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## ■ Section 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Introduction: Assessment of the Situation

Charles City County's economic heritage dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when agriculture and forestry were the basis for the local economy. As time progressed, tourism, built on the County's historic resources, became a significant source of income. Over the last 20 years, small manufacturers, specialty trade contractors, trucking companies, and other types of businesses have also established a presence in the community.

**The Current Local Economy.** In observing the current situation, agriculture remains a primary economic driver, focused mainly on the large-scale production of commodity crops (corn, soybeans, winter wheat and cotton) and beef cattle. The County's first winery is scheduled to open in the fall of 2015. Although interest in visiting historic properties



has decreased, resulting in declining tourism revenues, many plantations are pursuing creative alternatives such as operating B&Bs, hosting destination weddings, and offering other activities. Manufacturing has sustained its local presence and there is potential for growth with the right resources in place. A new industry in the County is energy generation. Solar, gas and possibly biomass-fueled electric power generation has become a viable economic option due to the availability of low cost remote land, access to the power grid, proximity to a major pipeline (for gas turbines) and substantial wood waste.

A potentially significant economic opportunity is the completion of the Virginia Capital Trail (also known as the Capital to Capital Trail) from Richmond to Williamsburg, with Charles City Courthouse positioned at its midpoint. Due to its length, location, attractiveness, and route between communities with historical significance, the trail has already received regional, national, and even international exposure. The County is well positioned to leverage the presence of the trail while preserving the rural, historic, and natural heritage of the community.



**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.** A SWOT analysis of Charles City County from an economic development perspective was conducted at the beginning of the project, presented to the community in December 2014, and then refined based on further feedback and evaluation.

#### Strengths/Assets

- Strategic location between Norfolk and Richmond
- Competitive cost structure
- Diversity of people/cultural backgrounds
- Attractive natural environment
- Preserved historic assets
- Access to water (lakes/rivers)
- Undeveloped industrial land (having land defined for industrial use is good, but it is at a low level of readiness, making it less attractive to fast-track businesses)
- Prime agricultural land
- Telecom/internet access improvement in Roxbury/Courthouse areas (an issue that is being addressed in 2015)
- Access to education/training resources

### **Weaknesses/Challenges**

- Limited retail/health care options for residents and employees working in the county
- Low population density and aging population
- Limited labor force and diversity of skills
- Proximity to I-64 (~5 miles) . . . further away than competing locations within the region
- Wetlands and flood plains in many parts of the County
- Lack of tax revenues to offset shortfalls and growth in demand for services/projects
- Public water and sewer capacity are very limited throughout the county
- Internet access to more remote areas of County is a challenge

### **Opportunities**

- Diversify tourism . . . particularly with hands-on/active activities
- Leverage the Virginia Capital Trail . . . increase local spending
- Develop retail in targeted locations . . . particularly in the Courthouse area
- Expand small manufacturing
- Well positioned from energy-related projects
- Build residential base in selected locations

### **Threats**

- Competition from nearby counties
- Fear of sprawl may impede any growth opportunities
- Failure to reach a “critical mass” in population and tourism activity to support incremental retail, dining, and other opportunities
- Growth without too much traffic
- Failing to embrace a shared vision going forward

***The Community is at a Crossroads.*** Based on the SWOT analysis, a review of demographic and economic characteristics, and feedback from stakeholder interviews, there are clearly challenges in the County that need to be addressed to sustain a viable local economy and support government operations:



- Very limited population growth and a high median age, resulting in a longer term diminishing tax base and workforce.
- Substantial portion of the workforce leaves the County for work; many young people leave upon completing their education and do not return to live in the County.
- Reduced County revenues from the regional landfill.
- Heritage tourism declining with less interest by the next generation; historic homes used as wedding and meeting destinations.
- Limited new business growth.
- Very limited retail options; most purchases are made outside the County, minimizing local sales tax revenues.
- If manufacturing is to progress, the workforce needs to be better prepared and committed.

**Moving Forward.** Although the County faces serious challenges, there are actions that can be taken to improve the local economy. The Virginia Capital Trail, for example, is a *gift* that can have a significant economic impact on the County if leveraged appropriately. There are also other opportunities in manufacturing, energy production, tourism, agriculture, and forestry on which the County can capitalize if the right efforts are applied.

The ultimate objective of the plan is to define these opportunities and chart a path to enhance the tax base, provide jobs and small business opportunities, offer an overall improved quality of life, and bring the community together to work toward a shared vision. Our role as consultants is to facilitate the process by gathering and packaging critical information, presenting and discussing options for a future vision, and then building and supporting a plan that achieves results. Charles City County has a potentially bright future if the community works together to address its challenges and capitalize on its assets.

