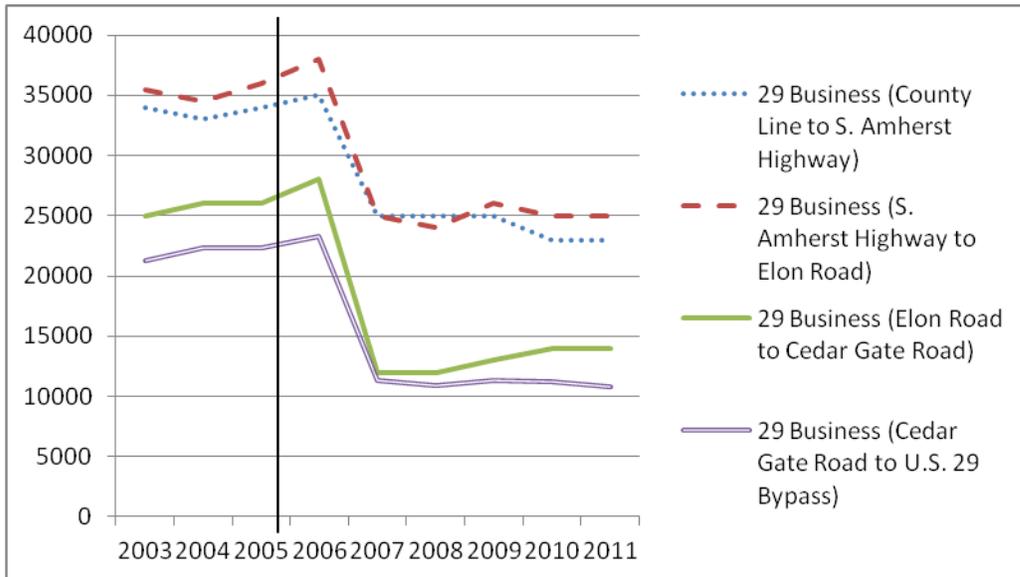
Figures 9 and 10 show changes in daily traffic volumes along the U.S. 29 corridor in the southern half of Amherst County due to the construction of the bypass. Traffic volumes along U.S. 29 Business decreased by approximately 42% following the construction of the bypass, and have remained generally stable. The core of the bypassed business highway (from Route 163/S. Amherst Highway to Cedar Gate Road), which includes the majority of the commercial development in the area, has enjoyed a slight rebound in traffic volume over the past five years, while volumes along the limited access portion of 29 Business (Route 163 to the James River) and the more rural sections including

**Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

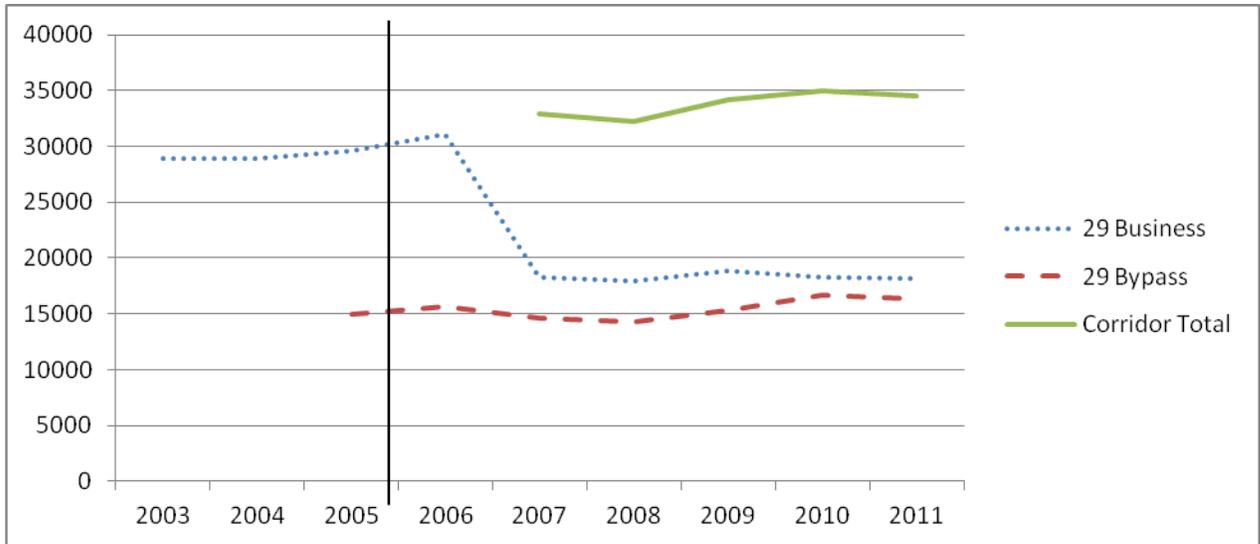
Monroe and Faulconerville have decreased slightly. The increase along the commercialized segment of the corridor is likely due to local business traffic returning to the area because of eased congestion. Other than the construction of the bypass in October of 2005, the only other significant outside force that might affect traffic along this corridor was the “Great Recession,” which spanned from December of 2007 to June of 2009 but the traffic volume data does not indicate any ill effects due to this event.

While traffic volume has increased slightly (by 8%) along the 29 Bypass since 2005, the section of 29 Business affected by the bypass is holding its own, with traffic volumes remaining steady since the initial reduction due to the bypass. For the past five years, 29 Business has consistently carried more traffic (11% more in 2011) than the 29 Bypass. Overall, vehicular traffic along the U.S. 29 corridor (including both roadways) in southern Amherst County has increased by about 5% in the past five years (see figure 10).

The new Route 29 provides opportunities for economic development, particularly at the new interchanges with Route 210 and Route 130 and at its northern terminus south of the Town of Amherst. The future land use map contained in Chapter VI of this plan designates the Route 210 and 130 interchanges as suitable locations for commercial development. Specific land uses identified as part of this planning process include hotel, restaurant, and other service uses.



**Figure 9: Table showing Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for U.S. 29 Business (as currently designated, from the County Line [CL] at the James River northward to its junction with the 29 Bypass AND/OR Amherst Town limits) between 2003 and 2011. The black vertical line indicates the October 2005 construction of the U.S. 29 Bypass. Changes in data caused by the construction of the bypass are delayed on the graph due to the annual (rather than monthly) nature of the data series. Source: VDOT Average Annual Daily Traffic by Jurisdiction, [www.vdot.virginia.gov](http://www.vdot.virginia.gov).**



**Figure 10:** Table showing Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for U.S. 29 Business (as currently designated, from the James River northward to its junction with the 29 Bypass AND/OR Amherst Town limits) and the U.S. 29 Bypass (from the James River northward to its junction with U.S. 29 Business near Sweet Briar). The black vertical line indicates the October 2005 construction of the U.S. 29 Bypass. Changes in data caused by the construction of the bypass are delayed on the graph due to the annual (rather than monthly) nature of the data series. Pre-bypass Corridor Total data are equal to the 29 Business data. Source: VDOT Average Annual Daily Traffic by Jurisdiction, [www.vdot.virginia.gov](http://www.vdot.virginia.gov).

**Virginia Primary Route 130** connects Madison Heights in Amherst County with Natural Bridge in Rockbridge County, and passes through the communities of Winesap, Elon, Agricola, and Naola. This roadway serves as the primary access corridor for residents and businesses in the southwestern quadrant of the county, and intersects with the Blue Ridge Parkway near the Otter Creek Campground. Between Snowden and the Rockbridge County line, the highway also carries the designation of U.S. 501. Route 130, also known as Elon Road, is one of the region’s few official Virginia Scenic Byways (although Route 622 is classified as a Scenic Road). Route 130 also serves a substantial amount of tractor trailer traffic between U.S. Route 29 and I-81.

Other Virginia Primary routes in Amherst County include **Route 151** (Patrick Henry Highway), which runs through the community of Clifford, **Route 163** (Amherst Highway), which skirts Old Town Madison Heights and connects with Lynchburg’s Fifth Street at the James River, and Virginia Primary **Route 210**, a limited-access extension of Colony Road that connects to the U.S. 29 Bypass.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a National Parkway and All-American Road which traverses the Blue Ridge Mountains for 469 miles between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Shenandoah National Park. The federally-maintained roadway snakes in and out of Amherst and Rockbridge Counties after it crosses the James River at Snowden and before it enters Nelson County to the north.

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

All of the other Amherst County roadways except for those mentioned above are state secondary roads, frontage roads, or privately-maintained streets.

The table at the end of this section lists all of the road segments in Amherst County that are classed as “collector” and “arterial” roadways. 2011 traffic counts (Annual Average Daily Traffic or “AADT”) have been provided for each segment. For the segments that are designated as U.S. Highways and Virginia Primary Routes, traffic counts for 2005 have been included as well as the percent of change (if any) between 2005 and 2011.

### **Corridors of Statewide Significance**

(From Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, 2035 VTrans)

#### **Genesis and Definition**

What are now referred to as the “Corridors of Statewide Significance” were originally introduced as part of the VTrans2025 effort as Multimodal Investment Networks (MINs). These MINs were to be a focus of statewide investment. Eleven MINs were identified throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and were defined as multimodal networks. It was envisioned that high priority multimodal projects within these corridors would be given increased consideration over single-mode solutions in modal plans.



VTrans 2025 introduced 11 transportation networks identified as “Corridors of Statewide Significance” (CoSS), including the U.S. 29 or “Seminole Corridor” (shown in blue) through Amherst County. Other nearby corridors include U.S. 460 “Heartland Corridor” (orange) and the I-81 “Crescent Corridor” (yellow).

The Corridors of Statewide Significance (CoSS) are broadly drawn and include other modal facilities, such as highways (e.g., I-81, I-95, U.S. 460, etc.), rail lines, transit services, port facilities, and airports. Parallel roadway facilities are also included in addition to the main Interstate or U.S. Highway (e.g., U.S. 11 along the I-81 corridor and U.S. 1 and U.S. 301 along the I-95 corridor).

House Bill 2019, adopted in 2009, requires that the long-range transportation plan sets forth an assessment of needs for all Corridors of Statewide Significance and that all modes of travel are considered. In the designation of the Corridors of Statewide Significance, the Commonwealth Transportation Board was not to be constrained by local, district, regional, or modal plans. The official definition of a CoSS was defined as thus:

“An integrated, multimodal network of transportation facilities that connect major centers of activity within and through the Commonwealth and promote the movement of people and goods essential to the economic prosperity of the state.”

The process of corridor identification included an all-day meeting in 2005 with many statewide participants, including the Multimodal Technical Committee, VDOT transportation planners, Department of Rail and Public Transportation planners, Virginia Department of Aviation planners, Virginia Port Authority planners, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) directors and planners, and Planning District Commission (PDC) directors and planners. Criteria for identification of the CoSS were developed and applied to corridors throughout the Commonwealth. To be considered a CoSS, a corridor must meet all four criteria.

- **Multimodal:** The Corridor of Statewide Significance must involve multiple modes of travel or must be an extended freight corridor. Major freight corridors include I-81 and U.S. 460. Additional modes of travel include transit, such as Metrorail along the I-66 corridor; airports, both commercial and general aviation; freight and passenger rail; and port facilities, including the Port of Virginia in the Hampton Roads region and the Virginia Inland Port, located at the junction of I-81 and I-66.
- **Connectivity:** A corridor must connect regions, states, and/or major activity centers. I-95 is an important multi-state corridor, while others, such as U.S. 58, mostly function within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Some corridors connect cities throughout the state, such as the U.S. 29 corridor, which connects the major Northern Virginia activity center with Charlottesville, Lynchburg, and Danville.
- **High Volume:** The corridor must involve a high volume of travel. This would include all the major interstates through the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as multiple U.S. Highways.
- **Function:** The corridor must provide a unique statewide function and/or address statewide goals.

The process identified eleven CoSS within the Commonwealth of Virginia, with five corridors mostly defined by Interstates and six corridors mostly defined by U.S. Highways. These corridors were given names separate from the highway facility route

number in order to emphasize their multimodal nature. A map of the corridors in the vicinity of Amherst County is shown on the previous page.

### **The Seminole Corridor**

Of the eleven Corridors of Statewide Significance, one, the “Seminole Corridor,” runs through Amherst County. This corridor connects the Northern Virginia region to Charlottesville, Lynchburg, and Danville, operating as a parallel option between I-95 and I-81. It runs parallel to the Bull Run Corridor within Northern Virginia, and there are multiple transit options in the Northern Virginia region. In addition, there are Norfolk Southern Crescent Corridor rail lines along the entire corridor, which also provide passenger rail service. There are multiple general aviation and reliever airport facilities along the corridor as well.

### **Air Service**

There are no licensed public airports in Amherst County. However, two airports, one a regional commercial airport and the other a general aviation airport, can be found in the Lynchburg metropolitan area.

**Lynchburg Regional Airport** is the air service provider for the greater Lynchburg area. The airport is located along U. S. 29 within Campbell County, just outside the City of Lynchburg limits. As of September 2012, the facility has 12 daily arriving and departing flights provided by US Airways Express. The airport is located at the intersection of U.S. 29 and U.S. 460 and is considerably more convenient to access from Amherst County since the U.S. 29 Bypass was opened in 2005. The airport has two runways; one measuring 7,100 feet in length; and the other measuring 3,387 feet. Expanding the capabilities of the airport is currently being considered as a part of long-term facility planning. Lynchburg Regional Airport also provides general aviation and air freight service.

**Falwell Aviation, Inc.** is a general aviation airport located on U.S. Route 460/29 in the City of Lynchburg. The hard surface runway is 2,900 feet in length and has lights for night landings. The airport is attended from 8:00 A.M. to dusk daily. Repairs, fuel, lodging, and surface transportation are available.

Other nearby airports can be found in Charlottesville, Roanoke, Richmond, Washington, D.C., and Greensboro, North Carolina.

### **Rail Service**

Norfolk Southern's north-south mainline between Washington, D.C., and Birmingham, Alabama, passes through Amherst County. This line serves First Brands with two or three freight stops per week. Many manufacturers in the region use rail as a cost-effective and reliable means of goods transport.

Passenger service within Amherst County was discontinued decades ago, with no prospect of this service being resurrected even though Amtrak, using the NS mainline, passes through the County. The Amtrak Crescent, which makes a daily trip between New York and New Orleans, may be boarded at Lynchburg or Charlottesville. In October of 2009, additional daily Amtrak service was established in Lynchburg, extending a

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Northeast Regional line that can take travelers to Washington, D.C., New York, and Boston. In addition to the two Amtrak trains that service Lynchburg, Charlottesville is served by the Amtrak Cardinal, which runs east-west from Washington, DC through Chicago and to the west coast.

### **Bus Service**

Greyhound Bus Company no longer offers passenger service in Amherst County; however, residents may use a primary loading hub in Lynchburg at the Kemper Street Station.

### Classification of Roadways

All roadways in Virginia are classified by the geographic area that they serve, as well as their purpose and traffic volume. Most roads in Amherst County are classified as being “rural local,” but the county is also home to a number of rural and urban collectors and arterials. Definitions of these classifications are provided below.<sup>5</sup>

#### Geographic Areas

- **Urbanized** - Areas designated by the Census Bureau having a population of 50,000 or more
- **Small Urban** - Areas designated by the Census Bureau having a population of 5,000 or more and not part of an urbanized area, also referred to as urban clusters on the maps
- **Rural** - All areas not designated urbanized or small urban

#### Rural Functional Classification System

- **Rural principal arterial**
  - Serves corridor movements of substantial statewide or interstate travel
  - Serves all urban areas of 50,000 and over population and a majority of those over 25,000
  - Provide an integrated network without stub connections
- **Rural minor arterial**
  - Link cities and large towns (and other generators, such as major resorts)
  - Spaced at such intervals so that all developed areas of the state are within a reasonable distance of an arterial highway
  - Provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by rural collectors or local systems
  - Design should be expected to provide for relatively high overall speeds, with minimum interference to through movement
- **Rural major collector**
  - Provide service to any county seat not on an arterial system, to larger towns not directly served by higher systems
  - Link the above to nearby larger towns or routes of higher classification
  - Serve the more important intra-county travel corridors
- **Rural minor collector**
  - Spaced at intervals, consistent with population density
  - Collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road
  - Provide service to the remaining smaller communities
  - Link local traffic generators with their rural hinterland
- **Rural local**

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/fxn\\_class/definitions.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/fxn_class/definitions.asp)

- Serves primarily to provide direct access to adjacent land
- Provide service to travel over relatively short distances as compared to collectors or other higher systems
- **All facilities not on one of the higher systems**

**Urban Functional Classification System**

- **Urban principal arterial**
  - Serves the major centers of activity of a metropolitan area
  - Highest traffic volume corridors
  - Roads serving the longest trip desires
  - Carry a high proportion of the total urban area travel on a minimum of mileage
  - Carry significant amounts of intra-area travel
- **Urban minor arterial**
  - Interconnect with and augment the urban principal arterial system and provide service to trips of moderate length at a lower level of travel mobility than principal arterials
  - Include all arterials not classified as a principal and contains facilities that place more emphasis on land access, and offer a lower level of traffic mobility
- **Urban collector**
  - Provides land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas
  - Distributes trips from the arterials through these areas to their ultimate destination
  - Collects traffic from local streets and channels it to the arterial system
- **Urban local**
  - All facilities not on one of the higher systems
  - Serves primarily as direct access to abutting land
  - Serves as access to the higher order systems
  - Through traffic movement is deliberately discouraged

**Note:** In the following table, 2005 AADT data and the percent of change between 2005 and 2011 is only provided for Amherst County’s U.S. Highways and Virginia Primary Routes.

**TABLE 25: ROADWAYS WITHIN THE COUNTY OF AMHERST  
(FEDERAL AID SYSTEM “COLLECTORS” AND ABOVE)**

Route Label	Route Alias	Amherst County/ Town	Link Length	Start Label	End Label	2011 AADT	2005 AADT	% Change from '05
US 29		County	1.09	NCL Lynchburg	SR 210	17000	17000	0%
US 29		County	3.77	SR 210	SR 130	17000	14000	21%
US 29		County	7.15	SR 130	SCL Amherst; Bus US 29	15000	14000	7%
US 29		Town	1.72	SCL Amherst; Bus US 29	US 60 Richmond Hwy	21000	19000	11%
US 29		Town	1.45	US 60 Richmond Hwy	BUS US 29 Near NCL Amherst	17000	17000	0%
US 29	N Amherst Hwy	Town	0.64	BUS US 29 Near NCL Amherst	NCL Amherst	18000	15000	20%
US 29	N Amherst Hwy	County	1.35	NCL Amherst	SR 151 North of Amherst	18000	15000	20%
US 29	N Amherst Hwy	County	4.10	SR 151 North of Amherst	Nelson County Line	13000	11000	18%
Bus US 29		County	2.06	NCL Lynchburg	SR 163 North of Lynchburg	23000	34000	-32%
Bus US 29	S Amherst Hwy	County	2.20	SR 163 North of Lynchburg	SR 130 Elon Rd	25000	36000	-31%
Bus US 29	S Amherst Hwy	County	2.11	SR 130 Elon Rd	05-657 Cedar Gate Rd	14000	26000	-46%
Bus US 29	S Amherst Hwy	County	0.89	05-657 Cedar Gate Rd	05-671 Bruner Rd	12000	24000	-50%
Bus US 29	S Amherst Hwy	County	2.42	05-671 Bruner Rd	05-663	9500	21000	-55%
Bus US 29	S Amherst Hwy	County	2.64	05-663	US 29 South of Amherst	11000	22000	-50%
Bus US 29		County	1.61	US 29 South of Amherst	SCL Amherst	3800	4600	-17%
Bus US 29	S Main St	Town	0.86	SCL Amherst	US 60 Lexington Tpke	3800	4600	-17%
Bus US 29	N Main St	Town	1.07	US 60 Lexington Tpke	NCL Amherst	3100	3500	-11%
Bus US 29		County	0.20	NCL Amherst	US 29 North of Amherst	3100	3500	-11%
VA 48	Blue Ridge Parkway	County	2.38	Bedford County Line	SR 130	520	1200	-57%
VA 48	Blue Ridge Parkway	County	15.86	SR 130	Rockbridge County Line	280	1200	-77%
US 60	Lexington Tpke	County	9.42	Rockbridge County Line	05-635 Forks of Buffalo	780	960	-19%
US 60	Lexington Tpke	County	6.92	05-635 Forks of Buffalo	05-778 West of Amherst	1300	1400	-7%
US 60	Lexington Tpke	County	5.30	05-778 West of Amherst	WCL Amherst	2300	2700	-15%
US 60	Lexington Tpke	Town	0.44	WCL Amherst	Bus US 29 Main St	2300	2700	-15%
US 60	E. Lexington Ave	Town	0.45	Bus US 29 Main St	US 29 By-Pass East of Amherst	7100	7600	-7%
US 60	Richmond Hwy	Town	0.18	US 29 By-pass East of Amherst	ECL Amherst	6000	6600	-9%
US 60	Richmond Hwy	County	4.04	ECL Amherst	05-600 Riverville Rd	6000	6600	-9%
US 60	Richmond Hwy	County	4.05	05-600	Nelson County Line	1900	2300	-17%
US 501, VA 130		County	3.94	Rockbridge County Line	US 501 Near Snowden	1900	1800	6%
VA 130	Elon Rd	County	9.45	US 501 Near Snowden	05-635 Near Agricola	1600	1700	-6%
VA 130	Elon Rd	County	4.08	05-635 Near Agricola	05-652 Elon	3200	3600	-11%
VA 130	Elon Rd	County	3.86	05-652 Elon	05-679	5700	6200	-8%
VA 130	Elon Rd	County	2.10	05-679	Bus US 29	6800	7100	-4%
VA 130	Amelon Expressway	County	2.05	Bus US 29	US 29	7800	7100	10%
VA 130	Amelon Expressway	County	0.48	US 29	05-669	4100	0	100%
VA 151	Patrick Henry Hwy	County	6.34	US 29 N Amherst Hwy	Nelson County Line	2000	2700	-26%
VA 163	Amherst Hwy	County	1.64	NCL Lynchburg	Bus US 29	10000	12000	-17%
VA 210	Colony Rd	County	0.54	SR 163 Amherst Hwy	Bus US 29 Lynchburg Hwy	4300	4400	-2%

