

2023



AMHERST

Perfect Slice of Virginia

# Planning Commission Annual Report

AMHERST COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION

TELE: (434) 946-9303 | Address: 153 Washington Street, Amherst, VA 24521

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# Planning Commission

The duties and functions of the Amherst County Planning Commission are to promote the orderly development of the County and its environment. The Commission serves primarily in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in which it is their goal to provide specific measurable, reasonable, and timely information, advice recommendations and reports on matters within the Community.

The commission consists of seven (7) members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Five (5) members are drawn from the five (5) election districts, with one more member being drawn from any of the election districts (at-large member). The last member is a non-voting, board of supervisor that serves as a liaison to the board. The Planning Commission meets every third Thursday of each month.



## Commission Members

Member	Email	District
<b>Beverly C. Jones</b>	<a href="mailto:bcjones@countyofamherst.com">bcjones@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 5
<b>Derin S. Foor</b>	<a href="mailto:dsfoor@countyofamherst.com">dsfoor@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 1
<b>Jim D. Thompson</b>	<a href="mailto:jdthompson@countyofamherst.com">jdthompson@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 3
<b>Michael D. Bryant</b>	<a href="mailto:mdbryant@countyofamherst.com">mdbryant@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 4
<b>Michael K. Martineau</b>	<a href="mailto:mkmartineau@countyofamherst.com">mkmartineau@countyofamherst.com</a>	At-Large
<b>Catherine L. Gamble</b>	<a href="mailto:clgamble@countyofamherst.com">clgamble@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 2
<b>David Pugh (Board Liaison)</b>	<a href="mailto:dwpugh@countyofamherst.com">dwpugh@countyofamherst.com</a>	District 4

## Staff

2023 was a year of transition for the Division of Planning & Zoning. Former Director of Community Development, Jeremy Bryant, served as Interim County Administrator prior to becoming the new County Administrator. Tyler Creasy, previous Assistant Zoning Administrator, and Nate Young, Building Official, served as Interim Co-Directors of Community Development during the transition. The role of Director of Community Development and Zoning Administrator was filled by Tyler Creasy. Stacey Stinnett, Administrative Assistant, continues to be a huge asset to the department and both Stacey and Tyler have gone above and beyond to fill the needs of the department during the staff transitions. Sarah Nichols joined the team as the new Assistant Zoning Administrator, bringing with her 20 years of experience from the Amherst County Health Department. We are happy to now be fully staffed in the Planning and Zoning Department.

# Route 29 Business Beautification Committee

Amherst County's Route 29 Business Beautification Committee was created in 2016 as an advisory committee to the Planning Commission. Before the creation of the Committee, the business corridor was viewed as unattractive and unmaintained. Therefore, the Committee's purpose was to beautify Amherst County's roadways to instill pride and appreciation of the citizenry and the attractiveness of their community. Since the committee's creation, partnerships between numerous organizations have been created to advocate for the revitalization and upkeep of the Route 29 Business corridor. These partnerships have led to supplementary landscaping, blight removal, coordination efforts between local, state, and private entities, and business incentive programs. The committee continues facilitating an attractive and highly functioning corridor through these initiatives.

## Route 29 Business Beautification Committee Receives Achievement Award



The Route 29 Business Beautification Committee received the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award. The awards program recognizes local government programs that show innovation, cooperation, and model practices. VACo received 135 submissions to be considered for the 2023 awards, and only 33 programs received recognition. A representative from VACo presented the award to the Committee at the September 5, 2023, Board of Supervisors meeting.

## A+ Improvement Award

The A+ Improvement Award is bestowed periodically to companies within the Route 29 Business Corridor that exhibit excellence in highlighting the appearance of their business and share in the committee's vision of creating beauty in Amherst County.