**1.2 The Process of Achieving an Economic Development Plan**

Having a workable and achievable plan is the outcome of this process, but it takes a number of steps to arrive at a plan. As shown below, the process begins with a vision – what do we want the local economy to be 5, 10 or 20 years into the future?

**KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC MODEL FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH**



**Defining the Vision and Related Strategy:** The vision for Charles City County embraces the need to preserve the existing character of the community while taking advantage of opportunities and moving the community forward with additional jobs, business development, private sector investment, and an expanded tax base. Elements of a strategy to achieve the vision include:

- Preserve and leverage the County’s natural and historic qualities while embracing a modest level of compatible development and population growth.
- Based on a realistic assessment of local resources, expand employment and small business opportunities for local residents to help retain/attract the emerging next generation.
- Facilitate the growth of small businesses (from start-up to acceleration of existing firms) throughout the County to provide increased economic opportunities.
- Enhance the quality of life with amenities and services (e.g., retail, restaurants, cultural/recreational activities, health care services) to serve residents and visitors and sustain the population base in the County going forward.
- Develop a portfolio of diverse economic activities that produces the tax base required to sustain the operation of the County.

**Concepts and Considerations.** In the implementation of the vision, there are several concepts and considerations that should be understood.

**Keeping the Balance:** In many communities, there are two opposing views when it comes to local economic development: (1) Those who want to maintain the status quo and protect the community from development; and (2) Those who believe that changes are needed to increase economic opportunities.

In the case of Charles City County, both views are valid and are not necessarily at odds. We recognize the importance of the County’s natural and historic assets to local residents as well as visitors. It is essential that the plan for economic development is supported by well- defined land use and zoning regulations, covenants and design standards so that what makes Charles City County a unique place does not get destroyed in the process.

**The Dynamics of the “Tipping Point”:** A tipping point is a critical point in a situation or process beyond which it takes minimal effect to achieve results. Before a community has reached its “tipping point,” it may be considered unattractive or risky by outside investors; incentives may be needed to address issues and encourage investment activity. Beyond the “tipping point,” there is a momentum that stimulates growth, and investment begins to escalate. Now, the challenge shifts toward *managing* the growth.

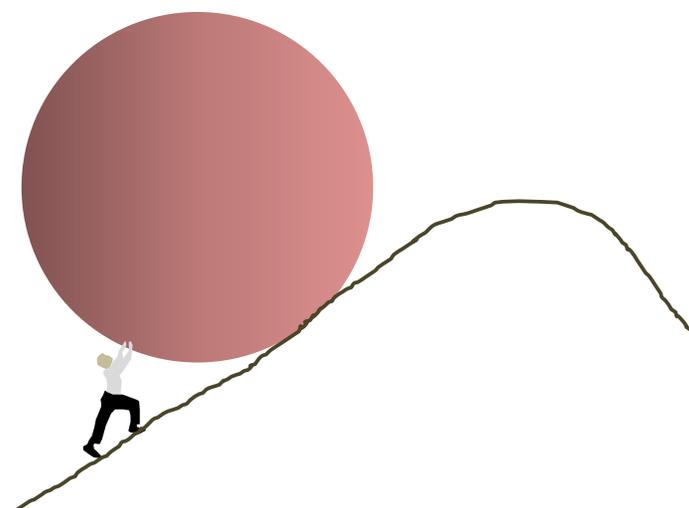
### KEEPING THE BALANCE

We Need to Keep Things  
“The Way They Are”

We Need More  
Economic Opportunity



### THE “TIPPING POINT”



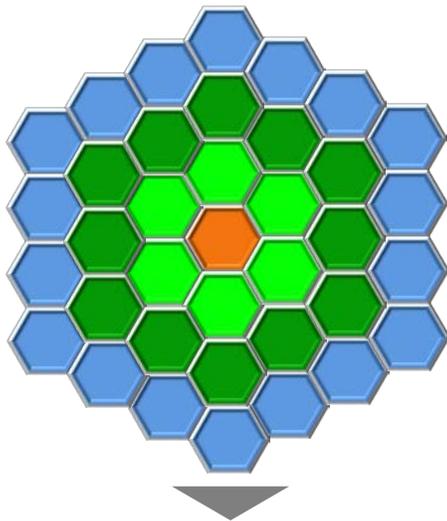
The County will need to play a dual role here:

- (1) Make some initial investments in infrastructure to encourage investment activity; while also
- (2) Establish the land use and other regulations that assure favorable growth in predefined locations to avoid the typical runaway growth scenario.