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

Route Label	Route Alias	Amherst County/ Town	Link Length	Start Label	End Label	2011 AADT	2005 AADT	% Change from '05
VA 210	Colony Rd	County	0.19	Bus US 29 Lynchburg Hwy	05-622 CVT Rd	11000	3300	233%
VA 210		County	2.44	05-622 CVT Rd	US 29	0	1300	-100%
US 501		County	0.14	Bedford County Line	SR 130 Elon Rd	1400	1800	-22%
US 501, VA 130		County	3.94	SR 130 Elon Rd	Rockbridge County Line	1900	0	100%
05-600	Riverville Rd	County	3.60	US 60 Richmond Hwy	05-601	680		
05-600	Riverville Rd	County	1.39	05-601	05-823	480		
05-600	Riverville Rd	County	0.50	05-823 Fiber Plant Rd	05-622	280		
05-600	Riverville Rd	County	1.00	05-622	Dead End	60		
05-604	S Coolwell Dr	County	1.42	Bus US 29	05-671 N, Possum Island Rd	2500		
05-604	S Coolwell Dr	County	1.70	05-671 N, Possum Island Rd	05-663 SOUTH	1800		
05-604	S Coolwell Dr	County	0.57	05-663 South	05-663 North	1800		
05-610	Fletchers Level Rd	County	1.90	SR 151 Patrick Henry Hwy	US 29, N Amherst Hwy	360		
05-610	New Glasgow Rd	County	1.23	US 29, N Amherst Hwy	05-708	870		
05-622	Colony Rd	County	0.26	SR 334 Training School and Hospital Rd	05-833, CVT Rd	3500		
05-622	CVT Rd	County	0.13	05-833 Colony Rd	SR 210	3900		
05-622	CVT Rd	County	0.62	SR 210	05-842 Old Wright Shop Rd	5400		
05-622	Wright Shop Rd	County	0.18	05-842, CVT Rd	05-833 W, New Wright Shop Rd	4800		
05-622	New Wright Shop Rd	County	1.51	05-833 W, Old Wright Shop Rd	05-833 E, Old Wright Shop Rd	2400		
05-622	New Wright Shop Rd	County	0.29	05-833 E, Old Wright Shop Rd	05-677 Dixie Airport Rd	4200		
05-622	Galts Mill Rd	County	2.04	05-677 Dixie Airport Rd	05-663 Brightwells Mill Rd	1300		
05-622	Galts Mill Rd	County	3.04	05-663 Brightwells Mill Rd	05-648 Beck Creek Rd	250		
05-622	Galts Mill Rd	County	2.38	05-648 Beck Creek Rd	05-624 S, Earley Farm Rd	250		
05-622	Stapleton Rd	County	6.40	05-624 S, Earley Farm Rd	05-823 Fiber Plant Rd	60		
05-622		County	1.17	05-823 Fiber Plant Rd	05-846 Stapleton Rd	650		
05-622	Allens Creek Rd	County	2.55	05-846 Stapleton Rd	Nelson County Line	160		
05-624	Sweet Briar Lane	County	0.43	05-661 Stage Rd	05-681 N, Old Stage Rd	500		
05-624	Higginbotham Creek Rd	County	1.70	05-661 S, Old Stage Rd	05-604 N, Ebenezer Rd	150		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	1.11	SR 130 Elon Rd	05-647 Minors Branch Rd	860		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	0.49	05-647 Minors Branch Rd	05-643 W, Ashby Woods Rd	870		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	0.01	05-643 W, Ashby Woods Rd	05-643 E, Wagon Trail Rd	850		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	3.85	05-643 E, Wagon Trail Rd	05-610 N, Puppy Creek Rd	630		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	3.26	05-610 N, Puppy Creek Rd	05-636 North	370		
05-635	Buffalo Springs Tpke	County	1.99	05-636 North	US 60 E, Lexington Tpke	380		
05-636	High Peak Rd	County	1.67	05-671	05-657 Laurel Cliff Rd	1200		
05-636		County	1.80	05-657 Laurel Cliff Rd	05-653	400		
05-636	High Peak Rd	County	2.80	05-653	05-643 SOUTH	180		
05-643	Kenmore Rd	County	5.30	05-655	Bus US 29	170		
05-653	Ambrose Rucker Rd	County	3.80	SR 130 Elon Rd	05-636 High Peak Rd	110		
05-655	Father Judge Rd	County	3.87	05-671	05-643	930		
05-657	Laurel Cliff Rd	County	0.50	05-636 High Peak Rd	05-652 Cedar Gate Rd	690		
05-657	Cedar Gate Rd	County	2.22	05-652 Cedar Gate Rd	05-707 Iron Bridge Rd	560		

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Route Label	Route Alias	Amherst County/ Town	Link Length	Start Label	End Label	2011 AADT	2005 AADT	% Change from '05
05-657	Cedar Gate Rd	County	0.05	05-707 Iron Bridge Rd	0.05 ME 05-707 Iron Bridge Rd	740		
05-657	Cedar Gate Rd	County	0.32	0.05 ME 05-707 Iron Bridge Rd	05-1201 Southern Lane	760		
05-657	Cedar Gate Rd	County	0.10	05-1201 Southern Lane	Bus US 29 S	960		
05-659	Second St	Town	0.03	Bus US 29	05-1105 Goodwin St	2400		
05-659	Second St	Town	0.07	05-1105 Goodwin St	05-1101; 05-1115	2400		
05-659	Depot St	Town	0.36	05-1101; 05-1115	05-1109 Norfolk Ave	240		
05-659	Depot St	Town	0.21	05-1109 Norfolk Ave	SCL Amherst	590		
05-659	Union Hill Rd	County	2.00	SCL Amherst	05-604 N, Union Hill Dr; Ebenezer Rd	420		
05-661	Stage Rd	County	2.20	05-663 Coolwell Rd	05-624 Sweet Briar Lane	160		
05-661	Stage Rd	County	0.17	05-624 Sweet Briar Lane	Bus US 29 Amherst Hwy	0		
05-663	Coolwell Rd	County	0.56	Bus US 29	05-661 Stage Rd	1700		
05-663	Coolwell Rd	County	0.73	05-661	05-604 N, Bobwhite Rd; S Coolwell Dr	1500		
05-663	Izaak Walton Rd	County	2.22	05-604 S, S Coolwell Dr	05-670 N, Partridge Creek Rd	580		
05-663	Izaak Walton Rd	County	0.78	05-670 N, Partridge Creek Rd	05-670 South	1900		
05-665	Warrick Barn Rd	County	1.69	05-694	SR 151 Patrick Henry Hwy	760		
05-666	Woodson Rd	County	2.65	05-778	05-630	410		
05-669	Amelon Rd	County	0.13	05-1329 Wildwood Dr	05-1336, W Bethel Dr	3000		
05-669	Amelon Rd	County	0.11	05-1336, W Bethel Dr	05-783	2700		
05-669	Amelon Rd	County	0.11	05-783	05-1331 Oakland Dr	2300		
05-669	Amelon Rd	County	0.07	05-1331 Oakland Dr	05-1360 Melwood Dr	1900		
05-669	Amelon Rd	County	0.75	05-1360 Melwood Dr	05-677 N, Dixie Airport Rd	1700		
05-669	Glade Rd	County	1.08	0.62 ME 05-670	05-663 Brightwells Mill Rd	100		
05-675	Winesap Rd	County	0.03	05-795 Winridge Rd	0.03 ME 05-795 Winridge Rd	1000		
05-675	Winesap Rd	County	0.84	0.03 ME 05-795 Winridge Rd	05-1323 Wedgewood Pl	1100		
05-675	Winesap Rd	County	0.96	05-1323 Wedgewood Pl	Bus US 29	2800		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.55	05-622 Galts Mill Rd	05-809 Casey Lane	3300		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.20	05-809 Casey Lane	05-1370 Fairmont Dr	3300		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.10	05-1370 Fairmont Dr	05-669 S, Izaak Rd	3200		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.04	05-669 S, Izaak Rd	05-1350	3100		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.06	05-1350	05-1351	3200		
05-677	Dixie Airport Rd	County	0.35	05-1351	05-669 N, Amelon Rd	3100		
05-681	Mays St	County	0.37	05-1070 Grove Ave; Edgewood Lane	Bus US 29 Amherst Hwy	340		
05-682	Woodys Lake Rd	County	0.39	05-1310 Daniels Dr	05-1329 Wildwood Dr	2700		
05-685	River Rd	County	3.84	SR 130 Elon Rd	Railroad Crossing	380		
05-685	River Rd	County	1.21	Railroad Crossing	05-684 Kings Rd	480		
05-685	River Rd	County	0.47	05-684 Kings Rd	05-683 Thomas Rd	950		
05-685	River Rd	County	0.83	05-683 Thomas Rd	SR 163 Amherst Hwy	1300		
05-694	Warrick Barn Rd	County	0.10	05-621 Warrick Barn Rd	05-778 Lowesville Rd	430		
05-708	Boxwood Farm Rd	County	0.50	05-739 Honey Bee Dr	05-610	310		
05-739	Boxwood Farm Rd	County	1.22	US 29	05-822 Lipscomb Hollow Rd	1100		
05-739	Boxwood Farm Rd	County	2.05	05-822 Lipscomb Hollow Rd	05-608	830		
05-739	Honey Bee Dr	County	1.55	05-608	05-708	340		
05-739	Honey Bee Dr	County	0.70	05-708 Boxwood Farm Rd	05-610 Boxwood Farm Rd	90		

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

Route Label	Route Alias	Amherst County/ Town	Link Length	Start Label	End Label	2011 AADT	2005 AADT	% Change from '05
05-739	Honey Bee Dr	County	1.60	05-610 Boxwood Farm Rd	Nelson County Line	460		
05-766	Dillard Rd	County	1.59	Bus US 29 Amherst Hwy	SR 130 Elon Rd	3500		
05-778	Lowesville Rd	County	2.38	US 60 Lexington Tpke	05-610 N, Sandidges Rd	1000		
05-778	Lowesville Rd	County	2.56	05-610 N, Sandidges Rd	05-627	940		
05-778	Lowesville Rd	County	1.05	05-627	05-621	820		
05-778	Lowesville Rd	County	0.89	05-621	0.89 MN 05-621	740		
05-778	Lowesville Rd	County	0.02	0.89 MN 05-621	Nelson County Line	590		
05-795	Winridge Rd	County	0.80	SR 130 Elon Rd	05-675 Winesap Rd	930		
05-823	Fiber Plant Rd	County	0.53	05-600	05-622 Stapleton Rd	380		
05-846	Stapelton Rd	County	0.99	05-622	Nelson County Line	710		
05-1054	Lakeview Dr	County	0.86	Bus US 29	05-681 Seminole Dr	2000		

### Planning Assumptions

Amherst County’s population has remained fairly constant over the past three decades, achieving a net gain of roughly 10% since 1980. The majority of residents live in the central area of the county, generally in a swath encompassing five miles to the east and west of U.S. 29. The population is most dense in the areas of Madison Heights, the Town of Amherst, Elon, Monroe, and Coolwell.

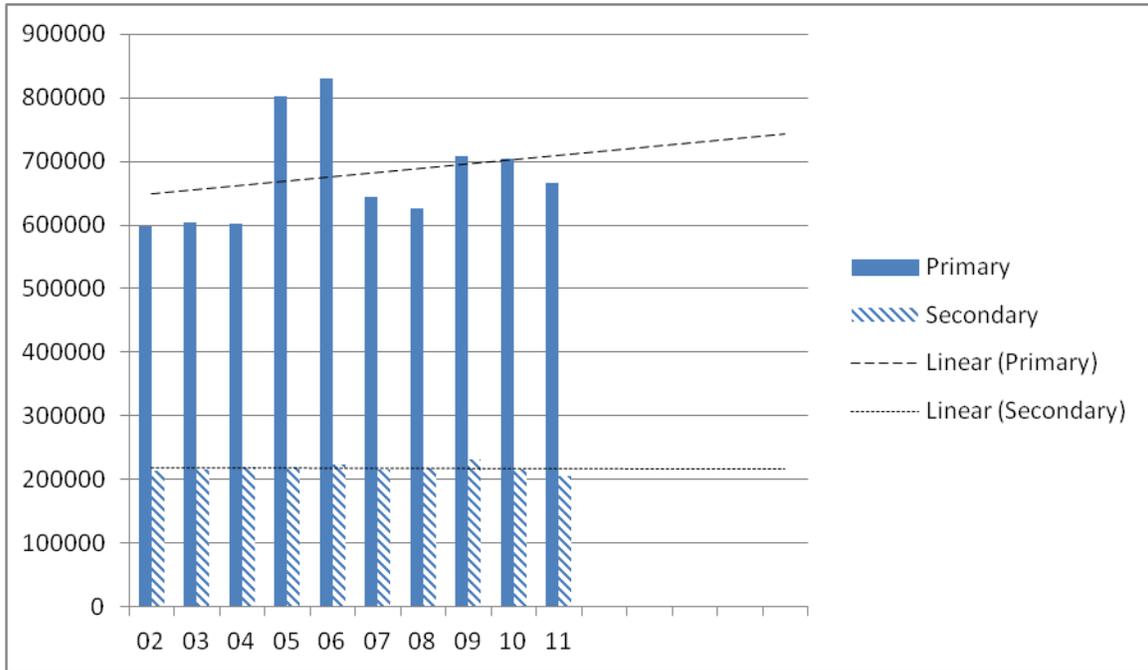
Likewise, most of the County’s employers are located along this same corridor, with particular focus along U.S. 29 in Madison Heights and the Town of Amherst, and Route 130 between the Madison Heights Bypass and Winesap. Another major employer is located at Riverville in the southeast corner of the county.

Future commercial, industrial, and large-scale residential development in Amherst County will likely be tied to the combined availability of transportation resources (particularly rail and highway) and utilities (including water and sewer). Portions of the southern and central areas of the county are provided with water and sewer service by the Amherst County Services Authority and Town of Amherst Utilities.

Three particular areas of the county with water and sewer availability and ready access to U.S. 29 consist of the interchanges with the Madison Heights Bypass at Route 210 (Colony Road), Route 130 (Amelon Expressway), and the Ambriar vicinity in the Town of Amherst. These areas are likely to see the majority of noticeable growth in the county for the foreseeable future.

Figure 11 depicts the daily volume of traffic in Amherst County over the past ten years. Traffic on secondary roadways has remained almost constant over the period, and is projected to remain constant for the next five years. Traffic volumes on the primary roadways has fluctuated (with a peak in 2005 and 2006, which was probably spurred by curiosity-seekers relative to the opening of the Madison Heights Bypass), but is projected to rise at a modest rate over the next five years. With a few exceptions, the county’s existing road infrastructure is likely to provide adequate service well into the future.

While traffic volume (according to VDOT reports) along Route 130 between U.S. 29 and the County Line near Snowden have decreased between 2005 and 2011, citizens have commented that the location, quantity, and spacing of driveway entrances combined with the geometry of the road has led to traffic conflicts. This situation is exacerbated by the volume of tractor-trailer trucks who use the corridor to connect between U.S. 29 and Interstate 81. The characteristics that make this a problem for Route 130 also apply to U.S. 60 between the Town of Amherst and the western county line.



**Figure 11: Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (DVMT) for Amherst County Primary and Secondary Roadways between 2002 and 2011. Linear projections for the next five years are indicated by the black trend lines (source: VDOT)**

**Assessment of the Multi-Modal Transportation System**

**Roadways**

Amherst County’s multi-modal transportation system is functional, and typically performs at a level above that of other localities within the region. Generally speaking, the County’s road network provides little difficulty for the average driver. Many traffic issues (primarily congestion-related) were mitigated with the construction of the Madison Heights Bypass.

**Bridges**

The inspection and evaluation of bridges has been an ongoing focus of VDOT, but has received particular attention in the past several years. In the 2011 update to the 2035 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan for Region 2000, current bridge sufficiency ratings were reviewed and those structures with a rating of less than 50 were considered deficient and in need of structural upgrade or replacement.

**Table 26: Amherst County Bridge Ratings**

<b>AMHERST COUNTY BRIDGE RATINGS</b>			
<b>(Region 2000 2035 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan)</b>			
<b>TYPE OF DEFICIENCY</b>	<b>RATING OF BRIDGE</b>		
	<b>REPLACE 0-50</b>	<b>UPGRADE/REPAIR 51-80</b>	<b>80+</b>
Functionally Obsolete	2	28	11
Structural Deficiency	12	13	0

Table 27 specifically lists five Amherst County bridges that are deficient in some manner:

**Table 27: Deficient Bridges**

<b>ROAD</b>	<b>CROSSING</b>	<b>YEAR BUILT</b>
Route 624	Partridge Creek	1932
Route 624	Partridge Creek	1930
Route 663	Stovalls Creek	1932
Route 681	Williams Run	1954
Route 689	Huff Creek	1932

**Pedestrian Facilities**

As expected, sidewalks are prevalent in the older and more densely-developed areas of the county, including Old Town Madison Heights. Route 163 (Amherst Highway), has a sidewalk on its east side from its intersection with Main Street to its intersection with U.S. 29 Business. This sidewalk continues along the east side of 29 Business for approximately 2,300 feet before terminating at Seminole Plaza. This sidewalk resumes its northward journey on the western side of U.S. 29 Business, but no crosswalk provides reassurance to pedestrians traveling this route. The sidewalk continues northward for another 2,800 feet before again terminating and switching back to the east side of the major road, which consists of four traffic lanes with a central turn lane. After returning to the east side of the road (with no crosswalk), the sidewalk proceeds northward about 500 feet before reaching its terminus.

From this point (near the intersection of Dillard Road and 29 Business), a defined foot path follows the east side of 29 Business for approximately 3,600 feet before reaching another sidewalk at Woody’s Lake Road. This sidewalk runs about 3,800 feet north, passing the Walmart and Amelon shopping centers before terminating just north of Amer Circle and Amelon Elementary School.

**Bicycle Facilities**

Cycling is becoming popular in Amherst County, with particular corridors (such as River Road) seeing frequent use by individuals and groups riding for recreation. The elements that make certain rural roadways attractive for bicyclists (low traffic, moderate terrain, beautiful views) can also create vehicle to bicycle conflict, particularly involving speed

differential. “Share the Road” signs have recently been installed on River Road to remind drivers that a slower-moving cyclist could be just around the next bend in the road.

Bicycle use on roads is an appropriate, expected, and legal transportation mode. The only exception is in specific locations where bicycle use is stated as illegal, these locations are in general along high-speed, limited-access highways (such as U.S. 29 Bypass and the Lynchburg Expressway). While almost any road may be used by cyclists for transportation purposes, there are a number of key obstacles that limit comfortable transportation use by most cyclists. Most of these obstacles are related to safety and cyclist vulnerability by traveling on the same grade surface as motorized vehicles.

Below is an overview of the more common obstacles faced by cyclists when traveling along the road network. Addressing solutions to elevate these conditions through design and education is crucial in creating an atmosphere that supports a safe and efficient bicycle transportation network. The most common obstacles faced by bicyclists include:

- Not enough separation from motorized vehicles/effective width available for bicyclists;
- Speed of traffic along road
- Volume of vehicles along the road
- Surface conditions of the pavement along the road
- Existence of parking along the road
- Amount of large vehicles/trucks that travel along the road
- Lack of motorist and cyclist education on each others’ rights and practices

The difference in the physical characteristics and bicycle knowledge of potential cyclist, variation in facility condition, and cyclist obstacles highlight the need to implement the physical and programmatic solutions necessary to create a safe bicycle network.

Currently within Amherst County, there exist very few examples of specific on-road accommodations, such as signage, marking, or specific designated lanes, designed to alert motorists to anticipate cyclists or to provide cyclists specific riding guidance. While the use of bicycles along the road network has increased greatly, the safety for area cyclists and motorist is compromised by a combination of lack of road accommodations and limited cycling education of some motorists and cyclists. Some of these conflicts can be avoided by the use of existing (or creation of new) educational programs and materials that focus on road rules, safe behaviors, and road responsibilities of cyclists, motorists, and pedestrians.

### **Recommendations**

The County's major highways provide vital community access. Maintaining the efficiency and character of these highways is of critical importance. The County should continue to evaluate all development proposals along these primary corridors to ensure that new development does not negatively impact the safety, efficiency, or aesthetics of these important routes. Maintenance and enhancement of these highways will require a partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation and adjoining land owners.

The County's major highways, Routes 29, 60 and 130, are important transportation corridors within the County. These corridors allow for the efficient movement of people and goods, and thus are critical to the County's economic health and quality of life, and also serve as gateways into Amherst County and surrounding communities. Visitors' first impressions of the County are developed partly on the basis of the function and appearance of these corridors.

Maintaining and enhancing traffic flow within these corridors is of crucial importance to the County. Future development along these corridors should be designed to ensure that it does not impede or further restrict traffic flow. In this regard, access management is very important. The County should adopt local access standards that meet or exceed VDOT minimums. Minimizing the number of driveway entrances, increasing the distance between new driveway entrances, and minimizing the number of new median cuts and traffic signals all can have a positive effect on traffic safety and traffic efficiency.

From an aesthetic perspective, signage, landscaping, building character, and scale all can influence the visual qualities of these important corridors, and define the quality of Amherst County's gateways. Recent changes to the County's zoning ordinance pertaining to commercial landscaping and signage have positively influenced the character of new development in the County. Continued equitable enforcement of these provisions is critical. In addition, the County should evaluate the need for more stringent signage and landscaping standards for the more rural portions of the County and develop standards as needed.

### **Route 29 Bypass**

Interchanges along the new Route 29 (Bypass) should increase demand for commercial and other high intensity land uses at these locations. The County should anticipate increased development pressure at these locations and plan for and allow development consistent with this plan and the economic development objectives of the County.

The future land use plan does not designate areas for new commercial development at the northern terminus of this new highway, south of the Town of Amherst. Any new commercial development in this location should be located/concentrated within the Town of Amherst, if it is to be consistent with the Town's land use plan. In addition, the Town and County should jointly coordinate future land use planning initiatives around the town's borders. Not only will this action ensure the optimum use of community services and facilities, but also the development of a land-use pattern consistent with the objectives of both jurisdictions.

### **Pedestrian Facilities**

Sidewalk improvements should be considered along U.S. 29 in Madison Heights, particularly between Dillard Road and Woody's Lake Road as part of an overall desire to create pedestrian connectivity between the intersection of S. Amherst Highway/Lyttleton Lane to the south and the Coolwell Road vicinity to the north. If it is deemed appropriate to maintain the tradition of having a sidewalk on only one side of this road, crosswalks and other protective measures should be added at appropriate locations, as allowed by VDOT policy.

### **Rural Scenic Corridors**

In 2012, the Region 2000 Local Government Council conducted a study of best practices relating to rural scenic corridors within the region. The resulting report made numerous recommendations on evaluating the scenic (visual) as well as cultural (historic) significance of rural roadways. Within Amherst County, six corridors were recommended to be studied further and/or designated as scenic corridors. These are:

- “The **continuation of Route 624 to create a loop**” (Virginia Outdoors Plan [VOP]). Scenic Corridor Study Editor’s note: While detail is not given, this is assumed to be Earley Farm Road in Amherst County, which intersects with Route 622 (Scenic Road) at Stapleton. Route 624 transitions to Higginbotham Creek Road in the Sweet Briar vicinity. This roadway does possess many scenic characteristics, although the VOP’s mention of a “loop” is not clear.
- **State Route 685 (River Road)**- Views of James River, Tobacco Row Mountain, historic homes
- **State Route 635 (Buffalo Springs Turnpike)**- Views of Pedlar River Valley, Pedlar Mills Historic District, communities of Pleasant View and Allwood, mountain vistas
- **U.S. 60 (Lexington Turnpike)**- between the Town of Amherst and the Rockbridge County line. Mountain vistas, farmland, historic homes, access to National Forest, Blue Ridge Parkway
- **State Route 653 (Ambrose Rucker Road)/State Route 636 (High Peak Road)/State Route 643 (Matohe/Kenmore Road)**- Between Elon and Town of Amherst through apple orchards, views of Tobacco Row Mountain, Monacan Indian heritage sites, historic homes
- **State Route 610 (Sandidges Road) & State Route 778 (Lowesville Road)**- between U.S. 60 and Amherst/Nelson line. Mountain vistas, historic homes,



**Graham Creek Orchard Packing Shed and stone wall along Ambrose Rucker Road (SR 653)**

farmland, access to watershed lakes, Sandidges Historic District, historic community of Lowesville

### **Traffic Impact Analysis**

Recent additions to VDOT planning procedures require close co-operation between locality planning commissions and VDOT. Localities will be required to submit certain documentation, as described in VDOT regulations section 24 VAC30-155, for review and comment by VDOT. As part of this coordination, localities are encouraged to submit an information packet, which shows the impact of the development on primary and secondary highways, to VDOT for certain size developments. Part of this package consists of a traffic impact analysis in accordance with procedures defined in section 24 VAC30-155-50C of VDOT procedures. All reviews of significant new developments or requests for rezoning should comply with these procedures. The end result of these procedures should produce a Level of Service calculation per the Highway Capacity Manual (see 24 VAC30-155-90). Development planning by the County should require a minimum Level of Service “C” for affected roads and intersections. Proposed developments, in areas where existing road Level of Service is already level “D” or poorer, should be required to assist in overcoming obstacles to bring the projected Level of Service to at least a level “C”.

Developments in Amherst County which fail the Level C requirement should require VDOT/developer co-operation to resolve the traffic problems arising from the new development, so that the Level C service can be maintained.