2023 A+ Improvement Award Recipients:

- Motor World
- Cascio and Sons Construction
- Salon Twenty-One



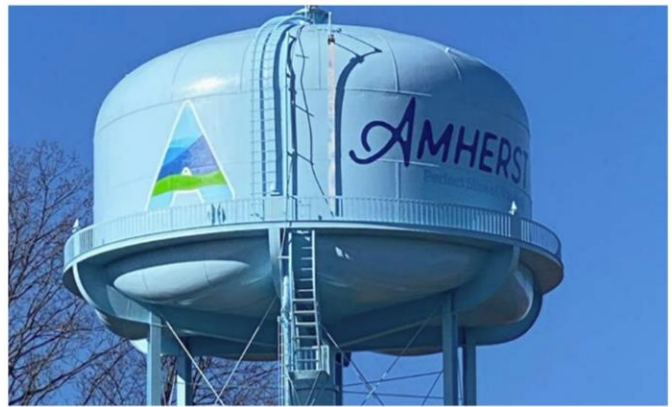


## Targeted Clean Up Effort Along Route 29 Business Corridor and New Liaison Staff Member

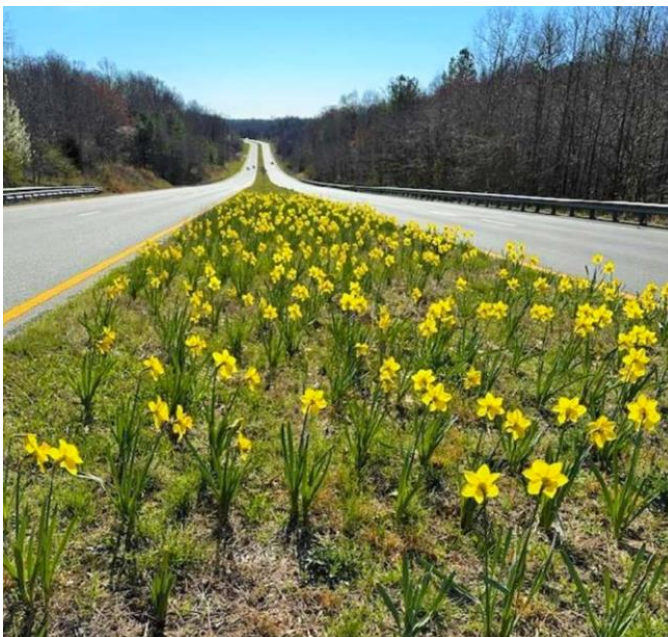
The Board of Supervisors approved the addition of a Route 29 Corridor Liaison-Ground Technician to County Staff. This individual started in July and is part of the Public Works Department. A targeted clean-up effort along the Route 29 Business Corridor began mid-September to improve the appearance of the Corridor and connecting routes in Madison Heights. Since September, over 53,100 pounds of refuse, dirt, and litter have been removed from the ground near stop lights, medians, and roadsides. The team has also cut grass, cleared out overgrown brush, and pulled weeds.

## Water Tower Branding

A joint effort between the Economic Development Authority, the Amherst County Service Authority, and the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee provided for County Branding to be placed on the Madison Heights water tower located near Lyttleton Lane. The Amherst “A” and the County’s slogan “A perfect slice of Virginia” can be seen on the freshly painted water tower from Route 29 Business.



## Daffodil Planting



Many beautiful blooms from the 2,000 bulbs planted by Amherst County Staff in November 2022 were enjoyed in the Spring of 2023. The plantings were increased by an additional 2,000 daffodil bulbs planted in November of 2023. The flowers were planted in the grass medians on the 210 and 130 connectors. The project was a group effort among Community Development, Public Works, the EDA, the Amherst County Sheriff's Department, the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee, and the Virginia Department of Transportation. The project was funded by the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee, who serve under the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

# Madison Heights Conceptual Master Plan 2023

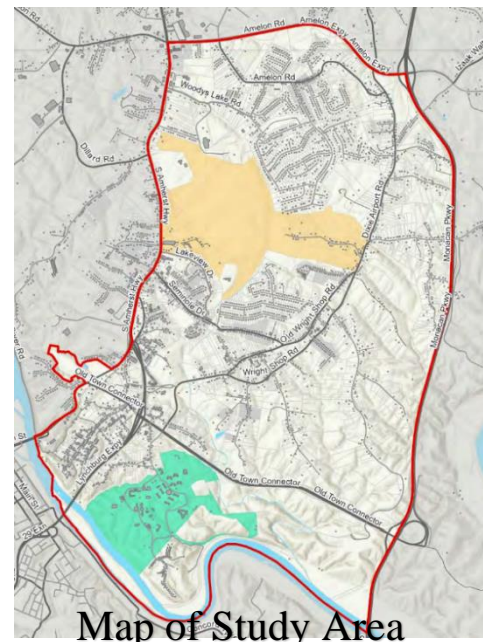
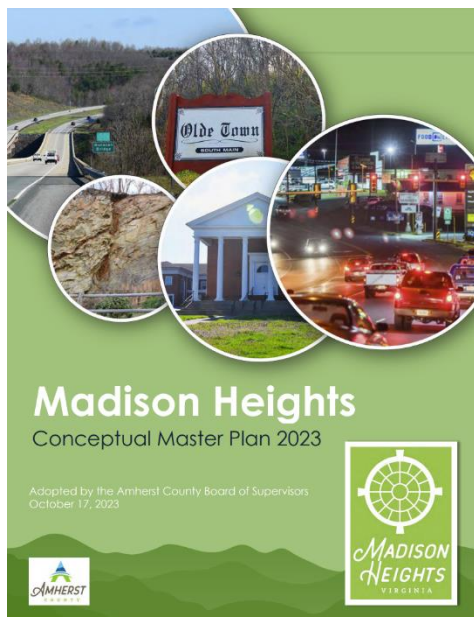
In December 2021, Amherst County initiated the Madison Heights Conceptual Master Plan process to define a vision for the future of the critical Madison Heights area of the County. With this plan, the County aims to create a blueprint for Madison Heights that guides future public investment and private development in ways that contribute to a successful and prosperous community.

In conducting this planning exercise, Amherst County planners and administrators worked with a team of consultants led by EPR (land use and transportation planning), along with RKG (economics), LPDA (landscape architecture), and Hurt & Proffitt (utilities). This team worked closely with an Advisory Committee of local staff and leaders, as well as residents, business owners, service providers, and many more, to understand the conditions, needs, concerns, and desires of the Madison Heights community.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to influence the future growth of the Madison Heights area to:

- Reinforce a sense of local community,
- Improve the area's overall quality of life,
- Plan for necessary expansion of public facilities and services, and
- Increase positive economic development.

The plan was adopted by the Amherst County Board of Supervisors October 17, 2023 and can be viewed [here](#).



## Major Developments

The Amherst County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors voted on several large developments in 2023. Two large subdivisions, Abbott Estates with 20 lots, and Kentmoor Acres with 17 lots, were reviewed by the Commission. In addition, a rezoning for a 128 unit townhome development at the corner of Dillard Road and South Amherst Highway was approved by the Commission. Conceptual plans for this development can be found in Appendix B. A workshop on solar farms was held and a new solar ordinance will be proposed in 2024.

## Comprehensive Plan

The Board of Supervisors approved the update to the 2007-2027 Amherst County Comprehensive Plan. The update included the incorporation of the Madison Heights Conceptual Master Plan as Appendix B.

## Utility-Scale Solar Workshop

The Planning Commission held a workshop in August of 2023 to discuss changes to the utility-scale solar ordinance. The workshop included a comprehensive review of the existing ordinance, as well as changes relating to vegetative buffers, size under panels, third-party inspections, and an emergency response plan. The Commission expects to pass an ordinance regarding these changes in 2024.

## Ordinances

Ordinances can be searched and viewed on the Amherst County website [here](#).

### MU/TND Code Changes

Ordinance 2023-04 and 2023-11 brought modifications to the Mixed Use / Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District in regards to setback regulations, increase in density, lot size requirements, and development standards (i.e., lighting, sidewalks, etc.)

### Erosion and Sediment Control Enforcement

Ordinance 2023-03 updated the County's code regarding erosion and sediment control enforcement to clarify that the county attorney shall take legal action at the county's request and the terms of violations.

## Requesting Withdrawal of Public Hearing

A change in the zoning ordinance that allows the applicant to withdraw a special exception or rezoning proposal only after it has been advertised and all costs have been paid by the applicant. This change does not allow an applicant to request an item to go back to the Planning Commission after it has already been advertised to the Board of Supervisors.

## Revenue Sharing Solar

Ordinance 2023-06 provided a code change to allow for taxing of utility-scale solar farms through a revenue share program.

## Recreation Dwellings and Requirements for Family Divisions

A code change to allow for recreational dwellings as a permitted use in the A-1 Agricultural Residential district and a code change to allow for a spouse to be the grantee of a family division subdivision.

# Subdivisions and Zoning Permits

The Amherst County Planning and Zoning Department reviewed and or issued over 600 zoning and or subdivision approvals in 2023. For this report, zoning permits consist of: single / multi-family dwellings (single/double-wide, modular and stick-built), accessory structures (deck, agricultural building, carport/garage, pools, and sheds), camping, site plan, special exception, rezoning / conditional zoning, erosion and sediment control plan, land disturbance, wireless cell tower, home occupations, short-term tourist rental, business licenses, addition/expansion, mixed-use, variances, and sign reviews and or approvals. Subdivisions consist of resurveys, family divisions, reconfigurations, subdivisions reviewed/approved by staff, and subdivisions reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission.

A complete break of all reviewed and or approved permits can be found in Appendix A.