### **Level of Service**

Levels of service are used as measures of highway performance in transportation planning analysis and help define public policy concerning highway performance. They are also used in traffic impact analyses to determine local traffic of proposed developments. Definitions of level of service differ for intersections and roadway segments, city streets, and controlled access highways. In urban and suburban areas, where intersections are closely spaced, traffic signals usually govern arterial and street capacity. Route 29 business in the Madison Heights area is an example of this situation. Levels of service reflect driver satisfaction with the various factors that impact congestion, including speed, travel time, traffic interruption, safety, and delays. VDOT uses six levels of service to describe highway flow conditions as derived from the “Highway Capacity Manual”.

- **LOS A:** Represents a free flow of traffic with low volumes and high speeds with little or no delays. Drivers are virtually unaffected by others in the traffic stream.
- **LOS B:** Is in the range of stable flow, but the presence of other users in the traffic stream begins to be noticeable. This level affords above average driving conditions.
- **LOS C:** Is also in the range of stable flow, but marks the beginning of individual users becoming significantly affected by interactions with others in the traffic

stream. This level is normally utilized as a measure of “average conditions” for design of facilities in suburban or rural locations.

- **LOS D:** Represents high density but stable flow. Speed and freedom to maneuver are severely restricted and the driver experiences a generally poor level of comfort. Small increases in traffic flow will generally cause operational problems.
- **LOS E:** Represents operating conditions at or near the capacity level. Operations at this level are usually unstable because small increases in traffic flow, or minor perturbations within the traffic stream, will cause breakdowns in flow.
- **LOS F:** Is used to characterize demand volumes which exceed roadway capacity as complete. Congestion occurs. Under these conditions motorists seek other routes in order to bypass congestion, thus impacting adjacent streets.

### **Recommended Road & Intersection Improvements**

Below is a list of potential road and intersection improvements, a description of action, and the estimated cost (if available). These improvements should be considered by the Virginia Department of Transportation, Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization, and other bodies when crafting future plans; they should also be considered when future developments are built along roads that cannot handle an increased capacity, which may affect the level of service.

**Table 28: Transportation Road and Intersection Improvements**

<b>PROJECT NAME &amp; DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>EST. COST</b>
<b>VDOT FY 2013-18 Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP)</b>	
UPC 72657- Riverwalk Trail Extension – Amherst County Greenway	\$2,286,076
UPC 76552- Replace Route 29 Bridge over Tye River (completed 4/20/12)	\$6,818,177
UPC 77301- Replace Northbound Lanes of US 29 Bridge over Buffalo River	\$6,705,000
UPC 77303- Replace Bridge and Approaches U.S. 60 over Buffalo River	\$3,468,999
UPC 100993- Replace Route 130 Bridge over Pedlar River	\$7,830,000
UPC 97136- Replace U.S. 501 Bridge and Approaches over James River	\$19,043,000
UPC 101042- Bridge Replacement Route 771 (Lowesville Road)	\$3,3326,000
UPC 51353- Horsley Creek Bridge Replacement/Relocation	\$1,363,368
UPC 97497- Route 622 Bridge Superstructure Replacement	\$1,125,365
UPC 72320- Route 745 Surface Treatment	
UPC 103299- Structural Steel Repair-Rte. 210 over Route 29	
<b>2035 Virginia Transportation Surface Plan (VTRANS)</b>	
Route 29 (Lynchburg Expressway) from Amherst St to Lyttleton Ln.(.52 mi.) – widening/improvement	\$12,000,000
Route 60 (Richmond Highway) from Route 606 to Route 600 (3.29 mi.)- widening/improvement	\$49,837,000
Route 29 (Lynchburg Expressway) Construct interchange at Route 163 to allow all movements. Lynchburg Vision CLRP recommendation.	\$12,000,000
<b>Region 2000 2035 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP) (2011)</b>	
<b>Note:</b> Prioritized as presented in RLRTP	
1. VA 662/VA 151 ( <i>Intersection Safety Deficiency</i> )- Long-term: reconstruct intersection to improve alignment and address geometric and safety issues.	
2. US 60/VA 686 ( <i>Intersection Safety Deficiency</i> )- Short-term: add warning signs for approaching intersection; Long-term coordinate with Forest Service and realign to form a standard four-leg intersection.	
3. US 29/VA 151 ( <i>Intersection Safety &amp; Operational Deficiency</i> )- Short-term: consider reducing speed limit; Mid-term: apply access mgmt. and consider signalization; Long-term: construct interchange.	
4. US 60 (Richmond Hwy.)/Eastern Town Limit Amherst to VA 600- ( <i>Segment Safety &amp; Operational Deficiency</i> )- Long-term: reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).	
5. VA 610/VA 635 North to VA 625 ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
6. VA 635 (Buffalo Springs Turnpike)/VA 636 North to US 60 E. ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term: reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (11-foot lanes).	
7. VA 631/US 60 to VA 617 W. ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term: reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
8. VA 617/VA 631 W. to VA 627( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term: reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
9. VA 625/VA 830 to VA 627 South ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
10. VA 627/VA 625 South to VA 778 ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
11. VA 617/US 60 to VA 616 North ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
12. VA 739/VA 608 to VA 708- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> ) Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
13. VA 708/VA 739 South to VA 610- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
14. VA 600/US 60 to VA 601- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
15. VA 604/VA 659 North to US 60- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).	

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

16. VA 622/VA 648 to VA 823- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
17. VA 670 (Isaak Walton Rd./Partridge Creek Rd.)/VA 670 South to VA 604- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).	
18. VA 643/VA 655 to Amherst Western City Limit- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
19. VA 643 (Wagon Trail Rd.)/VA636 North to VA 655- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (10-foot lanes).	
20. VA 655/Falls Rock Creek Bridge to VA 643- ( <i>Segment Geometric Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).	
21. US 60/VA 600 to Amherst E. Co. Line- ( <i>Segment Operation &amp; Safety Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct US 60 to current two-lane roadway standards, with right turn lanes and center left turn lanes.	
22. US 29/Northern Boundary of MPO to Nelson Co. Line- ( <i>Segment Operation &amp; Safety Deficiency</i> )- Long-term reconstruct to four-lane parkway with interchanges.	
<b>Amherst Co. Priorities – Region 2000 2035 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan (2012)</b>	
<b>Note:</b> In 2011 and 2012, staff from the County of Amherst collaborated with the Region 2000 Local Government Council and VDOT's Lynchburg District to select from the 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan the most important projects to county. The selection process allowed for input from local planning and engineering staff, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Post-selection, a field trip was conducted to each of the top five sites for evaluation of remedial action (recommendations from these site visits are shown below). The 10 projects in the following list are in prioritized order, and were recommended by the Amherst County Planning Commission on 15 December 2011 and accepted by the Amherst County Board of Supervisors on 6 March 2012. Numbers in parentheses correspond to the priority ranking assigned in the 2035 RL RTP document.	
1. (#3) <b>Intersection of US 29 and US 151.</b> This intersection is currently being reviewed by VDOT per VDOT staff. Recommended speed reduction and redesign intersection including access by adjoining properties.	
2. (#4) <b>Roadway, US 60, east of town limits to VA 600.</b> Recommend signage alert to intersection (US 60 and VA 600) traveling west bound on US 60; widen roadway to 24 feet and improve shoulders.	
3. (#1) <b>Intersection of US 151 and VA 662.</b> Recommend signage alert of poor visibility on US 151, reconstruct intersection to improve tie-in angle and visibility.	
4. (#7) <b>Roadway, VA 631, from US 60 West to VA 617.</b> Recommend widen to 20', improve shoulders and place stop sign at intersection of VA 631 and VA 617.	
5. (#6) <b>Roadway, VA 635, from US 60 West to VA 636.</b> Recommend widen to 22' and improve shoulders.	
6. (#9) <b>VA 625 from VA 830 VA 627</b>	
7. (#10) <b>VA 627 from VA 625 South to VA 778</b>	
8. (#12) <b>VA 739 from VA 608 to VA 708</b>	
9. (#18) <b>VA 643 from VA 655 to Town of Amherst western limit</b>	
10. (#20) <b>VA 655 from Fall Rock Creek Bridge to VA 643</b>	
<b>Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization Bike Plan (2010)</b>	
<b>Ambrose Rucker Road</b> (between Elon Road and Miller Creek), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Amherst Highway</b> (between Dillard Road and Richmond Highway), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Amelon Road</b> (between Elon Rd and Dixie Airport Rd), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Colony Road</b> (from Main Street to 29 Business SB Ramp), Signed Share Road	
<b>CVT Road</b> (from Route 210 to Route 334), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Dixie Airport Road</b> (from Old Wright Shop Road to Amherst Highway), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Elon Road</b> (from Bypass to North MPO Boundary), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Father Judge Road,</b> Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>High Peak Road</b> (from Route 671 to Route 656), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>North Coolwell Road</b> (from Amherst Highway to South Coolwell Road), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>North Five Forks Road</b> (from Amherst Highway to High Peak Road), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Old Town Connector</b> (from 29 Bypass to Route 622), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Old Wright Shop Road</b> (from Colony Road to East MPO Boundary), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	

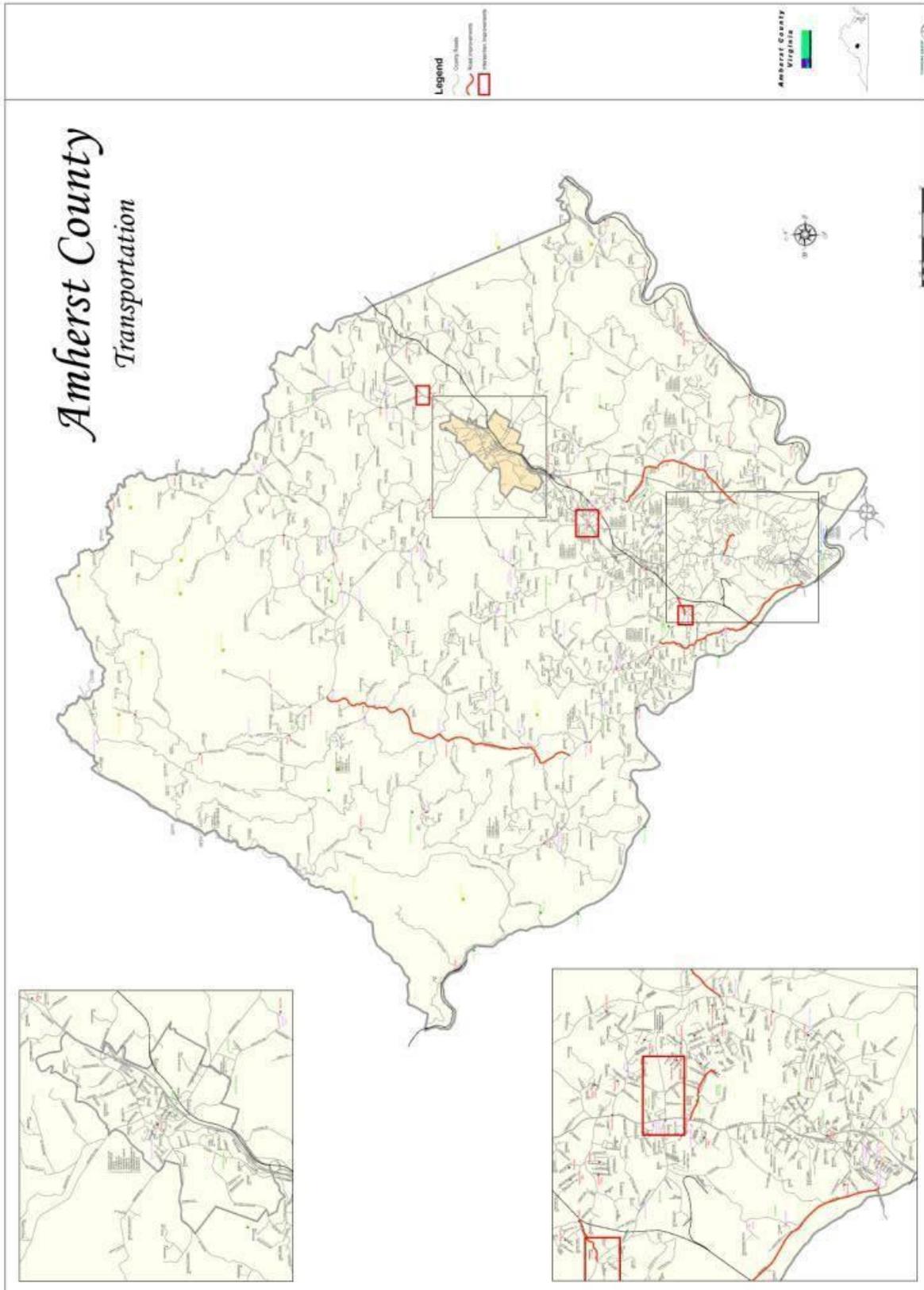
## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

<b>River Road</b> (from Elon Road to Amherst Highway), Signed Share Road; Wide outside lane, paved shoulder	
<b>South Coolwell Road</b> (from Izaak Walton Road to North Coolwell Road), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>South Five Forks Road</b> (from Amherst Highway to High Peak Road); Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Winesap Road</b> (from Winridge to Amherst Highway), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Wright Shop Road</b> (from Route 210 to Old Route 622), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Winridge Drive</b> (from Elon Road to Winesap), Signed Share Road; Pave Shoulder	
<b>Region 2000 Rural Scenic Corridors Study</b>	
Creation of a scenic corridor along “the continuation of <b>Route 624</b> to create a loop” (Virginia Outdoors Plan [VOP]). Editor’s note: While detail is not given, this is assumed to be Earley Farm Road in Amherst County, which intersects with Route 622 (Scenic Road) at Stapleton. Route 624 transitions to Higginbotham Creek Road in the Sweet Briar vicinity. This roadway does possess many scenic characteristics, although the VOP’s mention of a “loop” is not clear.	
Creation of a scenic corridor along <b>State Route 685</b> (River Road)	
Creation of a scenic corridor along <b>State Route 635</b> (Buffalo Springs Turnpike)	
Creation of a scenic corridor along <b>U.S. 60</b> (Lexington Turnpike)- between the Town of Amherst and the Rockbridge County line.	
Creation of a scenic corridor along State <b>Route 653</b> (Ambrose Rucker Road)/ <b>State Route 636</b> (High Peak Road)/ <b>State Route 643</b> (Matohe/Kenmore Road)- Between Elon and Town of Amherst	
Creation of a scenic corridor along <b>State Route 610</b> (Sandidges Road) & <b>State Route 778</b> (Lowesville Road)- between U.S. 60 and Amherst/Nelson line.	
<b>Region 2000 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2011)</b>	
<b>Industrial Park Location Study on Rt. 210-</b> Additional Industrial/Business Parks study especially in the Route 210 area - The project would have a potentially significant impact on the development of the Rt. 210 corridor. This would allow developing business and or light to moderate industry easy access to the Rt. 29/460 by-pass which would make for a very strong marketing tool. The location is very attractive on a regional standpoint and would draw from a regional workforce. With the building of the regional jail in this same corridor, many of the needed infrastructure components are already in place.	
<b>Amelon Commerce Center Expansion Study-</b> This project is located on the Rt. 130 corridor between Business 29 and By-Pass 29. The study would look to show the impact of expanding the Amelon Commerce Center which houses light industrial businesses. Infrastructure already exists which makes for a very feasible project. This would impact the region by drawing from a regional workforce. The study would provide the necessary figures, cost estimates and feasibility of expanding in the direction of the by-pass.	
<b>Widening of Old Stage Road to Poplar Grove Golf Community-</b> Old Stage Road is located across from the Sweet Briar College main entrance off of Rt. 29 Business. The widening of this road will provide a much more convenient entry point into Poplar Grove which would help in attracting business/residential growth and facility use. This has a great potential for regional impact as the golf course is a nationally recognized facility and once it is established with amenities, could become a large tourism draw for Amherst County.	
<b>Access Intersection from U. S. 29 Amherst Bypass to Izaak Walton Road-</b> On/Off Ramps at Izaak Walton Road and the 29 By-Pass - Construction of on/off ramps at the intersection of Izaak Walton road and By-pass 29 would open the area to future growth potential. It would also provide a much needed road access point to the North end of Madison Heights from the by-pass.	
<b>Other Recommendations from Amherst County Planning Commission</b>	
Install 3,800 feet of sidewalk on east side of U.S. 29 Business between Dillard Road vicinity and Woody’s Lake Road	
<b>Woody’s Lake Road</b> (682)- Reconstruct 2 lane roadway-.83 mi.	\$3,354,700*
<b>River Road</b> (Rt. 685)- Reconstruct 2 lane roadway-3.7 mi.	\$6,191,747*
<b>Buffalo Springs Turnpike</b> (Rt. 635)- Reconstruct 2 lane roadway-10.5 mi	\$11,156,302*
<b>Izaak Walton Road</b> (Rt. 663)- Reconstruct 2 lane roadway-4.5 mi.	\$5,020,335*
<b>Winridge Road</b> (Rt. 795)- Reconstruct 2 lane roadway-1.25 mi.	\$1,394,537*
<b>Intersection of 29/Coolwell</b> (Faulconerville)- Traffic Signal	\$251,016*
<b>Intersection of 29/151-</b> Traffic Signal	\$251,016*

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

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<b>Intersection of Amelon (669)/130 connector(Amelon Expressway)/Amelon Circle (Industrial Park)- Traffic Signal</b>	\$251,016*
<b>Intersection at Route 130/Hans Hill (1241)- Two left turn lanes</b>	\$557,815*
*Estimates created with 2007 dollars and adjusted for inflation to 2012 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator)	



**TRANSPORTATION  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Ensure that the County's transportation systems complement desired land uses.

**Objective #1**

Adopt and implement a future land use pattern that provides for mixed land uses, thus minimizing the mileage necessary to drive to work, school, or businesses.

**Strategies:**

Incorporate appropriate multi-purpose mixed-use zoning districts into the county's zoning ordinance.

**Objective #2**

Include VDOT in all stages of the planning process.

**Strategies:**

Continue to involve VDOT in the county's comprehensive planning, capital facility programming, development code preparation initiatives, and the review of development proposals. Coordinate land-use planning with VDOT 6 year plan and Region 2000 transportation plan.

**Objective #3**

Seek other funding to assist in development of transportation projects in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Strategies:**

Work with the General Assembly to provide for an increased percentage of state transportation funding to be set aside for VDOT to allocate on future transportation projects in support of the county plan. Adopt necessary code to enable the county to accept cash proffers.

**Goal #2**

To improve and preserve the safety, efficiency, and aesthetics of all roads.

**Objective #1**

Maximize safety at points of access to the County's primary and secondary roads.

**Strategies:**

Amend the county's zoning and subdivision ordinances to require the construction of service roads in conjunction with new development along primary and secondary highways, thereby minimizing the quantity of new highway intersections. Maximize the appropriate use of "right in and right out" traffic flow designs when reviewing and approving new site designs. Promote the development of new cul-de-sacs to provide access for new larger scale commercial/industrial development along primary corridors.

**Objective #2**

Improve the safety and aesthetics of certain road corridors.

**Strategies:**

Reinstall median strip with plantings on Route 29 from Coolwell Road to 29 business exit to Lynchburg. Use roundabouts wherever possible to promote traffic flow and minimize traffic signals. Encourage the appropriate use of traffic calming devices wherever possible. Utilize pullouts for public transport and school bus stops on transportation corridors. Modify codes for parking standards to make commercial lots more efficient and aesthetically appealing. Include Low Impact Development techniques in all road and parking design to minimize environmental impact. For guidance on access management, safety, and aesthetics, refer to the 2002 Route 29 Corridor Management Study.

**Goal #3**

Promote and develop multi-modal transportation system.

**Objective #1**

Promote walking and biking.

**Strategies:**

Plan bikeways and sidewalks when improving or designing roads and public transportation facilities. Consider requiring all new developments along Business 29 in Madison Heights to install sidewalks to improve pedestrian access. Plan trails and bikeways as alternative means to roads. Consider requiring biking or walking trails in new subdivisions.

**Objective #2**

Promote passenger rail service from Amherst to major metropolitan areas. Use Monroe or Amherst as a station.

**Objective #3**

Promote hiking and biking trails.

**Strategies:**

Identify and work with surrounding city and county groups. Obtain legal assistance as needed for gaining public ownership of roadbeds. Seek grants for expansion of trails in Amherst County.

**Goal #4**

Strive to improve on surrounding visual qualities of existing transportation systems and every transportation infrastructure design.

**Objective #1**

Improve litter control.

**Strategies:**

Require secured trash loads during transport. Increase enforcement and penalties of litter laws. Promote education in grades K – 5. Increase participation in Adopt-A-Highway Program and make the sections adopted small enough to be easily managed. Encourage the development of an “adopt-a-spot” program.

**Objective #2**

Protect view sheds along primary corridors.

**Strategies:**

Promote conservation easements along roads with view sheds.

**Objective #3**

Improve and strengthen the landscaping ordinance.

**Strategies:**

Add options to landscaping ordinance to create more variety for property owners. Grant exceptions only in extreme and rare circumstances.

**Objective #4**

Promote THE LEAF<sup>6</sup> Program.

**Strategies:**

Form a volunteer committee of citizens and businesses to plan and raise money for “recognition signs”.

**Objective #5**

Create treescape plans for primary corridors, by-pass and scenic primary corridors.

**Strategies:**

Apply for Transportation enhancement funds for design and implementation.

**Objective #6**

Seek funding and grant opportunities through the State of Virginia.

**Strategies:**

Work with VDOT to increase the percentage of funding for landscaping along road projects.

**Goal #5**

Increase the use of public transportation by Amherst County citizens.

**Objective #1**

Provide public transportation service to the Town of Amherst and Sweet Briar College.

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<sup>6</sup> Program adopted by the City of Lynchburg that promotes beautification along the Lynchburg expressway.

**Strategies:**

In coordination with Greater Lynchburg Transit Corporation (GLTC), undertake a feasibility study of providing transit service to the Town of Amherst and Sweet Briar College.

Use the JAUNT<sup>7</sup> system or vans for express service to the Town of Amherst and Sweet Briar College.

**Objective #2**

Expand public transportation service with respect to both hours of operation and route frequency.

**Strategies:**

Coordinate with GLTC and JAUNT to improve services in Amherst County

**Objective #3**

Review expansion of taxi service.

**Strategies:**

Assist in efforts to promote taxi service as an alternative means of travel for those without access to a private vehicle or public transportation.

**Objective #4**

Promote “Park and Ride”.

**Strategies:**

In coordination with VDOT, promote park and ride opportunities and locate parking for park and ride services in proximity to businesses and shopping.

**Objective #5**

Market all public transport alternatives.

**Strategies:**

Support the use of brochures, television, radio, and other marketing strategies to promote the use of public transit.

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<sup>7</sup> Jefferson Area United Transportation.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Capital facilities are a critical component of the educational services provided by a community. Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) currently operates seven elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one alternative school. Map VII shows the location of these educational facilities. The capacity/adequacy of each of these facilities is a function of the total number of students in the school and grade specific space needs. Ever-changing program offerings and program mandates also have a direct impact on the adequacy of specific schools. At this time, all school facilities are at capacity.

The school system currently has approximately 4,456 students. State projections for enrollment anticipate a slight decline in school-age population over the next five years, while school officials predict increasing student enrollment. Actual school age population will be highly dependent on the county’s overall growth rate during this period.

The Amherst County School system has adopted and annually reviews a facilities improvement plan. Since 1993, \$33,000,000 has been invested to modernize and improve the instructional environment in all of the schools in the system. Projects have included classroom and media center renovations and additions, air conditioning of all schools, roof, window and asbestos floor tile replacement, and electrical and technological upgrades.