## Single-Family Dwellings

Single-family dwelling zoning permits continued to stay steady as in has in recent years. The table below illustrates the number of single-family dwelling permits reviewed and or approved for the previous 5 years.

Single-Family Dwelling Permits					
No. of Permits	77	104	128	116	119
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023



## Accessory Structures

Just as single-family dwellings, accessory structures have also stayed consistent over the past several years. Accessory structures consist of sheds, pools, garages, decks and agricultural buildings. The below tables illustrate the number of accessory permits reviewed and or approved from 2019 to 2023.

Accessory Structure Zoning Permits					
No. of Permits	104	138	123	127	141
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

## Special Exceptions

The Planning Commission reviewed seventeen (17) special exceptions in 2023. A complete list of the reviewed special exceptions for 2023 is below.

Use	Description	Zoning District	Address	Status
Residential	Dog Training /Kennel – up to 5 dogs at a time in training area at residence	A-1, Agricultural Residential	1181 Cedar Gate Rd	Approved
Commercial	Automotive Body Shop	B-2, General Commercial	4728 S Amherst Hwy	Pending
Commercial	Truck Business	B-2, General Commercial	3713 S Amherst Hwy	Pending
Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental of a Dwelling	R-2, General Residential	430 River Road	Approved
Commercial	Solar Energy Facility	A-1, Agricultural Residential	2508 Patrick Henry Hwy	Pending
Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental of a Dwelling	A-1, Agricultural Residential	233 Athlone Ln	Approved
Residential	Third Dwelling – Single-wide	R-2, General Residential	200 Boxwood Cir	Approved
Residential	Family Day Home – up to 12 children	R-2, General Residential	250 Crescent Ln	Pending
Residential	Two Family Dwelling with the Outward Appearance of a Single Family Dwelling	RMU-1, Residential Mixed Use	160 Warwick St	Approved
Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental of a Dwelling	R-2, General Residential	1648 S Coolwell Rd	Approved
Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental of a Dwelling, Wedding, Winery, Photography and Business Venue	A-1, Agricultural Residential	2770 Elon Rd	Pending
Residential	Breeding Kennel – 20 dogs max	A-1, Agricultural Residential	245 Old Farm Rd	Approved
Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental of a Dwelling	R-1, Limited Residential	230 Brightwells Mill Rd	Approved
Residential	Special Event – Public Entertainment	A-1, Agricultural Residential	2409 Riverville Rd	Approved
Commercial	Solar Energy Facility	A-1, Agricultural Residential	2508 Patrick Henry Hwy	Withdrawn
Commercial	Automotive Service Center	R-2, General Residential	4446 S Amherst Hwy	Pending
Commercial	Install 12,000 gallon diesel fuel tank	B-2, General Commercial	178 Elon Road	Approved

## Rezoning and Conditional Zonings

The Commission took up seven (7) rezoning / conditional zoning cases in 2023. The approved rezoning / conditional cases were for multi-use and or multi-family residential. All of the rezoning / conditional zoning cases of 2023 are below.

Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Proposed Use	Address /Tax Map	Status
R-1, Limited Residential	B-2, General Commercial	Part of Auto Body Shop	155C-1-F-1B	Pending
R-3, Multi-Family Residential	R-3, Multi-Family Residential	Amendment to previous proffers to allow for more townhomes	679 Dillard Road	Pending
B-2, General Commercial	R-3, Multi-Family Residential	Townhouse development	4446 S Amherst Hwy	Pending
B-2, General Commercial	R-2, General Residential	Move house to rear of property	111 Coleman Rd	Pending
R-1, Limited Residential	R-2, General Residential	To allow a doublewide to be placed on the lot	139-A-42D	Approved
R-2, General Residential	R-3, Multi-Family Residential	Townhouse Development	697 Dillard Rd	Approved
R-2, General Residential	B-2, General Commercial	Automotive Center	4446 S Amherst Hwy	Approved

## Subdivisions

Staff and or the Planning Commission reviewed Ninety-six (96) total plats in 2023. This number is consistent with reviews from past years. A complete breakdown of the reviews completed in 2023 are below.