Amherst County High School

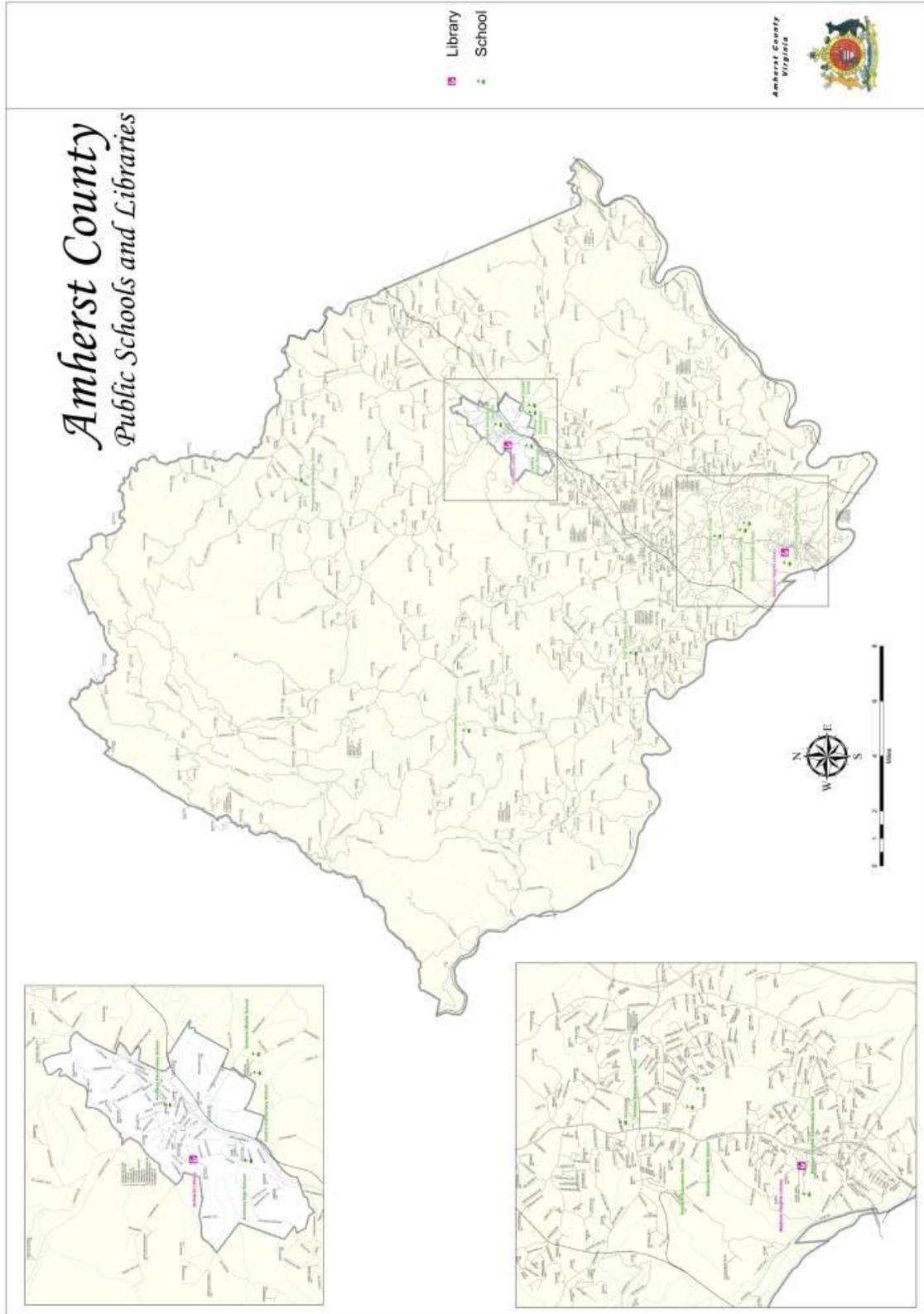
This plan endorses a balanced educational system that pays appropriate attention to academic, technological, required (K-12), and continuing educational

programs.

The attendant children will require an education at a local share cost of \$2971.00<sup>8</sup> per pupil in the 2010-2011 budget. For local taxes to pay that portion the average home and lot would have to have an assessment of \$500,000. The average value of all house types in Amherst County with a lot is estimated to be \$149,200. This large deficit means growth must be planned and balanced with land use types that are less demanding of services. This point was supported in a recent “Cost of Land Use Study” prepared for Amherst County in 2004.

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<sup>8</sup> Per pupil expenditure was provided by the Amherst County School Board Office.



**PUBLIC EDUCATION  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Ensure continuous improvement in student and school achievement.

**Objective #1**

Offer students an approved curriculum relevant to their needs, interests, abilities, and goals.

**Strategies:**

Examine curriculum offerings annually to ensure students are afforded the best opportunities to address their individual interests, abilities, and goals including vocational occupations.

Provide opportunities for students to pursue endeavors during and after their K-12 education based on their learning styles, interests, and preferences.

**Objective #2**

Hire and retain the highest quality faculty and staff personnel for ACPS which is representative of Amherst County's demographic composition.

**Strategies:**

ACPS should attend 15 faculty recruiting fairs annually.

The School Board should work with and meet with the Board of Supervisors regularly to examine and fund competitive compensation, benefit and wellness packages, professional learning opportunities, and facilities to attract and retain effective educators.

Promote professional development, centered on improving student achievement with an emphasis on literacy, differentiated instruction, and school safety.

**Objective #3**

Provide classroom space and other school-related capital facilities that meet the needs of the students, ACPS colleagues, and the community of Amherst County.

**Strategies:**

ACPS should minimize use of modular portable classrooms.

Annually review and update the facilities improvement plan. Incorporate the recommendations of the Facilities Improvement Plan in the County's five (5) year Capital Improvements Program.

Obtain necessary funding annually to finance the capital projects identified in the ACPS Facilities Improvement Plan.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Pupil to teacher ratios should be in compliance with the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia 8 VAC 20-131-10 etc. Seq.

Identify and purchase suitable locations and begin preliminary planning for the construction of new schools that will be necessary in the next twenty-five years.

Consider adopting laws that will enable acceptance of cash proffers to support school expansions.

ACPS should consider periodic school system efficiency studies.

### **Goal #2**

Maintain and promote a safe, clean, healthy, and positive environment conducive to teaching and learning.

#### **Objective #1**

Ensure that safe and healthy environmental conditions exist at all ACPS facilities and operations.

#### **Strategies:**

Climate control, utilities, and indoor-air quality facilities should be constructed and maintained in compliance with the Virginia Department of Education Regulations for Public School Building Construction and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

ACPS will provide safe, reliable transportation including reasonable riding distances and time.

The replacement cycle for buses should be followed per the recommendations of the Virginia Department of Education.

Adopt and enforce requisite policies that keep schools safe from all illegal activities per the guidelines of the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education.

### **Goal #3**

Enhance school, parent, and community collaboration.

#### **Objective #1**

Seek opportunities to create new community collaborations and enhance existing initiatives.

#### **Strategies:**

Establish a standing advisory committee with representative membership of Amherst County and meet three times per year to provide recommendations regarding the ACPS' role in the community.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Continue the ACPS business partnership program and sign a minimum of six (6) new business partnerships per school year.

Utilize various media, such as newsletters and websites, to facilitate collaboration.

### **Goal #4**

Promote lifelong learning.

#### **Strategies:**

The ACPS Staff Development Committee should meet regularly to consider and recommend staff development opportunities for all educators.

Ensure access to all for lifelong, diversified educational opportunities.

Support the adult literacy program *CALL (Citizens for Adult Learning and Literacy)*.

Continue to support the operation of the CVCC satellite campus at the Food Lion shopping center in the Town of Amherst.

**PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES**

The Amherst County Public Library System provides a full range of services for adults and youth. The three primary roles of the Amherst County Public Library, as approved by its Board of Trustees, are the following: provision of general information to all citizens of Amherst County; provision of current topics and titles to meet the recreational, informational, and educational needs of all citizens in various media formats; and provision of resources needed for lifelong learning including literacy. The main library, which includes the system’s administrative offices, is located in the town of Amherst. The system’s branch library is located in Madison Heights in the River James Shopping Center.

The collections of the library system include over 100,000 items including print books, electronic books, audio books, music CDs, DVDs, VHS videos, online databases, magazines, and newspapers. Public computers are available which offer basic office software, educational games for children, access to numerous databases, and Internet access. Both libraries also offer wireless access for users wishing to use their own laptop computers.

A wide range of programming and activities designed to promote reading, library use, and general and community information is offered for all ages. Outreach programming and homebound delivery of materials are offered for senior citizens and others who cannot visit the library due to physical disability or handicap.

Over half of the residents of Amherst County have library borrowing cards. Other residents attend programs or use materials in the library, but they do not check out materials. The Amherst County Public Library and the Lynchburg Public Library have reciprocal borrowing agreements, allowing residents of each jurisdiction to use the other library’s books. A courier shuttles books and materials between the Amherst and Lynchburg Library three days per week.

Both Amherst County libraries are open six days per week, including evening and Saturday hours.



Picture: Amherst Library



Picture: Madison Heights Library

**PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Promote reading, literacy, and life-long learning for all residents.

**Objective #1**

Maintain high quality service standards for libraries within Amherst County.

**Strategies:**

Assess the status of library services in the County.

Develop a comprehensive library services plan.

**Objective #2**

Ensure access to library services.

**Strategies:**

Acquire or develop and deliver Internet and computer literacy training and access.

Provide outreach services to those in the community who cannot access the libraries in-person because of disability or other limiting factor.

Provide viable access to electronic information resources to every resident of Amherst County by having T-1 or greater connectivity at library locations, keeping computers and equipment up to date, replacing slow and non-working equipment, providing technology training to the public, and maintaining a well-trained staff.

Ensure that the information technology remains viable and current.

**Objective #3**

In collaboration with Amherst County Public Schools, improve literacy and educational achievement rates [e.g., increase the number of Amherst County adults over the age of 25 with at least a high school education from 79.9 percent to 86.6 percent (the state's level) and increase the number of adults with Bachelor's degrees from 16.2 percent to 34.4 percent (state level)].

**Strategies:**

Design and deliver activities and programs to promote reading and literacy.

Work in cooperation and conjunction with CALL and other county and regional resources to support literacy.

Work in cooperation and conjunction with the public school system and educators to support reading, literacy, and Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Partner with existing county assets (e.g., Sweet Briar College, CVCC, the Job Corps Center) to develop or broaden educational and training opportunities for the citizenry.

### **Goal #2**

Develop non-traditional uses/missions for the library.

#### **Objective #1**

Identify opportunities for combined use of facilities.

##### **Strategies:**

Under applicable provisions of the Code of Virginia, establish a proffer system to accept voluntary cash contributions from individuals who rezone property for new development in order to off-set the County's cost of providing capital improvements to serve the property.

Provide non-traditional services, fund raising, collections, and resources to meet the needs of the community in which the library is located, as well as the overall needs of the County.

Work in cooperation with County officials to identify and examine the feasibility of non-traditional/combined use facilities and workforce training to support economic development.

#### **Objective #2**

Provide efficiently designed library buildings that are of appropriate size with sufficient air control systems to meet user and staff needs while providing expansion space for collections, technology, and other resources according to state recommendations.

### **Goal #3**

Promote the essential role the library plays in improving the quality of life for all residents and county visitors.

#### **Objective #1**

Convey, on a continuous basis, the value of available library services and materials.

##### **Strategies:**

Utilize both internal and external means, including staff communication, public service announcements, advertisements, electronic means, mailings, and other appropriate methods.

Provide library services and materials (i.e., print, non-print material, and electronic media) at each library facility that are complimentary, unless duplicate services and materials are warranted by demand and usage.

**PARKS AND RECREATION**

The active and passive recreational needs of Amherst County residents and visitors are met through recreational services and facilities that are provided by a broad cross-section of local, state, federal, and private sector entities. An increasing population with ever-changing priorities and demographic composition requires that our recreational amenities stay current with the needs. We are fortunate in Amherst County to have such a wide range of recreational diversions for the public to enjoy. Those offerings are described below along with the identification of future needs.

**Existing Facilities**

Coolwell Park

This multi-purpose park comprised of 33 acres provides passive and active opportunities. With picnic facilities, a children’s play area, restrooms, lighted all-purpose fields, outdoor basketball courts, picnic shelter, a nature trail, an amphitheater, and an indoor facility used for hobby and craft classes that is available for rent, it is the best equipped facility in the county.

**Lake Parks**

All three of these lakes were constructed to provide recreational opportunities and to provide as flood control measures. Mill Creek is further distinguished by being a designated future public drinking water supply.

Stonehouse Lake Park

Located in the Temperance area of the county, this park is located on a 41 acre watershed lake and is open for fishing only. There is a boat ramp providing access into the lake (no gasoline powered boats allowed.) Other facilities include a covered picnic pavilion, picnic tables, grills, a play area for children, and restroom facilities.



Thrashers Lake Park

Located in the Temperance area, this park rests on a 36 acre watershed lake open for fishing only. There is a 2 boat ramp providing access into the lake (no gasoline powered boats allowed). Other facilities include picnic tables, grills, a play area for children, and restroom facilities.

Mill Creek Lake Park

Located in the Temperance area, this park comprises a 190 acre lake. Facilities include a boat ramp, picnic tables, grills, restrooms, and a play area. Like the other two lake parks, gasoline motors are not allowed.

### Pedlar Reservoir

Pedlar reservoir was established in 1907 as a drinking water source for the City of Lynchburg. The original water lines conveying water to the city were constructed of redwood. The impounded water covers approximately 125 acres and holds approximately 1 billion gallons. The contributing waters to the reservoir is 35 square miles in size. The city allows limited recreation by some Lynchburg residents. Several permits for fishing are available daily from the Department of Billings and Collections. The permit includes a fishing license and a boat provided by the City of Lynchburg. Pedlar supplies ninety percent of Lynchburg's drinking water. A recent survey indicated that dredging is not currently necessary (it has never been dredged).

### **River Parks**

#### Monacan Park

Located on the James River at the end of Route 652 in Elon, Monacan Park is the only public place in the county allowing speed boats and water skiing. Facilities at the park include a boat ramp a small dock for boat access to the river, a covered pavilion, a picnic area, a small play area for children, and restroom facilities.

#### Riveredge Park

Situated along the James River in Madison Heights across from Lynchburg's riverfront, this park is a work in progress. There exists a boat ramp suitable for backing batteaus into the water and approximately 0.7 mile of shoreline. The County has an approved master plan for park development which includes hiking and biking trails, fishing coves, an existing ferry landing joins with the Lynchburg landing, and a restored building to be used by vendors. It is hoped that the Riveredge Park trail will connect with the James River Heritage Trail. There are plans to provide a pedestrian/bike bridge under the Expressway Bridge which will link the park with Percival Island and Lynchburg's riverfront.

### **Trails**

#### James River Heritage Trail

This trail system joins with Lynchburg's Blackwater Creek Trail/Riverfront and Percival Island. It crosses over the James River via a former railroad bridge and continues along the former railroad right-of-way for 1.4 miles to the current terminus. The long term plan contemplates this trail continuing from the terminus, 2.4 miles to another former railroad bridge which crosses the James River into Campbell County. Access to the existing trail is provided by Fertilizer Road.

#### Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail

The former Blue Ridge Railroad provides the basis of this hiking/biking/equestrian trail. It begins in Nelson County at the former depot in Piney River and continues one mile to the county line where it crosses the Piney River into Amherst. From there it continues another four miles, crosses back into Nelson, and ends in the community of Tye River.

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

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### Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail

A state-wide system of trails for viewing wildlife includes Amherst County in its “Mountain Phase” of a three phase trail system. Maps that indicate where the various trails are located can be obtained at the County recreation office.

### Appalachian Trail

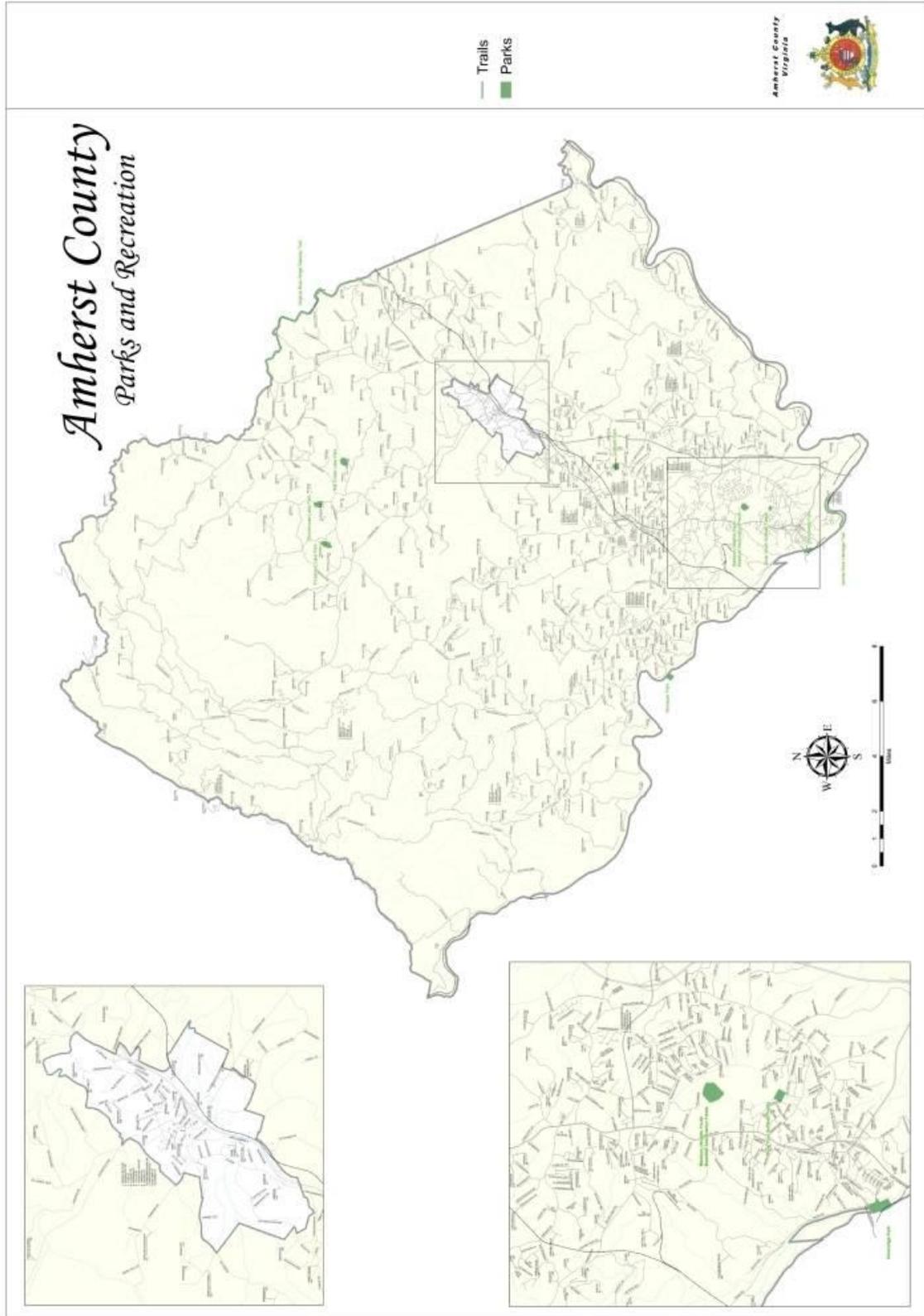
Approximately 25 miles of this nationally recognized trail passes through Amherst County.

### National Forest

The County has approximately 38,000 acres of the George Washington National Forest situated within its borders. It is predominantly the northwest part of Amherst County. A subset of the national forest is 7,600 acres; it is designated as the Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area. Outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, observing scenery, hunting, fishing, and camping abound in these areas.

### Athletic Organizations

The County Recreation Department sponsors multiple youth sports. Seasonally, soccer is offered in the fall for children ages 4 – 18; basketball is offered in the winter for ages 7 - 17; soccer is also offered in the spring, for ages 5 – 12. Nonprofit groups also sponsor activities. Dixie Youth Baseball organizes baseball and owns and/or operates several ball field complexes. Dixie Youth Girls Softball organizes softball and operates a softball complex. The Youth Football Leagues organize football and cheerleading and operate football fields.



**PARKS AND RECREATION  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Provide adequate and varied activities/programs/services to satisfy the needs of the residents of and visitors to Amherst County.

**Objective #1**

Prepare and implement a comprehensive plan for park and recreation facilities and programs, including a plan for greenways and blueways within the County.

**Strategies:**

Research and secure Federal, State, and private grant funding as may be appropriate.

Work in partnership with surrounding communities to promote improvements in parks and recreation facilities.

Consider developing water recreation facilities such as lake swimming, a swimming pool, and a spray park.

Consider developing more indoor and outdoor soccer fields and indoor and outdoor basketball courts.

Consider facilitating the development of a YMCA.

Consider multiple uses of future land acquisitions.

**Goal #2**

Maximize utilization of parks and recreation services for all ages.

**Objective #1**

Promote the year round use of public facilities for recreation.

**Strategies:**

Improve access to services and improve identification of destination points throughout the County.

Create a communications plan and implementation strategy to promote tourism.

Advertise the park and recreational assets of the community, including the county's walking and biking trails, in pamphlets identified in the communications plan.

Develop facilities and programs that have multiple users, such as parks and school sites sharing facilities, especially for new school expansions.

**Objective #2**

Protect natural resources while promoting public access.

**Strategies:**

Work in cooperation and conjunction with environmental groups within the county to protect and enjoy the natural beauty of the County.

Promote environmental education programs.

**Goal #3**

Include future sites in the County's capital improvement plan.

**Objective #1**

Identify potential sites.

**Objective #2**

Identify primary, alternative, and supplementary funding sources.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The Amherst County Sheriff's Office is the principal law enforcement agency in the County. Its approximately 80-person staff provides services to citizens in the areas of field operations (patrol and enforcement), criminal investigations, crime prevention and corrections. The Sheriff also provides court house security and process serving services. Facilities used by the Sheriff's Office include the main administration and jail building in the Town of Amherst and one field office which has a gas pump and an unmanned office. The Virginia State Police assign ten officers to highway patrol. They are also involved in criminal investigations. The headquarters for Amherst assigned State Police is located in Appomattox and their office is by the Lynchburg Airport. The Town of Amherst also maintains a police force of five officers. Their office is located adjacent to Town Hall on Main Street in Amherst.



## **LAW ENFORCEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

### **Goal #1**

Ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of public safety in the community through proactive law enforcement and judicial administration.

### **Objective #1**

Assess the status of law enforcement, the adult and juvenile secured detention facilities, and judicial system in the County.

#### **Strategies:**

Encourage the sheriff's department to develop a comprehensive plan for law enforcement, adult and juvenile secured detention, and the judicial system.

Acquire and maintain appropriate law enforcement resources (staff and equipment).

Promote professional development and training centered on improving public safety.

Obtain federal and state grants to support staff and equipment.

Consider participation in regional activities and authorities.

Establish and track reasonable response-time targets for law enforcement calls for service.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Ensure sheriff department communication compatibility with Virginia State Police.

### **Objective #2**

Promote a positive, safe climate for all who come in contact with judicial/law enforcement facilities.

#### **Strategies:**

Provide safe and functional facilities for the court system and law enforcement which meet the needs of the community and judicial system.

Consider participation in regional activities.

Regularly assess security needs, trends, and equipment to ensure the county is keeping current and providing the best possible safety to its employees and the citizens they interact with.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Amherst Department of Public Safety is responsible for operating the 911 communications center, coordinating with state emergency services, protecting against and responding to natural or man-made disasters. The department consists of four divisions: Emergency Management Division, Communications Division, Fire Division, and EMS/Rescue Division. A Public Safety Director, using an Integrated Emergency Management System approach, manages the Department of Public Safety. The Department also coordinates with three volunteer fire departments and three volunteer rescue squads. In addition, EMS providers, cross trained in fire suppression, staff all three volunteer rescue squads twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week with Advanced Life Support personnel and a Emergency Medical Technician providing continuous coverage. The dedication and commitment of the volunteers to serve their fellow citizens is the foundation of the County's public safety program. There are three non-jurisdictional fire departments and rescue squads located in Nelson and Bedford Counties that provide first due response service to the County. Fire and Rescue stations are located in the Town of Amherst, Pedlar (Forks of Buffalo), Elon, and Madison Heights.

**PUBLIC SAFETY  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of 911 communications to the community and public safety agencies.

**Objective #1**

Assess the status of the communications system and personnel to promote an effective network for receiving calls for assistance (emergency and non-emergency) and for dispatching the appropriate resources through a reliable radio system.

**Strategies:**

Regularly assess trends, staffing, and equipment needs to ensure the county is keeping current and providing the best possible communications systems to the citizens and the emergency responders in the County.

Acquire and maintain appropriate resources to effectively maintain the communications network (staff and equipment).

Consider participation in regional activities and authorities.

Ensure communication compatibility between Public Safety personnel and Virginia State Police.

**Objective #2**

Establish a South County Government Complex (including a public safety substation) in the southern portion of Amherst County.

**Strategies:**

Consider identifying a site location and begin preliminary planning for a south county government complex.

**Objective #3**

Take a proactive or preventative approach to facility safety.

**Strategies:**

Establish standards for provision of fire protection to be applied to all developments including the structure(s) roads and bridges.

**Goal #2**

Provide state-of-the-art emergency service facilities and services that keep pace with future growth and development.

**Objective #1**

Assess status of emergency services in the county and develop a comprehensive emergency service/public safety plan.

**Strategies:**

Leverage advances in technology to meet state and local requirements.

Conduct regular evaluations of present equipment and technology. Ensure that trained personnel and adequate equipment are available in the event of a natural or man-made disaster by participating in regional disaster simulation training exercises.

Recruit, train, and retain personnel for all areas of public safety.

Consider providing a modern facility conducive to teaching and learning to provide ongoing training to public safety personnel.

Develop county-wide standards for interchangeable equipment and promote cooperation between public safety agencies to make the best use of all available resources and reduce duplication where feasible.

Promote generation of revenue from private and public use of public safety facilities.

**Objective #2**

Improve response times.

**Strategies:**

Establish reasonable response-time targets by fire departments and emergency medical services agencies based on the ability in the County.

Utilize advances in technology to meet and improve response times.

**Goal #3**

Support, embrace, and encourage the tradition of the volunteer system for emergency service provision within the County.

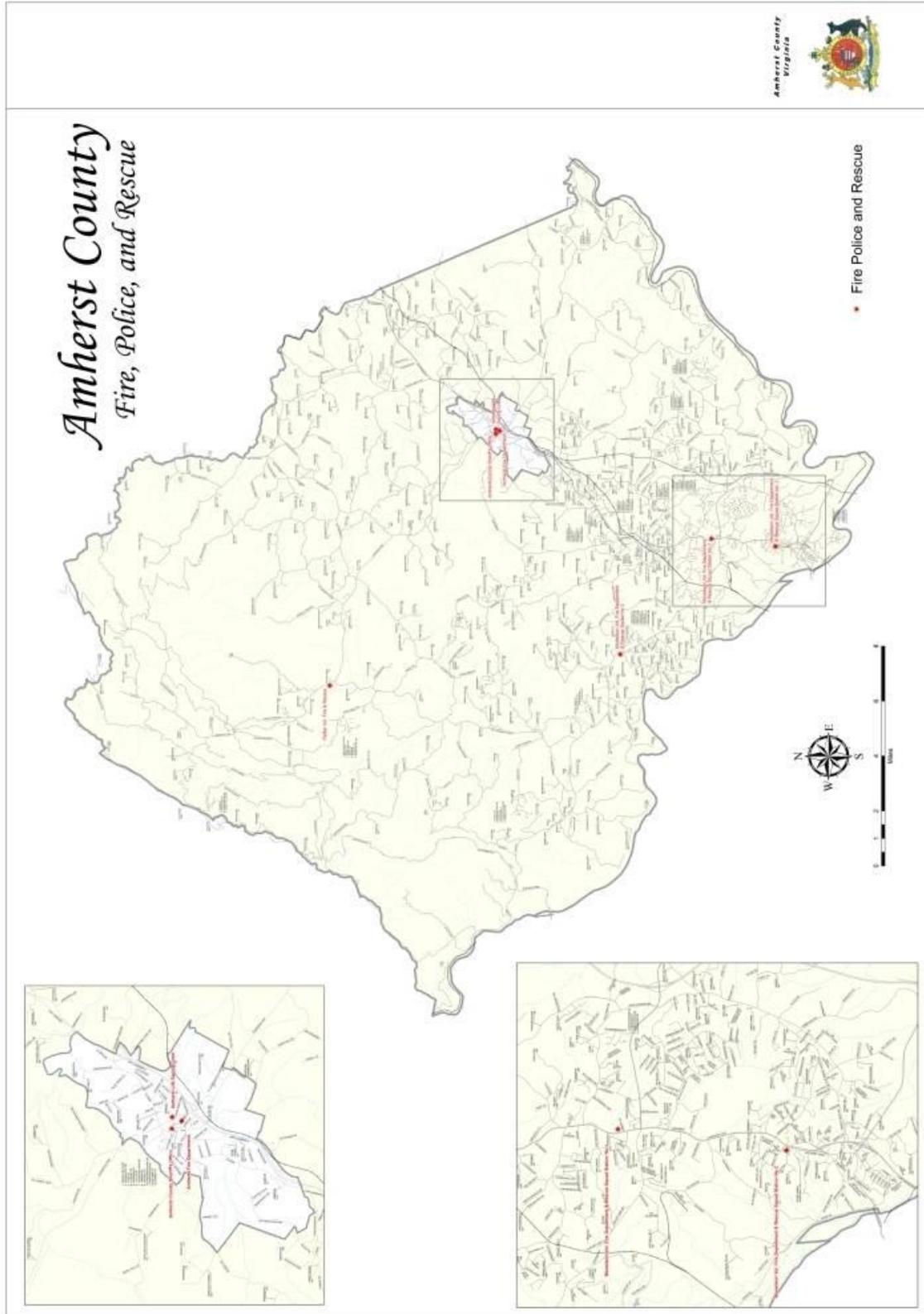
**Objective #1**

Maintain a strong system of volunteers for emergency response.

**Strategies:**

Work in conjunction with the local media outlets to promote incentives and opportunities, praise accomplishments, and educate the public on emergency service volunteerism.

Work with the Amherst County Chamber of Commerce to promote the value of volunteering and to identify potential emergency service recruits/resources.



## **HOUSING**

A key measure of every successful county is the health of its housing and neighborhoods. This, in turn, plays an important role in the broader land-use mosaic that defines the community. In addition, housing and neighborhood policies must relate to economic opportunity, education, public safety and transportation. The provision of good housing is tied to good jobs, good schools, a safe community, and quality of life; all of which are desired outcomes of a well-planned county. Safe and decent housing contributes to neighborhood stability and long-lasting communities.

Emphasis placed on housing and neighborhoods in the county planning process acknowledges the fact that 69 percent of the county's \$2,009,662,200<sup>9</sup> in assessed real estate base is residential. For most homeowners, housing represents the family's largest single financial investment. Housing is an indispensable building block of the economy. It contributes to household wealth, creates jobs, boosts local revenue, adds wages and contributes to taxes.

The promotion of construction and maintenance for affordable housing should be clearly identified for continued growth. Affordable housing should be designated in neighborhoods that promote mass transit, walk able communities, and public services. The Madison Heights area contains a section within the "designated growth area-public water and sewer boundary" which should promote affordable housing.

Good housing and neighborhoods are more than a path to economic prosperity. Decent, affordable, and stable housing has a demonstrable positive and stabilizing effect on families with children.

## **HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

### **Goal #1**

To ensure access to safe, comfortable, attractive and affordable housing for all County residents.

### **Objective #1**

Ensure that the identified housing needs of all segments of the county's population are addressed.

### **Strategies:**

Adopt a future land use map that identifies areas for a wide variety of residential housing types and densities.

Attract the supply of high quality, affordable housing for those in the low-moderate income bracket.

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<sup>9</sup> Figure is from 2008 reassessment and new construction data through 2/14/2012 data from the Commissioner of the Revenues office.

**Objective #2**

Utilize the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances, the state building code, and enabling legislation as tools to achieve the County's housing goals.

**Strategies:**

Consider adopting Part III of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code and establish enforceable standards of maintenance for current and new housing.

Facilitate enforcement of applicable laws to sustain housing and neighborhood quality and to prevent the effects of blight.

Consider providing resources necessary to more rigorously enforce the county's zoning ordinance.

Amend the County's subdivision ordinance to encourage the use of underground utilities in new residential subdivisions.

Amend the County's development codes to require more open space within new residential developments.

Consider creating and encourage the use of zoning districts that allow and provide incentives for mixed-use developments.

Coordinate the timing and location of capital improvements in neighborhoods as inter-related systems in order to achieve multiple outcomes and advance the strategic goals of the County.

Consider the adoption of enabling legislation (Code of Virginia 58.1-3220 or 58.1-3220.01) to encourage private investment to rehabilitate, renovate, or replace certain residential structures.

Encourage high density residential in areas served by public sewer and water.

Continue to work with state and federal programs to assist with affordable and safe housing.

Consider revisions to County Code addressing the Landlord Tenant act.

**SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH CARE**

A key measure of every successful county is the health and welfare of its citizens, especially the children and elderly residents. Health and welfare policies are important factors in neighborhood development, economic opportunity, education, public safety, and transportation. The provision of good health, welfare policies, and services are tied to good jobs, good schools, a safe community, and quality of life, all of which are desired outcomes of a well-planned county.

In 2010, the Amherst County Department of Social Services provided \$40,502,679 in services for the residents of Amherst County in the areas of Child and Adult Protective Services, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Energy Assistance Programs, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Employment Services, Emergency Assistance, Child Day Care, Auxiliary Grants, Companion Services, General Relief, and Administrative Services.

Good health and welfare policies and services have a demonstrable positive and stabilizing effect on families and children.

**SOCIAL SERVICES  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Ensure that adequate health and welfare services are available in partnership with existing and future health and welfare providers.

**Objective #1**

To support the continued expansion of health and welfare services in the community.

**Strategies:**

Collaborate with the Virginia Department of Health, the Amherst County Department of Social Services, the Blue Ridge Medical Center, local hospitals and health and welfare providers.

Work with local hospitals and other health care providers to attract more doctors and dentists into the area.

Support workforce training initiatives aimed at increasing the number and skills of health and welfare personnel in the County.

**Goal #2**

Continue to explore options to meet the office space requirements for the efficient operation of the Amherst County Department of Social Services.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

All of central Virginia and Region 2000 specifically have experienced economic growth over recent years. At the same time the shape of economic activity has shifted from one based primarily on manufacturing and agriculture to one based more on higher technology, service oriented activities.

Accompanying this restructuring in the region, events in Amherst County are also having an impact on economic development. Primary among these are completion of the new Route 29 in October 2005, which has bypassed Madison Heights.

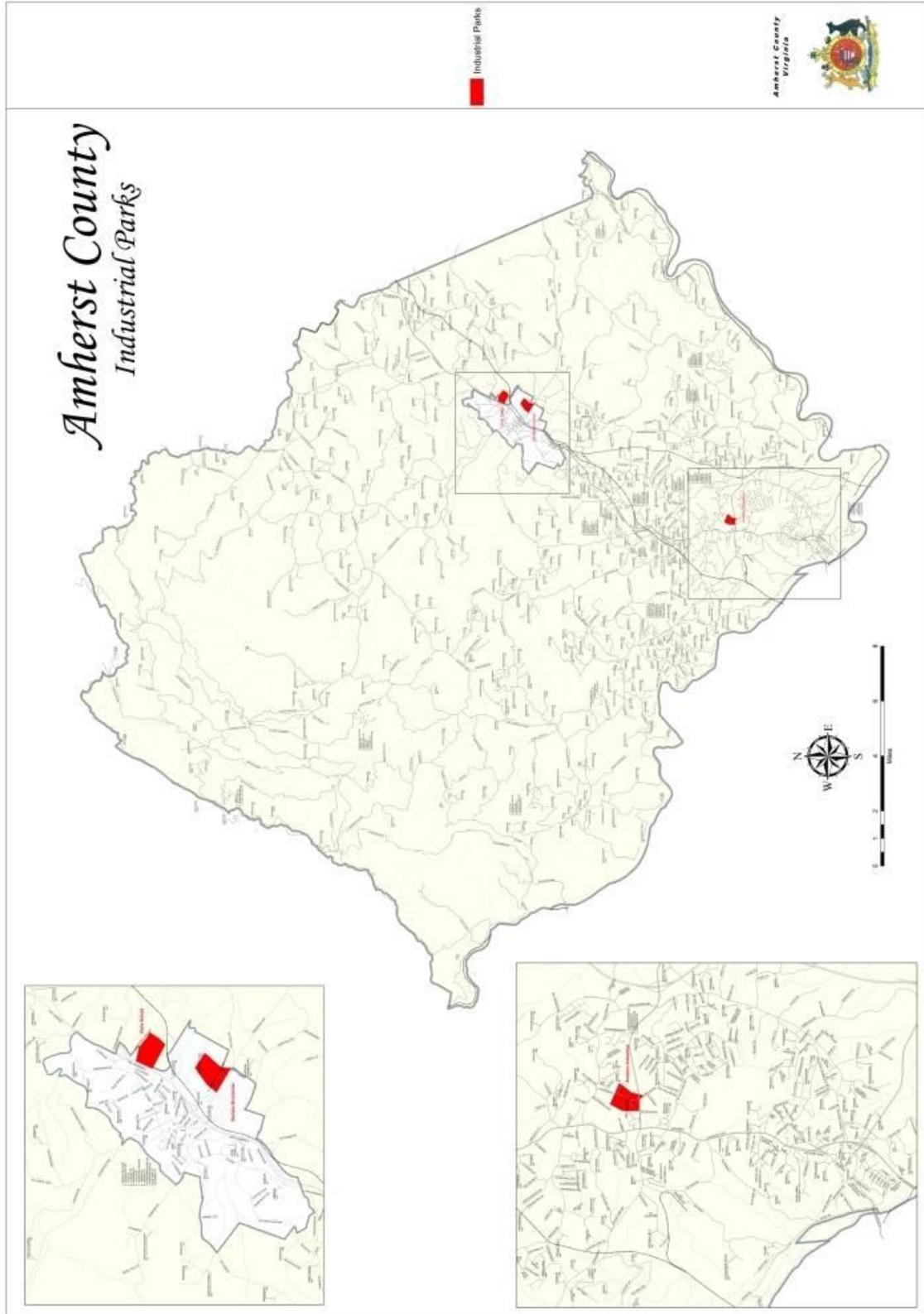
A number of actions have been taken to foster economic development in the past several years. Among these has been the establishment of three industrial parks: the L. Barnes Brockman Sr. Park in the Town of Amherst, the Zane Snead Industrial park near the Town of Amherst, and the Amelon Commerce Center in Madison Heights. Additionally, in 2005, the Board of Supervisors created the Economic Development Authority.

While recognizing the shift to higher emphasis on manufacturing and services, it must be recognized that agriculture plays a significant role in the future of the Amherst County economy. The 2007 census recorded the following data on Amherst County Agriculture:

- Number of farms, 424 with a total acreage of 88,430;
- Annual sales of livestock and poultry, \$6,287,000;
- Annual crop sales of corn, hay, nursery products, etc. of \$1,357,000; and
- Amherst County 2010 logging harvest (per Virginia Department of Forestry) \$5,263,332.

In addition to this economic activity, a number of agri-businesses serve farmers, forestry personnel, and suburban residents.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan identifies economic development opportunities, introduces impediments to growth, and presents specific actions for dealing with them.



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Develop the capacity, programs, and facilities necessary to attract new business investment and employment to Amherst County.

**Objective #1**

Provide a solid structural foundation through updated technology systems and improved and expanded utilities to support new businesses.



**Strategies:**

Adopt strategies that reflect the regional differences within the County.

Work to expand, develop, and/or maintain community assets that will attract businesses and employees to the County (County water and sewer to industrial parks and other commercial designated growth areas; electricity and other utilities, information technology upgrades to keep pace with industry, high-speed internet access).

Insure that there are agreements in place where the interconnection of the County and Town water systems can be activated expeditiously as necessary.

Connect dead end waterlines in system to provide system loops that produce higher quality, better flow and capacity characteristics for fire protection.

Review and update the water and sewer master plan to assure it is consistent with growth objectives.

Create a climate that is conducive for new businesses. Support business incubators, partnerships, and cooperative arrangements between the county and new businesses.

Build community support for the economic development program.

Make the county's natural assets attractive to prospective businesses by improving litter control, working in conjunction with tourism initiatives, and actively promoting (advertising campaigns, economic development office initiatives, etc).

Review County zoning for possible revisions to accommodate appropriate new business entries.

**Objective #2**

Work to diversify the County's economy by promoting light industry and agricultural production by focusing on targeted growth industries to be consistent with regional strategies.

**Strategies:**

Have marketing and a comprehensively updated economic development web site material available for our target markets, and take periodic marketing initiatives to target companies outlining Amherst County's interest in attracting them and explaining the reasons to consider Amherst County for expansion or relocation.

Insure that the County has the necessary economic development tools (e.g., pricing on Amelon park property, assistance programs and site data for private property owners, technology zones, incentives, web site, expedited review procedures, etc.) to be competitive in capturing existing business expansion and attracting new businesses.

Maintain an effective web site that assists consultants and companies searching for suitable locations for new facilities.

Foster the continuing development and growth of the Amherst County Chamber of Commerce.

Maintain and improve Amherst County's roads, water, and sewer infrastructure, with assistance from developer proffers.

Market to attract high-tech, environment-friendly businesses.

Nurture and cultivate small business development.

Attract healthcare providers to build facilities or provide services within the County.

Embrace our agricultural roots by encouraging agricultural growth and spin off businesses (e.g., wine guild, micro-brewery, veterinarian center, etc.). Producers need USDA inspection for ability to market retail meats at a farmers market.

Develop a list of industries Amherst County should pursue.

Facilitate the development of new industry.

Add to the inventory and provide infrastructure development tools for publicly and privately owned industrial sites that can accommodate a range (uses/activities and sizes) of employers.

**Objective #3**

Evaluate the potential for economic development at the Route 29 Bypass intersections and on the 130 and 210 Connectors. Develop appropriate strategies.

**Strategies:**

Determine how water and sewer can be extended to each intersection and calculate its cost.

**Objective #4**

Work with the Central Virginia Training Center and the Commonwealth of Virginia to develop and begin implementing a plan that mitigates the adverse economic impact of the plan for closing Central Virginia Training Center.

**Strategies:**

AEDA should vigorously pursue development and implementation of an aggressive economic adjustment strategy, in either a lead role or as a participant in a group designated by the Board of Supervisors, that offers specific actions designed to address the effects of the anticipated CVTC closure.

**Objective #5**

Improve the County's economic development website.

**Strategies:**

Work with IT and other sources to improve structure of web page.

Develop mechanisms to allow Economic Development to maintain web page content.

**Objective #6**

Attract and retain more restaurants and travel related businesses into the County.

**Strategies:**

Develop a future land use plan that shows commercial land uses in desired locations along the recently completed Route 29 bypass. Market these areas to "desired" restaurants and travel related businesses.

Add signage on 29 Bypass to clearly identify restaurant, hotel, or other visitor facilities.

**Goal #2**

Promote the retention and growth of existing County businesses with equal priority and with the same attention devoted to attracting new businesses.

**Objective #1**

Encourage and support existing businesses and industry by addressing issues affecting growth.

**Strategies:**

Support farms and agricultural operations in the County.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Implement planned water and sewer upgrades.  
Work to provide high-speed internet access to targeted economic development areas.

Maintain an equitable tax system for all businesses.

Encourage job training programs for County residents. Foster the continuing development and growth of Amherst County Chamber of Commerce (ACCC).

Work to encourage regional, county, and town government-industry communications, information sharing, and understanding.

### **Objective #2**

Utilize the EDA to identify issues restraining growth and opportunities for future growth and to make recommendations for appropriate action.

#### **Strategies:**

Work closely with local businesses to identify issues and opportunities.

Showcase successful companies operating in Amherst County on the web page in order to build the identity of Amherst County as a place where companies do well.

Provide attractive financing alternatives for new and expanding businesses.

Lobby for funds available to County similar to the Tobacco Commission funds used in localities south of the James River.

### **Goal #3**

Develop and maintain a community infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of the County.

### **Objective #1**

Engage in innovative programs that educate and train the workforce.

#### **Strategies:**

Consider a state of the art vocational and continuing education training facility.

Leverage existing county assets (e.g., Sweet Briar College, CVCC, Amherst Education Center, the Job Corps Center) to broaden educational and training opportunities for the citizenry.

### **Objective #2**

Support Trans Dominion Route initiatives.

### **Objective #3**

Enhance quality of life for all County citizens.

**Strategies:**

Enlist proactive involvement of citizens committed to improving the quality of life in their communities.

Pursue expanding the Community Center at Coolwell into a health/wellness center that provides year-round recreational opportunities for the entire population (e.g., YMCA-like facility).

Enhance programs for seniors to provide affordable and accessible housing, medical care, recreational opportunities, etc.

Expand hiking and biking trails, river and lake access, and other opportunities to encourage public enjoyment of the County's natural assets.

**Goal #4**

Ensure a local labor force that has the skills and work ethic needed by local employers.

**Objective #1**

Increase awareness of career opportunities and labor market realities among high school students and adults.

**Strategies:**

Partner with Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board to establish a center in Amherst for job information, youth programs, and employee education.

Support the operation of the CVCC satellite in the Town of Amherst/Amherst County through aggressive marketing that increases use of the facility and its programs.

Secure the commitment and participation of the Amherst County School Board and High School in more vocational education initiatives.

**Goal #5**

Promote and expand recreation and tourism opportunities in the County.

**Objective #1**

Make Amherst County a competitive tourist destination in the state.

**Strategies:**

Commit the resources necessary to develop and staff a welcome center.

Develop the James River front to include hiking/biking trails, river access, and connectivity to Percival Island.

Investigate ways to make utilizing county-owned resources for tourism (e.g., lakes, swimming, trails, etc.) a high priority agenda item.

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

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Seek a “turnkey contract” for a hotel/restaurant/conference center and recreational facility (golf, birding, etc.).

Develop a strong branding program supported by a website, brochures at state and other visitor centers, and tours for travel writers.

Promote Amherst County during the Dixie League Championship and other regional tourist’s opportunities.

Continue to produce a brochure highlighting Amherst County vineyards, orchards, lakes, and trails, in the National Forest and Appalachian area.

Partner with private property owners to attract activities supporting the travel-tourism industry through development of the intersections of Routes 210, 130 and Sweet Briar with U.S. Route 29 Bypass.

### **Objective #2**

Attract new people, skills, and resources to Amherst County.

#### **Strategies:**

Market the County’s natural assets to prospective tourists.

Create a performing arts/cultural center (dual purpose) that could include a movie theatre.

With assistance of the VCCA, make Amherst a destination of the artisan’s community through actively promoting, creating, and maintaining a climate conducive for artisans.

Promote tradesman apprenticeship programs in cooperation with Region 2000.

### **Goal #6**

Develop strategies to attract retirees to live in Amherst County.

#### **Strategies:**

Interview realtors and developers to determine who is relocating to Amherst County, where they are coming from, why they say they have chosen Amherst County, and the strategies recommended for reaching similar prospects.

Assess/Inventory local assets attractive to retirees particularly related to cultural, religious, and recreational opportunities, ease of travel, health care, and low taxes.

Tie together the reasons to live in Amherst County into a strong branding program and deliver it on the web page, in brochure(s) and through public relations.

Legalize fractional Home ownership in county.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND BROADBAND SERVICES**

Amherst County’s Information Technology Department plays a critical administrative support role. The department generates all payrolls and accounts payables for the county and school system, all tax tickets, tax books, and vehicle license applications. The department is also responsible for all computer-related functions in all county offices, including technical support and installation and setup of all computer hardware and software. The IT Department also maintains all fiber optic and wireless connectivity between the county facilities and within buildings and manages the county’s networks, e-mail servers, and website.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND BROADBAND SERVICES  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Continue to improve the County’s information technology infrastructure to deliver state-of-the-practice services within and outside the County to current residents, prospective residents, and business/industry.

**Objective #1**

Work to expand, develop, and/or maintain information technology assets that maintain current businesses and attracts new businesses, employees, and new residents to the County.