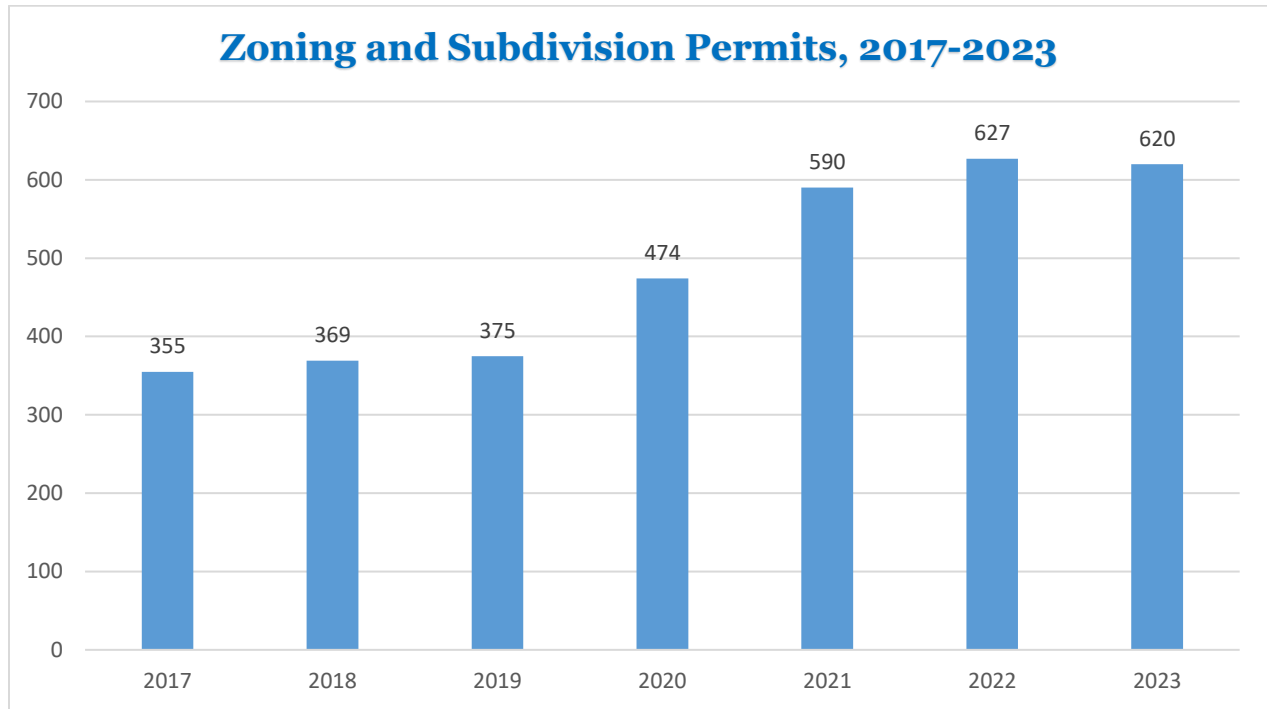
Type of Plat	Resurvey	Subdivision – Administrative	Family Division	Reconfiguration	Subdivision – Planning Commission
No. of Reviews	37	12	15	30	2

# Appendix A

*Table A1. Zoning and Subdivision Permits, 2022 - 2023*

Permit Type / Proposed Use	Total - 2022	Total - 2023
Accessory Structure – Deck/porch	27	34
Accessory Structure – Agricultural Building	10	13
Accessory Structure – Carport/Garage	26	36
Accessory Structure – Other	8	13
Accessory Structure – Pool	17	16
Accessory Structure – Storage/Shed	37	29
Erosion and Sediment Control Plan	11	6
Land Disturbance – Commercial	10	9
Land Disturbance – Residential	35	48
Resurvey	41	37
Rezoning	5	7
Sign – Alter/Modify Existing	2	2
Sign – New	11	3
Site Plan – Commercial	5	12
Site Plan – Multi-Family Development	1	0
Site Plan – Townhouses Development	1	0
Special Exception – Commercial	6	6
Special Exception – Residential	17	11
Subdivision Plat – Administrative	15	12
Subdivision Plat – Family Division	12	15
Subdivision Plat – Reconfiguration	25	30
Subdivision Plat – Planning Commission	0	2
Variance	1	0
Variance – Administrative	1	0
Wireless Communication Modifications	10	9
Camping	4	3
Short-Term Tourist Rental (By-Right)	7	3
Home Occupations	85	75
Mixed Use Building	2	2
New Building/Structure (Commercial)	2	1
Single-Family Dwelling	77	92
Two-Family, Duplex	0	2
Zoning – Change of Use	0	1
Zoning – Other (Business Licenses)	33	19
Zoning Verification	5	5
Addition/Expansion	19	23
Zoning – Other	13	12
Single-Family, Doublewide	17	10
Single-Family, Manufactured	5	9
Single-Family, Singlewide	17	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>620</b>

*Chart A1. Zoning Permits, 2017-2023*



*Chart A2. Single-Family Dwelling and Accessory Permits, 2017-2023*