**Strategies:**

Assess the status of broadband Internet access in the County, the County’s information technology needs and assets, and the County’s geo-spatial data to develop a comprehensive broadband Internet access, information technology, and geographic information system implementation plan.

Encourage affordable access to broadband for all citizens.

Encourage and facilitate private sector investment in broadband infrastructure.

Maintain an Internet accessible GIS program with multiple types of information, including, but not limited to parcels, land use, cultural, and physical features.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY AESTHETICS**

Cultural resources and community aesthetics are shaped by the residents over time. Thus, culture is made up of history and values. Physical characteristics also play a significant role. Here, the Blue Ridge Mountains, The James River and even the soil types have impacted settlement patterns and economic endeavors. Several examples of current events that are steeped in the past and the environment are:

- The Batteau Festival, a tribute to a time when tobacco was grown in Central Virginia and was transported via the James towards Richmond;
- The Monacan Pow-Wow, a remembrance of when the Monacans were the primary residents here; and
- The Apple Festival, a remembrance of when apple orchards covered most of northern Amherst.



Monacan Indian Pow-Wow in Elon

These events and others keep our heritage alive and are enjoyed by locals and visitors as well.

For our own benefit and for the benefit of visitors and persons passing through the County, it is important that Amherst be pleasing to behold. This means that streets, ditches, and lands along roadways should be free of litter. It means that buildings and grounds should be maintained. It means that development should follow a plan or set of guidelines that ensures continuity and aesthetic appeal as well as functionality.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY AESTHETICS GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

### **Goal #1**

To preserve and improve the aesthetics of Amherst County.

### **Objective #1**

To improve the appearance of Amherst County's built environment.

#### **Strategies:**

Prepare, adopt, and implement a corridor enhancement plan for the Business Route 29 corridor near Madison Heights. The emphasis of the plan should be on improving the visual character of the corridor (underground utilities, signage, landscaping, buffers).

Publicize and expand an "Adopt-a-Spot" litter abatement program in the County.

Encourage funding for the renovation and construction of additional staffed convenience centers.

Consider the adoption of an ordinance that would require an architectural review of commercial development along corridors leading to designated historic areas within the County.

Consider the architecture and aesthetics of a proposed development as one factor in recommending approval or denial of a rezoning or special permit request.

Consider adopting programs such a “LEAF” or “Adopt-a-Landscape”.

**Objective #2**

Preserve and maintain the unique natural features of Amherst County.

**Strategies:**

Adopt an official land-use map, land-use guidelines, and zoning provisions to protect and maintain the County’s major scenic corridors (e.g., Rt. 29N, Rt. 60W &E, Rt. 151, Rt. 130, Rt. 635, Rt. 778).

Consider the market for, and availability of, existing commercial and industrial space as a factor when considering commercial and industrial rezoning requests.

Identify and adopt incentives to encourage infill development and renovation of existing commercial space.

Encourage and support the efforts of local land trusts and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to obtain conservation easements that protect viewsheds and open spaces.

**Goal #2**

To expand the cultural and recreational opportunities available in Amherst County for all age groups.

**Objective #1**

Promote activities that celebrate the county’s cultural diversity.

**Strategies:**

Promote ecotourism – hiking, biking, visiting historic places, showcasing garden week, observing wildflowers, and bird watching. Promote trail development and use, through offering incentives to land owners to make their land accessible to these types of activities.

Identify and develop specific activities that promote awareness of cultural diversity and work in conjunction with other community partners to provide and promote these activities.

Promote more utilization of Sweet Briar College offerings.

Provide youth programs focused on cultural diversity issues.

**Objective #2**

Undertake specific tourism and recreation related activities.

**Strategies:**

Support Madison Heights Youth Baseball Association and future Dixie Youth World Series.

Develop a County Calendar of Events.

Enhance Tourism efforts by County (e.g. Tourism Department, Welcome Center with skilled personnel).

Promote Amherst County, Sweet Briar College, and the Monacan Museums.

Promote existing fall festivals (Sorghum, Garlic, Batteau, and Apple Festivals) and encourage new festivals throughout the year.

Continue work on James River Trail/ Riveredge Park and promote the Blue Ridge Railway Trail.

**Goal #3**

To recognize and promote our history.

**Objective #1**

To identify and preserve our historical sites, structures, objects, and areas.

**Strategies:**

Educate property owners as to preservation incentives and the mechanisms of registering and/or preserving the County's historic resources.

Promote historic tourism with encouragement for the County to develop site appropriate infrastructure, such as underground utilities, narrow roads, and building facade standards.

Explore incorporating historic preservation incentives into the County's zoning ordinance.

Evaluate the need for and feasibility of creating additional historic districts/sites within the County.

Consider identifying and publicizing a heritage trail system within the County.

Work with VDOT to add county historic roadside markers as identified by the County historical society.

Consider conducting a historic inventory of sites/structures with state department of historic resources.

**CHAPTER V - ANTICIPATED GROWTH TRENDS**

In this chapter we attempt to explain recent trends or changes in Amherst County development. Consideration of these changes is important due to their influence on future public facilities and services and land use in general. We then look at the major development topics this plan contemplates in the near term.

Of the years tracked (see Table 24), it is clear that most of the 90's were a time of gradual increase in single-family construction. In 1998, there occurred a precipitous drop which continued into 2001. Steady growth has brought the numbers back to those of the early 90's prior to 2007. Since then construction activity has decreased in concurrence with the National Recession of the late 2000s.

Recognizing a fairly certain growth trend then becomes useful to speculate on a profile of the people moving into these new homes. County permits indicate that a large portion of new construction and recent real estate acquisitions is by retirees, exurbanites, and generally persons from a different locality. The temperate climate, natural beauty, low crime, and relatively low cost of living have made Amherst an attractive place to live.

While land values have increased in the last five years across the United States (as they have in Amherst), it is the relative low cost of land with proximity to the mountains and the James River when compared to near-by Albemarle, Nelson, Bedford, and Rockbridge counties that seems to be the deciding factor for new arrivals. The completed 29 Bypass has also impacted location decisions. Lynchburg and surrounds is now fifteen to twenty minutes closer for some commuters.

Market forces prevail and adequately address the demand for commercial services when an area experiences population growth. As pointed out in chapter three it is the local government that becomes challenged in providing public services when the tax base increase does not keep pace for the cost of the services. For that reason anticipating and adequately funding community facilities is key. The private sector should contribute a reasonable share towards funding community facilities and services. Facilities should be located based on best land use practices, meaning they should take advantage of proximity to water, sewer, roads, and population.

**Route 29 Bypass Interchanges**

New interchanges along the Route 29 Bypass may increase demand for commercial and other high intensity land uses at these locations. The County should anticipate increased development pressure at these locations and plan for and allow development consistent with this plan and the economic development objectives of the County.

The new Route 29 in Amherst County was completed in 2005. Extending from the James River on the south to the Southern corporate limits of the Town of Amherst, this new four-lane divided highway provides quick and easy access to the central portions of Amherst County and points north along Route 29. Users of this new highway are able to avoid the commercial development and periodic traffic congestion in southern Amherst County along Route 29 Business, specifically in the Madison Heights area of the County.

Characteristic of most new major highways, the Route 29 Bypass provides opportunities for economic development, particularly at the interchanges with Route 210 and Route 130, and at its northern terminus south of the Town of Amherst. The future land use map contained in Chapter VI of this plan designates the Route 210 and 130 interchanges as suitable locations for commercial development. Specific land uses identified as part of this planning process include hotel, restaurant, and other service functions.

The future land use plan does not designate areas for new commercial development at the northern terminus of this new highway, south of the Town of Amherst. Any new commercial development in this location should be located/concentrated within the Town of Amherst, if consistent with the Town's land use plan. In addition, the Town and County should jointly coordinate future land use planning initiatives around the town's borders to assure optimum use of community services and facilities and coordinate a land use pattern consistent with the objectives of both jurisdictions.

### **29 Corridor**

The area referred to as the 29 Corridor within Amherst County begins at the Nelson County border, continues past Sweet Briar College and passes through Madison Heights as U.S. Route 29 Business before crossing over the James River into the City of Lynchburg. It is distinguished from the 29 Bypass. Land use along the corridor is varied from the pastoral north to the commercialized south. Traffic counts (vehicles per day) taken in 2004 ranged from 25,000 in the north to 35,000 in the south. The northern portion remains the main local route to Charlottesville and Washington, DC. Since the opening of the 29 Bypass the southern corridor is primarily the gateway to downtown Lynchburg. Locally, however, the southern 29 corridor is the major commercial area.

Economic activity is substantial and includes the range of retail sales, restaurants, and lodging. Those three sectors account for approximately 20 percent of employment in the county and 15 percent of local taxes collected. The land use and the economic importance of the 29 corridor is likely to remain stable for the foreseeable future. Steps should be taken to enhance its viability. One major step is to improve the aesthetic quality, especially in the Madison Heights area. Building design, signage, utilities, landscaping, and multi-modal access should be scrutinized and improved upon throughout the corridor.

### **Old Madison Heights**

Old Madison Heights is generally considered to be the older residential section directly across the James River from downtown Lynchburg. Its geographic area is: Route 163 to the west, Route 210 to the north, U.S. Route 29 Business to the east and the James River to the south. This lower central section of Amherst boasts the highest population density with 618 persons per square mile. The county average is 67. This concentration of people, along with the historical significance of Old Madison Heights, its proximity to the James River and Lynchburg, and its existing infrastructure, creates substantial potential for revitalization. A new zoning district was adopted in the Fall of 2012 to this

## **Amherst County Comprehensive Plan**

area that considers the unique characteristics of the existing buildings, grid street pattern, varying land use types and the historic and cultural qualities of this community.

The central part of Old Madison Heights has been identified as historic by the Department of Historic Resources. The layout with house location and street pattern is fairly unique in Amherst since it followed an urban design, as opposed to a suburban or rural development pattern. Most homes were constructed in the early 1900's and are in good or restorable condition.

Unfortunately, neighborhood stability seems to be tenuous. Census data indicates that this portion of Madison Heights has the slowest growth rate in the county. Additionally, renter occupancy has been on the increase as owner occupancy declines.

The gamut of revitalization programs should be explored and when appropriate, implemented in order to turn this hidden treasure into the most desirable neighborhood in the county.

### **River Parks and hiking/biking trails**

Two separate trail/parks are the focus of this discussion. To the north a converted railroad bed has become the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail. It begins in Nelson County, crosses the Piney River into Amherst, and continues back into Nelson when it crosses the Tye River. It terminates in the Nelson community of Tye River. This seven mile trail is pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian oriented.



In the south, situated between Old Madison Heights and the James River, is the Riveredge Park and a section of the River Walk Trail. The park is the site of the former Smiley Block plant/business. Existing improvements include parking and a boat ramp. Proposed improvements will be an access road built to state specification, a refurbished building for vendors and other uses, a mile of trail, a path connecting the park to Old Madison Heights, and a pedestrian/biking bridge connecting the park to Percival Island. This park will enhance our connectivity with Lynchburg for work and recreation. It is also a vital part of revitalizing Old Madison Heights.

### **Land and Environmental Protection**

More than any one topic, land preservation and environmental protection was emphasized by the citizens and the Citizen Advisory Committee to be the cornerstone of this plan. A lack of appropriate regulations was determined to be one of the main reasons for the appearance of our current landscape. Watersheds, viewsheds, streams, and steep slopes should all receive more attention for protection. Lot size and density are too permissive for development in the rural areas. Public facilities and infrastructure should be planned

to compliment the intended land use, not facilitate unintended land use. Development should be directed in areas where public water and sewer facilities can be provided. In urban areas, regulations should be considered to accommodate creative, aesthetic sites. Impervious surfaces should be minimized and commercial areas should be walkable.

**Designated Growth Areas**

If a community decides to reduce the amount of development that can occur in areas that are desired to remain rural, it is prudent to balance that with areas intended to accept development. The concept is very simple: Direct the growth to areas where roads, sewer systems, water, schools, and public transit are desired. If planned properly, these areas will become the population and service hubs of the county and will be attractive places to live and work.

**CHAPTER VI: LAND USE**

**Introduction**

This Chapter presents information on land use issues considered in developing the proposed land use map found in the appendix. There are three main discussion areas: the environment, land preservation, and land-use categories. These issues were identified by the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Citizen Task Forces and the Planning Commission during the development of this plan update. Citizen's comments, as well as topical presentations by the Amherst County staff and consultant team, were sources of information for the CAC and Commission. Comments from citizens indicated an overwhelming desire to protect natural resources, retain the rural nature of the county, and limit the cost of government services.

This chapter contains specific information to help better guide the County's month-to-month decision making on issues/requests, such as rezonings, special permits, and subdivision requests. Each of the main discussion areas is followed by specific policies that the County can use to help guide its decision making in regard to the timing, location, and character of future development in the County. Suggestions for land use have seriously considered the "cost of services study" as a helpful guide in determining development guidelines.

**Existing Land Use**

The existing land use map shows eight general categories of land uses. These categories are as follows:

Agricultural /Forested

This is the largest land use category in the County, comprising approximately 32 percent of the County's land area. Agricultural uses in Amherst are generally located in the central, north central and eastern sections of the County. These areas are typically used for the planting and cultivating of crops and the raising and grazing of livestock. Buildings associated with these activities (single-family dwellings, barns, grain storage, etc.) are included as part of this land use category. Forest land uses consist of forested lands that are privately or corporately owned.

National Forest

This category consists of the George Washington National Forest land publicly owned and managed by the Federal government. Located in the western portions of the county, the national forest comprises approximately 18 percent of the total land area in the County, or 57,877<sup>10</sup> acres of land. This area includes National Park Service/Blue Ridge Parkway property.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Forestry

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### Rural Residential

This category shows the general location of rural residential development clusters in the County. These clusters represent primarily single-family, low-density housing. This housing has been constructed in the very rural portions of the county on land previously used for agricultural or forestry uses. Almost universally, these properties have been developed without public water and sewer.

### Single Family Residential

This category represents areas of the County that have been developed generally as single-family homes in suburban patterns of development. Low-density residential land uses are concentrated in the southern portion of the County.

### Multi-family Residential

This residential category comprises a very small portion of the County's total land area. Multi-family residential areas include all apartment and townhouse developments. Most of these multi-family land uses are found in southern Amherst County or in or near the Town of Amherst.

### Commercial

The commercial land use category consists of areas where the wholesale and retail sale of goods and services is the primary activity. Commercial development has historically occurred primarily in the southern portions of the county along and near Route 29 Business in Madison Heights.

### Institutional

This category designates the location of major institutional sites in the county, such as Sweet Briar College and the Central Virginia Training Center.

### Industrial

The industrial land use category is designated to show those areas where manufacturing is the primary activity. The major areas of industrial activity in Amherst County are located in the southern portions of the County and in the two industrial parks within the Town of Amherst. Other smaller industrial uses and areas can be found on scattered sites and along highway corridors such as Route 29 Business.



### **Blue Ridge Parkway**

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a significant social, cultural, recreational and economic resource for Amherst County. The County must be proactive to ensure that this resource is sustained for future generations. The County should consider the visual negative impact of new development on the character of the Parkway, specifically development along the Route 130 and Route 60 approach corridors. In addition, the County should be actively involved in the development of future management plans for the George Washington National Forest, a key resource that protects the Parkway's long term environmental and visual character.

The Blue Ridge Parkway follows the Blue Ridge Mountains for 469 miles through Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The Parkway passes through the western portion of Amherst County within the George Washington National Forest. Two Virginia primary highways within Amherst County, Route 130 and Route 60, provide vehicular access to the Parkway.



The Parkway was conceived and was designed in accord with four specific purposes. These purposes were to:

- Connect Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks by way of a 'national rural parkway' - a recreational, destination-oriented motor road traveling through a variety of scenic ridge, mountainside, and pastoral farm landscape
- Conserve the scenery and preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Parkway's designed and natural areas.
- Provide for public enjoyment and understanding of the natural resources and cultural heritage of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.
- Provide opportunities for high quality scenic and recreational experiences along the Blue Ridge Parkway and within the corridor through which it passes.

Designed as a national, scenic, linear park, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a significant social, cultural, and recreational resource eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The Parkway is also a significant economic resource for communities. Approximately twenty-one million travelers per year use the Parkway and contribute to local economies along its route.

Conservation of the Parkway's scenic environment benefits from partnerships between the National Park Service (NPS), which manages the park, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, and localities (such as Amherst County) through which the Parkway passes.

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Amherst County can assist with the conservation of the Parkway's scenic environment through local policy action in three areas:

1. Evaluate the visual impact of new development that is proposed within the Parkway's viewsheds. Although the Parkway in Amherst County lies primarily within the National Forest, the County should be cognizant that certain private development, regardless of proximity, (such as communication towers) can have an adverse visual/scenic effect on the Parkway. Such development should be evaluated with consideration of these visual impacts. In addition, Blue Ridge Parkway staff should be consulted on such development proposals to obtain their opinion on the proposal's impact on the Parkway's scenic quality.

Amherst County should encourage the developers of property within Parkway viewsheds to minimize visual impacts on the Parkway. Impacts can potentially be minimized through changes in site or building design, including grading, building locations, building height, building and roof colors, street locations, lighting, landscaping, and buffering.

2. Protect the "gateways" to the Parkway. Route 60 and Route 130 are the gateways to the Parkway in Amherst County. Parkway visitors develop first impressions of the County based upon the scale and character of development along these routes. The County's current zoning regulations should be evaluated to determine whether or not they are sufficient in scope to require that development along these critical gateways be compatible with the rural and scenic nature of the Parkway's environs. If not, the county should consider adopting zoning amendments to create scenic corridor overlays that would manage the scale and character of new developments along these corridors.
3. Monitor and participate in the development of resource management plans for the George Washington National Forest. This national forest provides a significant buffer for the Parkway and protects the Parkway from the visual impacts of rural and suburban development; however, recent federal proposals to return some of the forest in Virginia to private ownership demonstrates that communities along the Parkway must be vigilant if they wish to be proactive in ensuring that the Parkway remain a major environmental and scenic asset.

### **Environment**

For development proposals in environmentally sensitive areas, including higher elevation and steep-slope properties, the environmental impacts of the development and access roads should also be considered. It is important to maintain a balance between development and environmental objectives throughout the County. The following techniques are available for protecting the environment of the County.

### Low Impact Development (LID)

LID is a stormwater management technique/philosophy designed to manage stormwater through replication of pre-development hydrologic conditions. Gaining popularity around the country, LID has six basic tenets:

- Minimize site disturbance/conserves open space;
- Reduce post-development impervious cover;
- Promote infiltration;
- Replicate pre-development flow patterns and times;
- Use decentralized practices; and
- Incorporate pollution control into site developments.

While many Virginia communities are exploring or have adopted voluntary LID programs, a few have mandatory requirements. Although the benefits of LID techniques are applicable throughout all of Amherst County, they are particularly applicable in environmentally sensitive areas. Amherst County's adoption of LID as an optional or required approach to stormwater management would further the county's environmental and conservation objectives contained in this plan.

### Riparian Easements

A riparian easement is a special type of conservation easement that applies only to a streamside or riparian zone mutually agreed upon by the landowner and the easement holder(s). Like all easements, a riparian easement is a legal agreement in which the landowner retains ownership and full control of the property, yet conveys certain specified rights to the easement holder(s).

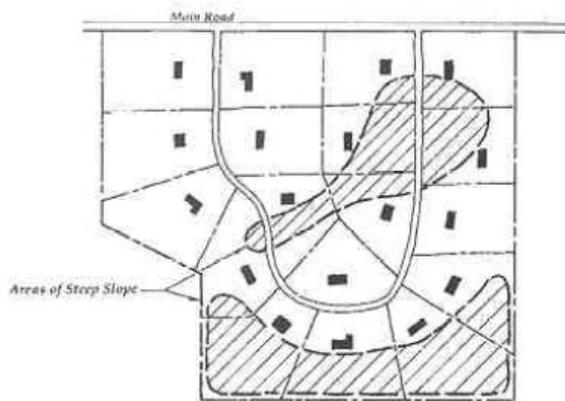


Specifically, the landowner agrees to restrict uses that would harm the riparian zone and works with the easement holder to develop a management plan to ensure riparian zone protection. Typically, this is done by establishing and maintaining vegetation and limiting livestock access to the stream. Each easement is tailored to the property and the desires of the individual landowner. Again, depending upon the

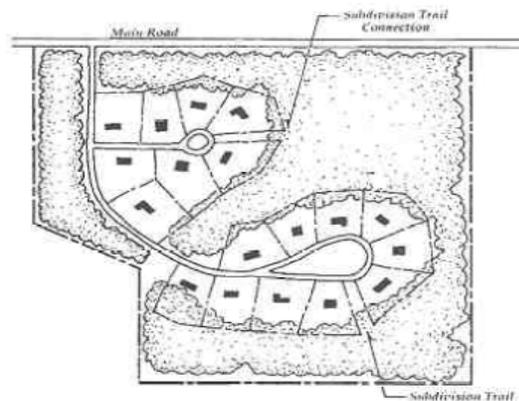
terms and timing of the riparian easement, significant tax savings can accrue to the property owner granting the easement.

Development on Ridge tops and Steep Slopes

Historically, the county has not regulated the placement of private roads, driveways or house sites. Due to the highly erodible nature of steep slopes and the potential difficulty of serving property accessed by steep driveways, it is prudent to establish guidelines for this type of activity. As a mountainous county, there is ample opportunity for our ridge tops to be denuded and built upon. Housing can be constructed on hill sides and mountains in a way that is not adverse or intrusive to our beautiful natural landscape. Steps should be taken now to ensure our views of higher elevations are not compromised. The County may wish to research and consider mountain/ridgeline protection ordinances. The ordinances should be applied to all lands identified as containing key/critical slopes, ridgelines, ridge areas, and those scenic viewsheds.



*Typical subdivision design disregarding environmental constraints and steep slopes. Source: Rural by Design*



*Subdivision with clustering provision which allows for open space and preservation of steep slopes, and ridgelines. Source: Rural by Design*

**Agricultural/Open Space Preservation**

Existing County development regulations and incentives have allowed a land use pattern characterized by considerable residential development in the rural portions of the County. The County should consider all of the growth management “tools” available to Virginia localities and should adopt additional regulations, programs, and incentives to promote future development consistent with this plan. The objective of these regulations and incentives is to encourage and promote environmentally sensitive development throughout the county and to encourage development within designated public facility areas, thus conserving the county’s rural agricultural areas, open spaces, and forested areas.

As Amherst County continues to experience residential, commercial and industrial growth, there will be continued pressure on the County’s agricultural, open space, and forested areas to be developed for these uses. Of similar concern are inappropriate patterns of development on environmentally sensitive lands, including steep sloped properties located at higher mountain elevations within the western portions of the County.

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

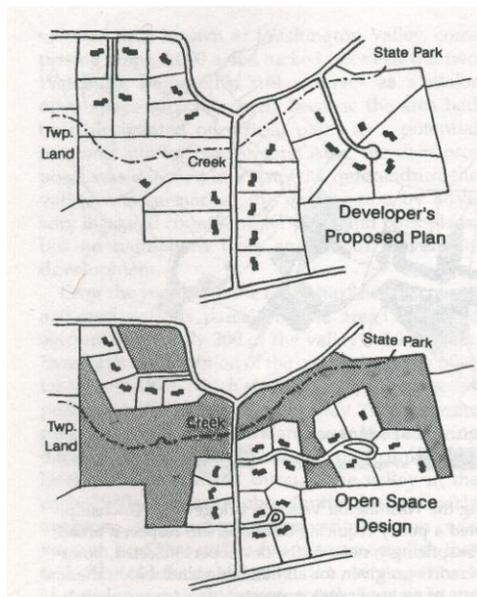
The land use map shows clearly the pattern of scattered rural residential development that has historically occurred in the County. Much of this development has been “by-right”-consistent with zoning and subdivision laws in effect at the time of development.

An Agricultural<sup>11</sup> district should delineate areas where production from the soil is the most important use of land. Like any production or industrial area, the noise level, odors, traffic patterns, and hours of operation are different that what is normal to a residential area. The Agricultural district should be structured to minimize the conflicts that occur between incompatible uses.

The future land use map and policies contained in this plan attempt to promote a compact development pattern that takes advantage of existing and proposed public facility areas - specifically those areas currently served by public water and sewer, or areas planned to be served by these facilities consistent with this plan and future updates to the Amherst County Service Authority Facility plans. This future land use map should be used as a general guide for future county development patterns and as a general guide for the location of new water and sewer service areas.

As Amherst County continues to grow, there will be attendant requests to rezone agricultural and forested areas to other use classifications or to allow higher residential densities in these areas. When these development requests occur, the economic and

quality of life benefits of agricultural and forested land uses should be considered, as well as the adequacy of public facilities and services in the area.



Source: Rural by Design

In developing this plan, the Planning Commission and CAC discussed the desirability of continuing the current patterns of unplanned rural residential development. It was the consensus of both groups that such development patterns should not be encouraged and should be discouraged through changes to the County’s development guidelines and through the adoption of programs and incentives designed to promote the conservation of rural and environmentally sensitive areas.

Zoning and subdivision standards, use value assessments and taxation, and public facility decisions are the tools now used by Amherst County to influence the timing and location of

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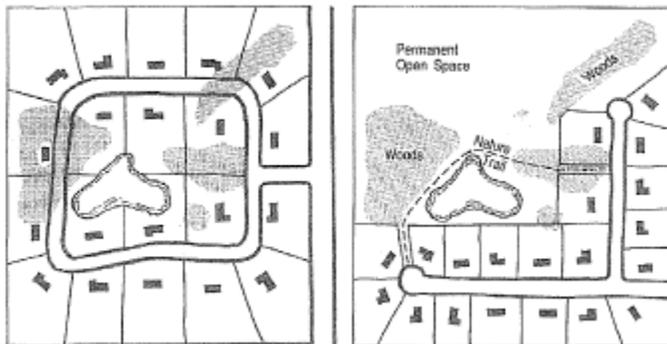
<sup>11</sup> Agriculture – The tilling of the soil, the raising of crops, horticulture, and gardening, including the keeping of animals and fowl, and including agricultural industry or business, such as dairies and similar uses.

growth. Additional regulatory approaches are available to Amherst County, if it wishes for zoning and subdivision standards to play a larger role in shaping future land use patterns.

In addition, voluntary tools and programs are available to agricultural and rural property owners who wish to take steps to preserve their land holdings while obtaining a desired rate of return on their equity. These programs are voluntary and generally involve a partnership between the landowner and a governmental agency. Brief discussions of several regulatory approaches and voluntary programs are presented below.

Rural Cluster Development

As the name implies, residential cluster developments “cluster” allowable residential units/densities into one portion of a development site, thereby permanently preserving portions of the site as open space. Typically 30-50 percent of a cluster development site remains undeveloped. In a cluster development, the density allowed by the underlying zoning district is “transferred” to a portion of the site, allowing for a more compact development. In addition to environmental benefits, cluster development can also be a strategy to reduce development costs.



Source: Rural by Design

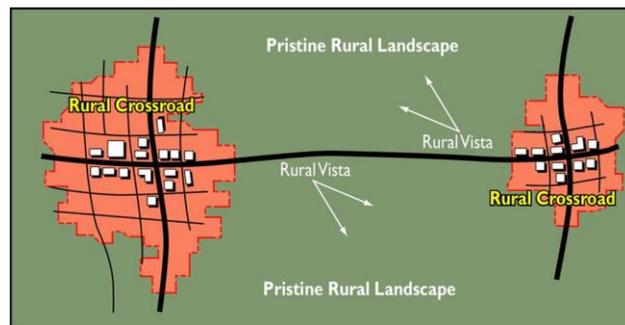
zoning district is “transferred” to a portion of the site, allowing for a more compact development. In addition to environmental benefits, cluster development can also be a strategy to reduce development costs.

Cluster provisions can be added to a zoning ordinance as a development option or as a requirement for subdivision in

some rural areas. Although mandatory provisions are more effective in preserving open space, voluntary options are more prevalent in Virginia jurisdictions.

Village Centers and Rural Commercial Nodes

Rural residents of the County benefit from having convenient access to commercial services. Some rural cross-road areas of Amherst County are appropriate locations for higher density housing and associated rural commercial development. These “Village Center” areas, if appropriately designed and served by adequate public facilities, can both contribute to meeting the County’s housing and commercial service needs. The County, through designation of village centers, can promote the development of village center areas and rural commercial nodes.



*Clustering development together assist in preserving rural vistas and promotes an efficient development pattern. Source: Dover Kohl and Partners*

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Certain areas within the rural portions of the County, as shown on the future land use map contained in this Chapter, may be suitable for small scale village center areas and associated rural oriented commercial uses. Commercial uses within these “nodes” would meet the commercial and service needs of residents in the immediate area, and would generally not provide goods and services to a larger Amherst or regional community.

The following principles are used as a guide to the development and application of such regulations:

- Village centers areas should be located in areas with adequate access and public facilities.
- Allowable densities should be compatible with existing surrounding communities and not place a burden on public services and/or facilities.
- Commercial developments that are small in scale and rural in character may be an appropriate component of a village center area and may be appropriate at certain rural commercial nodes as shown on the future land use map. Building sizes should be limited, as should the size of parking lots. Architectural designs should reflect the surrounding natural and rural environment.
- Such commercial uses should provide goods and services designed to meet the immediate needs of surrounding rural residents.
- Signage at such facilities should be minimal. National branding, through signage or building design, is discouraged as incompatible with the rural area. Signage should not be backlit.
- Rural commercial uses should contain significant landscaping and should have minimal lighting except for security purposes.

Access to rural commercial properties must be strictly controlled for safety and traffic flow purposes.

### Time Release Subdivisions

Time release subdivisions are a mandatory tool used to slow down the rate of growth and the number of new residential building lots in the rural areas of a jurisdiction. Under this approach, rural property owners are limited in the number of new lot divisions that can be created from a parcel during a specified period of time. For example, a property owner may only be allowed up to four divisions per parcel over a ten year period. This approach allows property owners some return on their land equity, limits development in rural areas, and channels a community’s development demand to designated growth areas.

### Agricultural and Forestal Districts

Agricultural/forestal districts are rural zones reserved for the production of agricultural and forestry products. At the request of a property owner, they are established by a local governing body according to state guidelines. In essence, a district constitutes a voluntary agreement between a landowner and the government that no new, nonagricultural uses will take place in the district. An agricultural/forestal district provides much stronger protection for farmers and farmland than does traditional zoning. Districts are established for a set period of time and can be renewed. During the life of a district, a landowner is prohibited from subdividing or developing the land for nonagricultural or forest uses. Similarly, a local governing body is prohibited from rezoning land in a district to a nonagricultural classification or from making capital or community facility decisions that endanger the landowner's ability to maintain the land for agriculture or forestry use.

Amherst County's adoption of a local agricultural and forestal district enabling ordinance would set the stage for future district applications and would increase the county's ability to be proactive in its rural land preservation efforts.

### Conservation Easements

Approximately 5,513<sup>12</sup> acres of land in Amherst County are protected by conservation easements. A conservation easement is a legal agreement in which a landowner retains ownership of his/her property while conveying certain specified rights to the easement holder. Conservation easements are usually given to a non-profit, charitable land conservation organization or a public entity. Easements can be tailored to meet the owner's wishes regarding the future use of his/her land. They can be for a specific time period or can be granted in perpetuity. Typically, a conservation easement restricts development or uses that would destroy natural, scenic, or historic areas while at the same time allowing other traditional uses such as farming.

Depending upon the terms and timing of the easement, significant tax savings can accrue to the property owner granting the easement.

### Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

This program is essentially the same as a conservation easement (previously described), except that the easement value (i.e. the development rights) are purchased from the landowner, rather than the landowner donating the easement and taking advantage of the tax benefits. Each landowner needs to determine whether selling an easement or donating one and taking advantage of the tax benefits better fits his/her financial situation.

This option has been used extensively in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and other states. Currently in Virginia, the City of Virginia Beach and Albemarle County have adopted local PDR programs. The funds for this program are typically generated by designating a small portion of an existing tax or by actual tax appropriation. The Commonwealth of

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<sup>12</sup> Virginia Outdoors Foundation, June 2012

## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

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Virginia has set aside funds for this purpose and may in the future dedicate a source of funding for PDRs.

### Sliding Scale Zoning

Sliding scale zoning limits the number of times that a parent parcel (a parcel existing on the date of ordinance adoption) can be split, based on its size, i.e., the larger the parcel the more splits that may occur, up to a maximum number established. A larger minimum parcel size is also established.

Unlike exclusive use zoning, sliding scale zoning allows some non-farm residential development without special land use or other reviews. Sliding scale zoning can be useful in agricultural areas where there are significant development pressures and land speculation. The use of sliding scale zoning is most effective in areas where a wide range of parcel sizes exist and non-farm residential development has already begun to occur.

Minimum and maximum building lot sizes can be used to encourage the location of non-farm development on less productive farmland and/or in areas where development is more concentrated to direct growth onto already fragmented land. The use of buffer areas is highly recommended to avoid land use conflicts between new residential development and agriculture fields. Since this method does permit some use of land for non-agricultural uses, it allows communities to more effectively avoid a claim that land has been "taken" without compensation<sup>13</sup>.

### Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The program is administered by the United States' Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Established in 1985, the CRP encourages farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas of grass and trees on land that needs protection from erosion, acts as windbreaks, improves water quality or provides food and habitat for wildlife. The farmers must enter into contracts with the CCC lasting between 10 and 15 years. In return, they receive annual rental payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost share assistance to establish this protective vegetation.

### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP is a voluntary initiative using state, federal, and nongovernmental funding to help solve environmental problems. The objective is to share costs and resources to address specific local environmental problems in designated target areas.

Specific financial incentives encourage farmers to enroll land in targeted areas in CREP contracts for designated environmental practices such as riparian buffers, grass filter strips, or wildlife habitat. Incentives can include cost-share assistance for establishing the designated practices, special rental rates, or one-time payments.

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<sup>13</sup> Sliding Scale Information from: Kalkaska County, MI. Website

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A landowner may establish both a CREP contract and a riparian easement on his/her property, reaping the benefits of both programs.

### Infill Development

One important objective of the proposed utility boundary is to encourage more compact infill development, which would allow the county to provide public utilities and services more efficiently. Other benefits of compact development include:

- Protection of productive agricultural land and open space;
- Greater opportunity for higher densities, mixed use developments;
- Redevelopment of existing commercial properties;
- Development of vacant and underutilized property; and
- Increased opportunity to accommodate affordable housing and provide diversity of housing types and choices.

There are two primary ways to foster more compact infill development. The first is to reinvest in existing neighborhoods in order to make them attractive places to live by introducing those amenities that are missing. The County must also become more proactive in code enforcement in deteriorating neighborhoods to prevent further decline. Attracting people back to the County's older neighborhoods will help to take some of the development pressure off undeveloped and rural land.

A second method to promote a more efficient development pattern is to encourage development within the proposed designated growth area that is predominantly around the Madison Heights and Town of Amherst area. A wide range of development models are available to encourage such development, such as cluster development, greenbelt, and traditional neighborhood development (TND). Cluster or open space development may be more appropriate in areas where there are sensitive environmental concerns such as floodplains, sinkholes, and steep slopes.

### Brownfield Sites

Brownfield sites also provide an opportunity for redevelopment. A brownfield site by definition is "developed real estate, generally in an urban setting, which is contaminated to some degree by years of use." These previously developed properties are generally within previously developed areas and have access to utilities. A brownfield site could



*Abandoned site in Madison Heights*

be as small as the vacant corner gas station that once held underground storage tanks or as large as a manufacturing facility that may have dumped wastes on its property.

There are, however, some challenges to redeveloping brownfield sites. Brownfield sites often include abandoned or dilapidated buildings on sites where the soils are contaminated or are perceived to be contaminated. The cost to clean up

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contaminated property can often be exorbitant a fact that might deter many investors from attempting to redevelop these properties. The properties then remain vacant, often become rundown, and become a detriment to the surrounding neighborhood.

There are many incentives programs offered by the federal government. For example, the Brownfield's Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) is a competitive grant program that Housing and Urban Development administers to stimulate and promote economic and community development. BEDI is designed to assist communities with the redevelopment of abandoned, idled, and underused industrial and commercial facilities. BEDI grant funds are primarily targeted for use with a particular emphasis upon the redevelopment of brownfield sites in economic development projects and the increase of economic opportunities for low and moderate income persons. The purposes of the BEDI program are to spur the return of brownfields to productive economic use through financial assistance to public entities in the redevelopment of brownfields and to improve the viability of a project financed with the Section 108 guaranteed loan authority.

In summary, Amherst County has significant opportunities to be more proactive in the realm of agricultural, open space, and rural land preservation. Specifically:

- The Planning Commission should annually monitor rural and mountain development patterns to determine the location of new development and the rates of growth in these areas.
- The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, through the recommendation and adoption of this plan, should state their commitment to preservation objectives.
- The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors should use the future land use map contained in this plan as a general guide for determining the desired location of new development.
- In evaluating development proposals, the Planning Commission and/or Board should consider the adequacy of existing or planned public services and facilities in the area and the impact the development will have on these services and facilities. If necessary facilities are planned, the timing of the planned new service or facility must be considered.
- The County should adopt voluntary or mandatory rural cluster provisions and consider subdivision ordinance amendments limiting the number of rural lots that can be created during a specified time period. The adoption of an exclusive agricultural zoning district should also be explored.
- The County should consider adopting sliding scale zoning to preserve open space, provide a method with greater flexibility than large lot zoning and reduce the density of development in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District.

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- Commercial and/or industrial developments that are approved in the rural portions of the County should be small in scale and of a design character that is consistent with a rural environment.
- The County should research the other preservation tools presented in this plan and be willing to provide information and administrative support to property owners who wish to pursue a particular preservation strategy. In this regard, the County should also explore issues associated with adopting a local PDR program, including possible sources of funding for such a program.
- The County should support the activities of local land trusts and the environmental organizations in their efforts to voluntarily preserve critical agricultural and open space areas in the County.
- The County should work closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Virginia Department of Forestry to insure that private timbering operations in the County are undertaken using approved techniques in an environmentally sensitive manner.

**FUTURE LAND USE**

The Future Land Use Map serves as a general guide for the future development of Amherst County. Both public and private sector decision makers may use this map. The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors can use this future land use map as one source of information when planning public facilities or evaluating land use requests. The map may also serve as a general guide for private investment, indicating the location and type of future desired development.

This map presents a generalized overview of desired land use locations within the County. The map is not intended to be parcel specific. Zoning categories are to be based on the general profiles developed on the map. The specific location of future land uses will be determined by the zoning ordinance and, when required by the zoning ordinance, Commission and Board review of specific land use requests. Such review will consider the compatibility and benefits of the use and the land use impacts of a specific use on the surrounding neighborhood and larger community.

Eleven future land use categories are shown on this map they are:

Public/National Forest

This category designates National Forest lands and public lands owned by the federal, state, and county government as being distinct from non-public properties.

Conservation/100 Year Floodplains

This category includes steeply sloped lands (> 25 percent), land protected with known conservation easements and floodplain areas. Future development in these areas should be prohibited or extremely limited.

Institutional

This category designates the location of major institutional sites in the county such as Sweet Briar College, Old Dominion Job Corps, and the Central Virginia Training Center.

Agricultural Limited

This category includes land areas in the rural portions of the County where agricultural<sup>14</sup> and forestry uses are the dominant land use. Large lot single-family development may exist within some of these areas.

Family divisions within the Agricultural Limited district shall be in accordance with the Code of Virginia guidelines for land divisions.

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<sup>14</sup> Definition of Agriculture (according to the Amherst County Zoning Ordinance, 2007) – The tilling of the soil, the raising of crops, horticulture, and gardening, including the keeping of animals and fowl, and including agricultural industry or business, such as dairies and similar uses.

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The conflicts between farming and rural non-farm development (residential) should be minimized as the needs of farming are acknowledged and non-farm development is accommodated as a subordinate use. When nonagricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas, farms often become the subject of nuisance suits. As a result, farmers are sometimes forced to cease operations. Many others are discouraged from making investments in farm improvements. In recognition of the farmer's "right to farm" without being restricted by neighboring residential areas, hours of operation of farm equipment restrictions on odor-producing fertilizers and other restrictions designed to limit the perceived negative impacts associated with reasonable farming practices should not be imposed on farming activities within the Agricultural District. The general intent of the Agricultural District is to encourage farming and maintain rural qualities in areas so designated in the County.

The Agricultural District as a component of the Comprehensive Plan is not limited to traditional farming; it extends to all aspects of the County's rural character. Agricultural land refers not only to tilled fields, but it refers also to open fields, pastures, and woodlands which are either prospects for additional farm acreage or are valuable for their many contributions to the environment and for their appearance. Agriculturally-related or support industries (farm implement dealers, supply services, storage and processing facilities, etc.) should be permitted within this district in recognition of the support they provide to the farming community.

Future development of these should consider the following factors:

- Larger tracts should be considered;
- Large subdivisions should require a traffic impact analysis per VDOT guidelines provided by the developer; and
- Divisions served by a private road not meeting VDOT requirements should be limited by the number of lots and number of acres per lot.

### Low Density Residential

This category includes areas where larger lot residential development is encouraged as a transition between the County's agricultural and medium density residential areas. These development areas generally have public water and lack public sewer; however, water lines should be encouraged to be extended within the designated growth boundary.

### Medium Density Residential

This category includes areas where suburban patterns of residential development have occurred and are encouraged to occur in the future. Although single family homes are the predominant land use in this category, higher density residential development such as duplexes and apartments may also be suitable. Allowable future densities in these areas should be based upon the availability and adequacy of public services and facilities and the compatibility of the proposed land use with surrounding properties. Public water and/or sewer typically serve or are planned for these areas. Most of these areas will be located in the southern portions of the County.

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Medium Density Residential areas consist of three sub-districts based on different types of structures and population densities designed to stabilize and protect the essential character of the sub-district. These districts should be developed as follows:

Future developments within the Medium Density Residential units should consider the following factors:

- Multi-family dwellings of five or more units must be supplied with public water and sewer;
- All developments consisting of five or more housing units should require access roads built to VDOT standards; and
- Developments may require a traffic impact analysis per VDOT guidelines.

### High Density Residential

This category includes areas where densities are increased with the availability of public water and sewer services. Single-family, multi-family, planned unit development, and townhouses are all permitted uses in this district. High density residential uses should be developed along roads that can handle adequately an increase in traffic and can accommodate more intensive uses. High density residential uses should also be encouraged to locate near public transit routes (ex. Greater Lynchburg Transit Company).

Future developments within the High Density Residential units should consider the following factors:

- All high density residential should be served with both water and sewer;
- All roads should be built to VDOT standards;
- Developments may require a traffic impact analysis per VDOT guidelines;
- All developments should provide for improved pedestrian accessibility; and
- Access to mass transit should be provided for all developments.

### Residential Mixed Use

This category designates areas that are densely populated with traditional neighborhood grid-like streets, where less intensive commercial activities can co-exist with surrounding residential uses. The intention of these areas is to allow development of mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, activity centers containing a variety of uses, including residential, supporting commercial, cultural, educational, and other public and private uses, while encouraging redevelopment and reinvestment in residential and supporting commercial areas. These areas are served by public sewer and water, and its design standards encourage the use and implementation of sidewalks, good lighting practices, and underground utilities.

Future developments within Residential Mixed Use areas should consider the following factors:

- Developments may require a traffic impact analysis per VDOT guidelines;
- All developments should provide for improved pedestrian accessibility;

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- Access to mass transit when available, should be provided for all developments;
- All new developments or expansions that increase the floor area by twenty (20) percent or greater must provide sidewalks that parallel the public street;
- Commercial developments will not be permitted to have any outdoor storage;
- Commercial developments will be subject to lighting standards.

The Residential Mixed Use District (RMU-1) comprises the land that is commonly referred to as “Old Town” Madison Heights which overlooks onto downtown Lynchburg, and its associated surrounding boundaries are: Route 163 to the west, Route 210 to the north, U.S. Route 29 Business to the east and the James River to the south.

### Mixed Use / Traditional Neighborhood Development

This category designates areas that are located within County’s designated Urban Development Area(s) (UDA), at least 40 acres in area, and served by public sewer and water, where projects feature a mix of land uses and building types closely linked by a network of streets, sidewalks, formal and informal open spaces, and trails. Projects and development will reflect the following characteristics:

1. Compact development with defined edges and a distinct neighborhood center.
2. Buildings and streets that are pedestrian- and public transit-oriented.
3. A mix of residential, commercial, civic, and open space uses located close to one another to reduce traffic congestion, travel demand and dependence on automobiles.
4. A mix of housing styles, types, and sizes to accommodate households of all ages, sizes and incomes.
5. A system of narrow, interconnected streets with sidewalks and bikeways.
6. Public transit as a viable alternative to the automobile by organizing appropriate building densities.
7. Preservation of significant environmental features and incorporation of such features into the design of new neighborhoods.
8. Design and development consistent with the County’s ~~County~~ Comprehensive Plan.

Additional information relating to Mixed Use / Traditional Neighborhood Development area(s) is given in: “Chapter VII: Urban Development Areas: Back to the Future”.

### Commercial

This category designates areas where commercial developments have occurred and where future urban suburban commercial developments have been encouraged. Commercial developments should be grouped in areas where extended business hours and high traffic volumes can be accommodated. Consideration should be given to limiting dark sky lighting effects, stormwater runoff, and the number of entrances and exits to state highways. Efforts should be made to maintain as much of the natural topography as

possible thereby limiting grading and fill requirements. Public water and sewer should be supplied for these areas wherever possible.

**Industrial**

The industrial land use category is designated to show those areas where major industrial activities exist and/or are planned. Industrial developments should be grouped in areas served by adequate highways and public utilities, when practical. In general, industrial structures (buildings, parking areas, etc.) should be separated from residential areas and schools by setbacks of a minimum of 200 feet. Structure heights should be approved by the Board of Supervisors. Consideration should be given to limiting dark sky lighting effects, stormwater runoff, noise, and maintenance of natural topography.



**LAND USE  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

To accommodate future population growth in a planned manner.

**Objective #1**

Adopt zoning and subdivision ordinance incentives and regulations necessary to implement the growth management policies contained in this plan.

**Strategies:**

Evaluate and amend the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances to require lower density residential development in the agriculturally zoned areas of the County in accordance with this plan. Consider using a development tool known as "sliding scale" to promote open space and preserve the agricultural district from densities that are currently permissible.

Adopt regulations that encourage development in the designated growth areas (areas served by public water and sewer) of the County.

Amend the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances to include provisions for cluster housing in appropriate areas of the County.

Evaluate all current zoning and subdivision ordinance standards and procedures and study the impact of such developments in the rural portions of the County.

Amend the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances to require the extension of public water and wastewater facilities to serve new development if the new development is within 2,000 feet of existing water and wastewater facilities and is within the County's and ACSA's designated water or wastewater growth area, as shown in this plan.

Amend the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances to include provisions for residential mixed use areas that promote convenient access to less intensive commercial services within and for appropriate existing and new traditional neighborhood developments that are not located within designated Urban Development Areas.

**Objective #2**

If funds are available, the County should develop an updated water and sewer master plan following each revision of the comprehensive plan.

**Strategies:**

Request that the public service authority retain consultant services to prepare an updated water and sewer master plan for Amherst County consistent with the growth objectives contained in this plan.

**Objective #3**

Allow and encourage appropriately scaled residential and commercial development to locate in Amherst County's "Village Center" communities.

**Strategies:**

Amend the county's official zoning ordinance to include standards for the development of the County's Village Center areas.

**Objective #4**

Plan, fund, and/or approve only those public capital improvements that are consistent with this plan.

**Strategies:**

On an annual basis, evaluate the County's six-year secondary road plan to ensure that all planned projects are consistent with this comprehensive plan.

Continue to prepare/update a five year capital improvement plan each year to identify and fund public capital improvement projects that are consistent with this plan.

**Goal #2**

To promote the preservation and use of open space and encourage viable agricultural and forest land uses to protect the County's natural beauty, rural character, wildlife habitats and water resources.

**Objective #1**

Identify key open spaces within the County.

**Strategies:**

Prepare an open space master plan based on the County's GIS conservation mapping system.

Determine criteria of attributes for desired open space such as minimum acreage, visibility, and aesthetic value.

**Objective #2**

Enhance public land access where funding may be available.

**Strategies:**

Develop more county lake recreational access points, through grant funding and user fees.

Expand James River access points.

Continue expansion of Percival Island bike trail connector and Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail.

Develop the old Southern Railway bed along Harris Creek into a hiking/biking trail.

Encourage volunteer effort coordination with National Forest Service for maintenance of trails and picnic areas.

**Objective #3**

Provide and/or support economic incentives to encourage the preservation of open space, agricultural, and forestall lands.

**Strategies:**

Continue and expand the use of the Use Value Assessment (land use tax) program in Amherst County.

Support agricultural and forestall district programs in Amherst County and promote its use to agricultural and forestall land owners.

Consider adopting a purchase of development rights (PDR) program for Amherst County based upon the model ordinance prepared by the Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services.

Support the conservation initiatives, such as the acquisition of conservation easements, of local conservation organizations.

Increase awareness of the Land Use Program and promote its use as a land preservation tool.

Consider adopting additional penalties for property taken out of the Land Use Program to help fund a purchase of development rights program.

To be cost effective, work with the Central Virginia Land Trust and the Virginia Outdoor Foundation due to their ability to leverage grant funding with modest local contributions.

**Objective #4**

Increase available funding for open space and agricultural land conservation initiatives.

**Strategies:**

Request that the General Assembly continue the land conservation fund and increase the funding for this program.

Consider including funding in the County's annual budget for the implementation of a purchase of development rights program.

Explore the use of dedicated local revenue sources such as Land Use Program rollback taxes as source of funding for a purchase of development rights program.

**Objective #5**

Initiate/support public education programs on conservation and low impact development techniques.

**Strategies:**

Work with the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District and Central Virginia Land Conservancy to design and offer at least one conservation seminar per year on topics such as best management practices, conservation easements, and low impact site design.

**Objective #6**

Enhance existing and explore new conservation programs.

**Strategies:**

Place additional emphasis on obtaining private, state, and federal grants for conservation efforts.

Consider additional funding for R.E. Lee S&WC District.

**Objective #7**

Promote retention of agricultural and forest land use in the County.

**Strategies:**

Maintain support for the Extension Service.

Encourage and promote existing rural entrepreneurial businesses.

Maintain agricultural education as part of the high school curriculum.

Encourage and establish programs for the mentoring of next generation farmers.

**Goal #3**

Minimize the negative environmental impacts of new and existing residential, commercial, and industrial development.

**Objective #1**

Promote environmentally sensitive stormwater management through the use of BMP's, low impact development, and other techniques.

**Strategies:**

Consider requiring the use of low impact development techniques in the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances.

Adopt mandatory low impact development standards for the County's Watershed Protection Districts and other environmentally sensitive areas. Also establish zoning and subdivision ordinance incentives for the use of these techniques in other portions of the County.

Adopt available models to design a low impact manual for Amherst County use.

**Objective #2**

Ensure that all new development not served by public water and sewer has adequate potable water and wastewater facilities.

**Strategies:**

Maintain County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance requiring all new private septic systems have a suitable, reserve drain-field space. Ensure that both are shown on the subdivision plat.

Amend the County's Code to require that private wells in new development be permitted, constructed, and approved by the Department of Health prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Implement a public education program on septic system ownership. This program should include the distribution of a septic system operation and maintenance flyer with every building permit where the structure is not served by public sewers. Also capitalize on other appropriate flyer distribution opportunities.

Consider requiring all subdivisions to meet the same soil evaluation standards for on-site wastewater systems and requirements of the watershed protection ordinance when located within those overlay districts.

**Objective #3**

Protect the County's water and air resources from degradation.

**Strategies:**

Locate new industries on the basis of the impact of their waste discharge and storm runoff on local waterways.

Target new businesses with a record of environmental sensitivity.

Consider a county riparian buffer program for waterways.

Cooperate with the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District in a voluntary riparian buffer easement program.

Rely upon and support the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's ambient air quality standards.

Prohibit development in river and stream corridors, especially floodplains (100 year) and wetlands.

Encourage agricultural compliance with Chesapeake Bay protection guidelines by extending or expanding financial incentives.

**Goal #5**

To protect our scenic view sheds.

**Objective #1**

Preserve the night sky. Work with local electric companies to begin installing neighbor-friendly, shielded fixtures and retrofit existing fixtures with shields.

**Strategies:**

Consider the adoption of zoning ordinance standards that limit the impact of site lighting for new or expanded construction.

**Objective #2**

Preserve and enhance scenic corridors.

**Strategies:**

Identify gateways to the county and scenic corridors, and apply special zoning and littering controls including increased fines for littering.

Provide and enforce regulations limiting placement of abandoned vehicles, household items, etc. in view of public rights-of-way.

**Objective #3**

Encourage the protection of steep slopes and ridgelines.

**Strategies:**

The County may wish to research and consider establishing a mountain/ridgeline protection ordinance and enforce guidelines for building lots and access roads to new developments.

**CHAPTER VII: URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS: BACK TO THE FUTURE**

One legacy of the planning and zoning practice across much of the United States post World War II has been to promote a segregation of land uses into discrete and uniform residential, commercial, and industrial categories. The initial intent, to protect public health and welfare by removing noxious influences from residential areas, was valid. However, the result has been to segregate uses in suburban areas to such an extent as to create a total reliance on automobile travel for activities which formerly were located within convenient walking distance in older, more mixed-use urban settings. Such settings remain in cities and towns across Virginia, their familiar development patterns should be encouraged in suburban areas as well, by promoting mixed use forms. As Amherst County moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, four forms of mixed-use are encouraged and recommended as follows:

- The first type includes single buildings, or clusters of connected buildings, which incorporate two or more complimentary uses, as in the placement of offices or apartments above ground-floor retail businesses, a pattern common in many Virginia downtowns.
- The second type comprises areas where one well established use predominates, but where well placed complimentary uses are appropriate. Examples include residential areas within which neighborhood churches, schools, and corner stores can all be accommodated.
- The third type consists of centers with mixes of uses and activities that act as multi-purpose destinations. These centers are characterized by shared parking and strong pedestrian linkages, where a variety of activities such as shopping, dining and entertainment can be accommodated by a single trip. The introduction of housing into such mixed use centers has become a common feature in many parts of Virginia.
- The fourth type comprises large scale planned developments designed to integrate a variety of complimentary uses. Examples include traditional neighborhood developments (“TND’s”) which simulate urban settings with a compact, walkable mix of varied housing types, as well as neighborhood shops, services, and other amenities. Likewise, office parks and employment centers incorporating complementary activities such as restaurants, recreation, health clubs, day care and other services to meet daily needs of workers and visitors are included in the category of planned mixed-use developments.

All of these forms represent substantial opportunities to promote a more diversified, sustainable pattern of land uses and activities in Amherst County. They are suitable both in urban areas in need of reinvestment and in suburban or fringe areas, where they provide a sustainable alternative and antidote to sprawl. Mixed use development, when properly planned and located, can help reduce auto trips, promote a more walkable environment and help expand the supply of higher density, affordable housing near employment and activity centers.

### **Designated Growth Areas**

As noted in Chapter V of this Plan, when a community decides to reduce the amount of development that can occur in areas that are desired to remain rural, it is prudent to balance that with areas intended to accept development. Chapter V recommends Designated Growth Areas consisting of existing and planned public utilities, services and facilities within Amherst County. The Plan anticipates directing future growth toward these areas in an effort to create population and service hubs for the County, providing attractive places to live and work. By the same token, directing growth toward Designated Growth Areas will retain a majority of the County as primarily rural, offering alternative lifestyles and maintaining agriculture and forestry as a way of life.

Within the Designated Growth Areas, it is anticipated that all public spaces in residential areas become increasingly pedestrian friendly through a variety of measures promoted by Amherst County and in collaboration with other governmental agencies and the private sector. These may include the construction, improvement and maintenance of public squares, parks and pedestrian connections, and the attention to street design details such as landscaping, lighting, and provision of attractive street furniture. Residential, office, civic, and commercial areas in the Designated Growth Areas should have convenient access by foot and bicycle. Additional effort should be expended to ensure that mixed use development is featured as the preferred land use pattern in the Designated Growth Areas.

Incentives are the primary mechanism for directing growth toward the Designated Growth Areas. Incentives can include placemaking amenities such as street lighting, landscaping, street furniture, sidewalks, and trails that are provided at public expense within these areas alone. Such amenities would be in addition to the provision of community facilities and services such as water and sewer, schools and libraries. In addition to the provision of placemaking amenities, Amherst County will continue to provide timely review of development applications within the Designated Growth Areas, including both the Residential Mixed Use District (RMU-1) and the Urban Development Area (UDA).

### **Urban Development Area Generally**

In 2007 the Virginia General Assembly embraced the philosophy of balancing urban and rural areas by adding Section 15.2-2223.1 to the Code of Virginia requiring high growth counties (localities with a population at least 20,000 and a growth rate of 5 percent or more between the most recent decennial censuses), including Amherst County at the time, to designate Urban Development Areas in their comprehensive plans by July 1, 2011. As defined by the Code of Virginia, Urban Development Area means an area that is (i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development.

When 2010 census data became available, Amherst County determined that it was no longer required to comply with the statute due to a drop in its growth rate; however, the

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appointed and elected officials of the County recognize that positive benefits can be realized by encouraging a more compact growth pattern and by permitting innovative planning and zoning techniques within certain areas. Therefore the County has elected to designate an Urban Development Area within the already defined Designated Growth Area that provides for the following:

1. Development of up to four single-family residences, or six townhouses, or 12 apartments or condominium units per developable acre, and a floor area ratio of up to 0.4 per developable acre for commercial development, or any proportional combination thereof.
2. An area sufficient in size to meet projected residential and commercial growth for at least 10 but not more than 20 years; development may be phased over the 20 year period.
3. Development that promotes the principles of traditional neighborhood design principles, including but not limited to (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections is encouraged within the UDA, in accordance with the zoning ordinance.
4. Direction of federal, state and local transportation, housing, water and sewer facility, economic development, and other public infrastructure funding for new and expanded facilities to the UDA, to the extent possible.
5. Reexamination and, if necessary, revision of the size and boundaries of the UDA every five years, in conjunction with the review of this Comprehensive Plan and in accordance with the most recent available population growth estimates and projections.
6. Continued cooperation and consultation between Amherst County and Region 2000 partner localities to promote orderly and efficient development within the region.

The area designated as a UDA consists of vacant land fronting on Route 29 Business, as shown on the County's future land use map. The area is located within the County's Designated Growth Area, in proximity to major transportation corridors and has access to public water, sewer and line electric utilities. Financial and other incentives for development within the UDA are outlined in the Plan and provided as part of Amherst County's timely review of development applications within Designated Growth Areas.

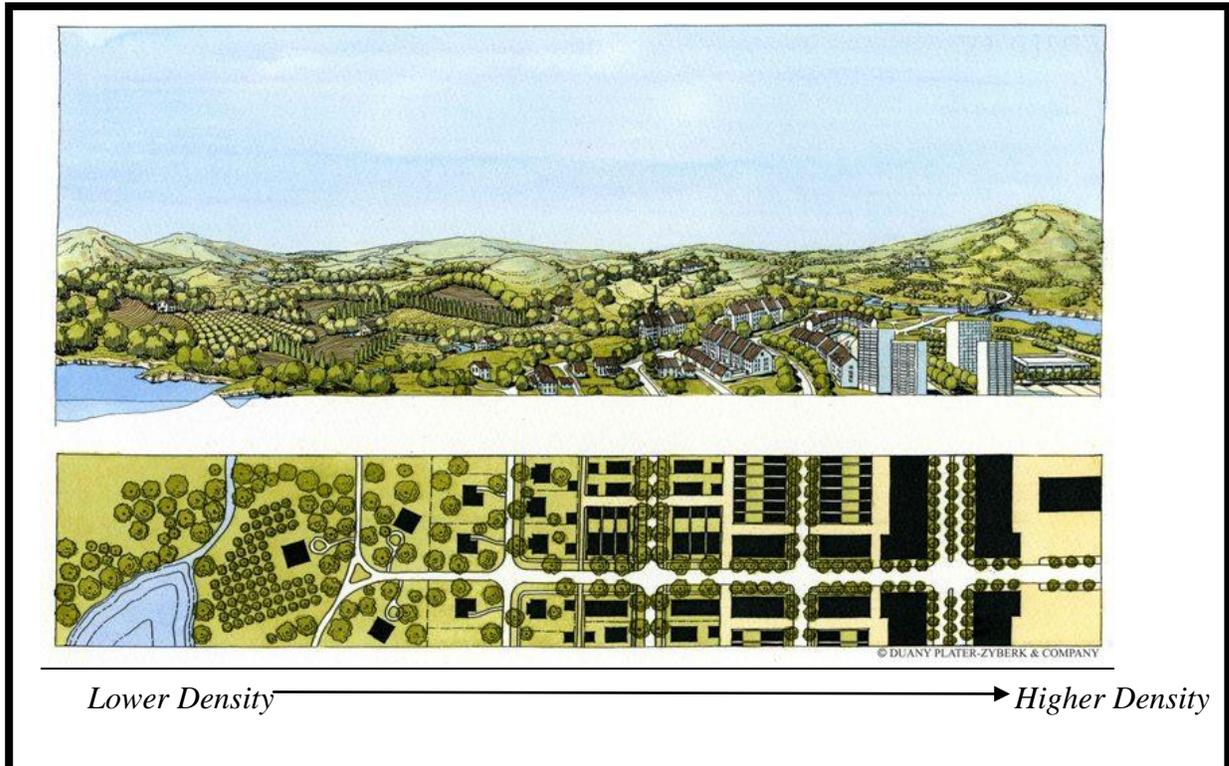
### **UDA Policies**

Amherst County has elected to designate an Urban Development Area (UDA) to serve as a focal point for growth over the next 10-20 years. Development within the UDA is encouraged to be compact and designed to accommodate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. It is anticipated that traditional neighborhood design and conservation design principles

will be featured along with a full complement of services and amenities. Provision for transit facilities or stops is also anticipated as density increases. The corresponding UDA land use category is expected to accommodate the following densities: up to four single-family residences, or six townhouses, or 12 apartments or condominium units per developable acre, and a floor area ratio of up to 0.4 per developable acre for commercial development, or any proportional combination thereof. Within the UDA, design standards incorporating the principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development are encouraged through the use of the corresponding TND zoning district. Other applicable UDA policies are as follows:

1. Development within the UDA should function as a mixed use activity center with medium scale office, retail, service and civic uses, with higher density housing in the core. Development within the UDA should generally consist of a minimum of 2 story and a maximum of 3 story buildings with minimal views of parking areas from the street.
2. Overall densities in the UDA should be village-like in terms of scale and intensity, with a mixture of high density mixed use development ranging from single family attached and multi-family residential units and 0.4 commercial floor area ratio (FAR) at the core, or most intense portion of the development, and single family detached to small lot single family detached residential units and 0.25 commercial FAR at the edges. The sought-after effect being one of a “transect” illustrated below, or a transition away from the taller, denser core area toward a lower density development pattern at the fringe that is compatible with surrounding development.

***Figure 12: The Transect***

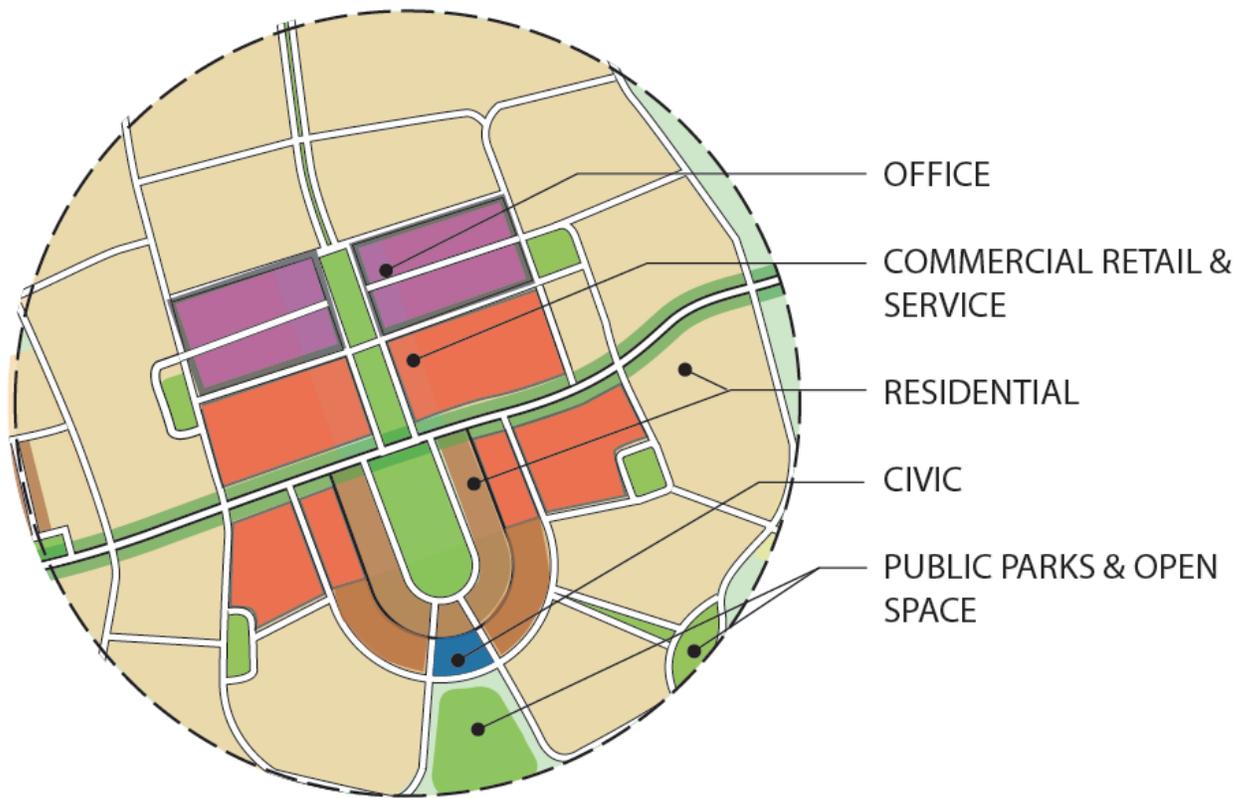


## Amherst County Comprehensive Plan

3. Development within the Urban Development Area is intended to be efficient, compact, mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented with a range of residential densities, providing active, passive, and natural open space that is fully integrated into the County's rural areas through a network of connected trails and walkways.
4. The Urban Development Area will provide for a mix of land uses including dwellings, commercial and office uses, personal and household service establishments, institutional uses, public facilities, parks, playgrounds and other similar uses meeting the needs of the adjoining neighborhoods.
5. The land use mix (measured as a percentage of the land area) in the Urban Development Area should generally reflect the ratios described in the table and illustration below:

<b>Table 29: Land Use Type</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
a. Residential	25%	40%
b. Commercial Retail & Services	20%	45%
c. Office	10%	25%
d. Civic Uses	10%	No Maximum
e. Public Parks & Open Spaces	10%	No Maximum

**Figure 13: Land Use Type Illustration**



**Example of Mixed Uses in a UDA**

The development of Urban Development Areas should be phased to achieve acceptable levels of transportation service through the available mix of transportation modes. An overall concept plan should be developed so the interrelationship of its parts (residential, commercial, office, civic, public open space, and transportation network) can be evaluated.

**URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**Goal #1**

Concentrate housing, commerce and public facilities in a mixed-use pattern within designated urban development areas.

**Objective #1**

Encourage higher density and alternative housing types with Urban Development Areas.

**Strategies:**

Designate an area of vacant land fronting on Route 29 Business as the County's Urban Development Area.

Consider designating other areas within the County's designated growth area as UDA's.

Develop a new zoning district for the UDA featuring traditional neighborhood design principles that will allow:

- a. Mixed-use neighborhoods including mixed housing types and values accommodating all residents and workers in the County;
- b. Integration of residential, retail, office and commercial development with public spaces and open spaces;
- c. A built environment that encourages and accommodates people living, shopping, visiting, and enjoying time in the UDA;
- d. Development densities that improve rates of walking, bicycling and transit use;
- e. Proximity to public infrastructure including utilities, services, parks and similar facilities;
- f. Bicycle and pedestrian-friendly street and road design;
- g. Interconnection of new streets with existing local streets and roads in a logical network;
- h. Design features that accommodate and prepare for an aging population within the County;
- i. Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas;

- j. Opportunities to redevelop existing underutilized and previously developed land;
- k. Satisfaction of requirements for stormwater management through the use of low impact techniques such as bioretention areas, rain gardens, gravel wetlands, and pervious pavements;
- l. Vehicular parking accommodated without dominating the streetscape or landscape;
- m. Reduced front and side yard building setbacks; and,
- n. Narrowed street widths and shorter turning radii at street intersections, in accordance with VDOT Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements (SSAR) standards.

**Objective #2**

Encourage a mixture of uses within the UDA in a pedestrian-oriented and pedestrian-friendly manner.

**Strategies:**

Develop a small area plan for the UDA that focuses on design, arrangement, and infrastructure while maximizing flexibility of uses.

Develop a mixed use zoning classification which incorporates flexible land use guidelines, allowing residential densities of 4 dwelling units per acre or greater and commercial floor area ratios up to 0.4 per acre, with specific performance standards in the areas of:

- a. Access management
- b. Shared parking
- c. Landscaping
- d. Architecture and Urban Design
- e. Pedestrian and bicycle access
- f. Low impact stormwater management

Ensure the UDA promotes pedestrian activity by:

- a. Making automobile related uses compatible with pedestrian activity
- b. Creating on-street parking
- c. Placing structures such that parking areas are located to the rear of structures
- d. Providing accommodations so that the area between buildings and the street be used for outdoor dining for cafes and restaurants and other, similar pedestrian and public oriented uses

Within all or along access ways of significance, allow any combination of residential, office, and retail structures and use within the same structure, provided the structure meets design and building code requirements.

**Objective #3**

Arrange land use designations so that the UDA witnesses distinct and discernable boundaries and creates a sense of place.

**Strategies:**

Utilize the existing transportation network and landforms as the basis for developing the UDA boundary.

Promote infill development, including higher density development, within the UDA.

Encourage the reuse of existing structures where appropriate.

**Objective #4**

Manage transportation impacts from development in the UDA by controlling the number and location of entrances onto primary roadways and incorporating multi-modal transportation elements in the planning of new development in the UDA.

**Strategies:**

Work with VDOT and potential developers in the UDA to develop an access management plan and policies for the business portion of US 29 through the UDA to ensure the proper spacing of entrances, traffic signals and median openings.

Encourage shared access and entries to reduce the number of entries onto primary roadways and improve safety in the area.

Encourage the development of a connected network of local streets to distribute trips and separate local from through traffic in the area.

Promote interconnectivity and vehicular and pedestrian circulation between adjoining properties.

Locate entrances a safe distance from traffic signals and encourage the multiple use of traffic signals by adjoining properties and businesses.

Properly evaluate rezoning and site plan proposals to analyze and mitigate the impacts of transportation in the area.

Review subdivision plats to ensure that potential businesses can have sufficient separation and meet sight distance requirements when fronting on highways.

Encourage the provision of facilities that allow multi-modal options for travelers, such as bike lanes, sidewalks and trails and transit stops.

Require, when feasible, traffic impact analyses from developers proposing new development in the UDA.

Periodically review these strategies in light of new development and changing traffic conditions to ensure they are effective.