**Economic Development ≠ Uncontrolled Growth:** People often equate economic development with large-scale construction projects that turn hundreds of acres of agricultural land and open space into the sprawling residential subdivisions, big box stores, and parking lots found in many suburbs. However, there are many economic development options that do not involve the consumption of large amounts of land or major changes to the essential character of the community, such as supporting the growth of small businesses, enhancing “low-impact” forms of tourism, and helping existing companies expand. This plan is aimed at growing the local economy without sacrificing what residents value about Charles City County. It also targets specific locations for growth by providing the needed utility infrastructure *only* in those areas.

**Strategic Growth of the Local Economy:** A primary objective in local economic development is to attract, retain, and expand businesses that are in **Level 1 - Primary Industries** because they bring a cash flow into the community. For Charles City County, Level 1 industries include agriculture, forestry, tourism and manufacturing. Level 2 support businesses will build on the presence of Level 1 primary businesses, while Level 3 will expand with the size of the population.

### TYPICAL LOCAL ECONOMY



- Jobs/Local Businesses
- Overall Quality of Life
- Local Taxes

 **Resources** (Real estate, labor, utilities, education/training, natural resources transportation, financing, etc.)

 **Level 1 - Primary Industries**  
Employers that infuse money into the county from outside sources, such as:

- Tourism
- Agriculture / Forestry / Fishing
- Manufacturing

 **Level 2 - Business Support Services**  
Provide support service to the primary industries and consumer businesses located in the area

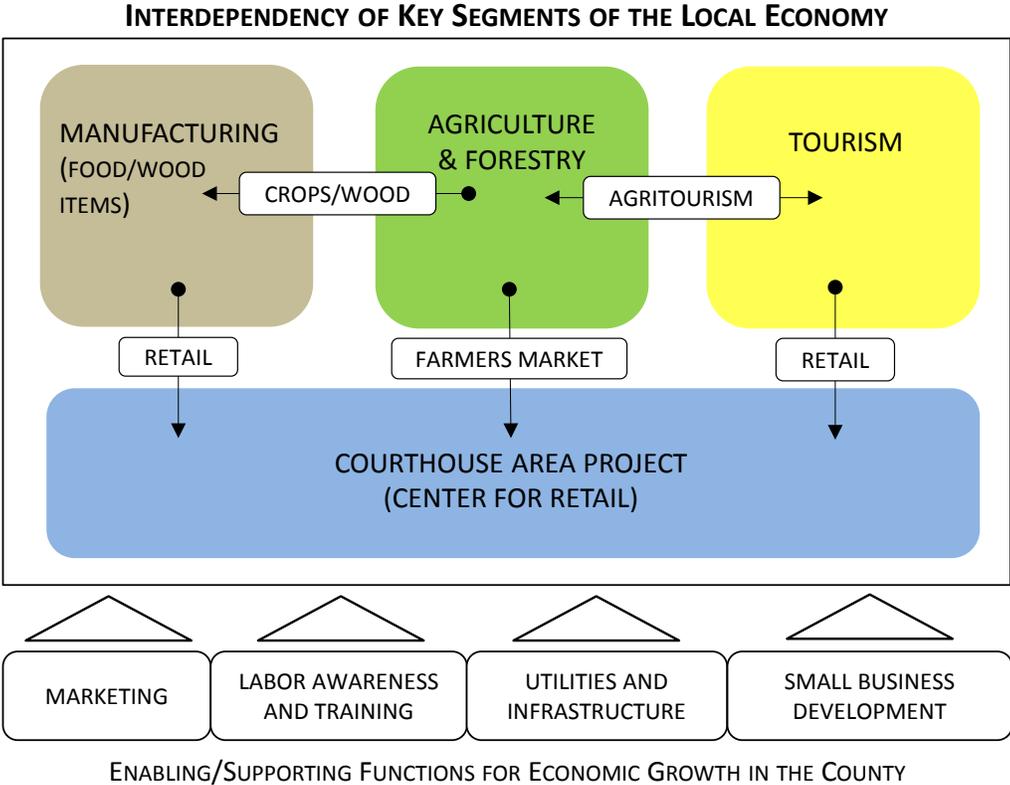
 **Level 3 - Consumer-Related Industries**

- Retail
- Health Care
- Construction
- Other Services

### 1.3 Summary of Action Plan

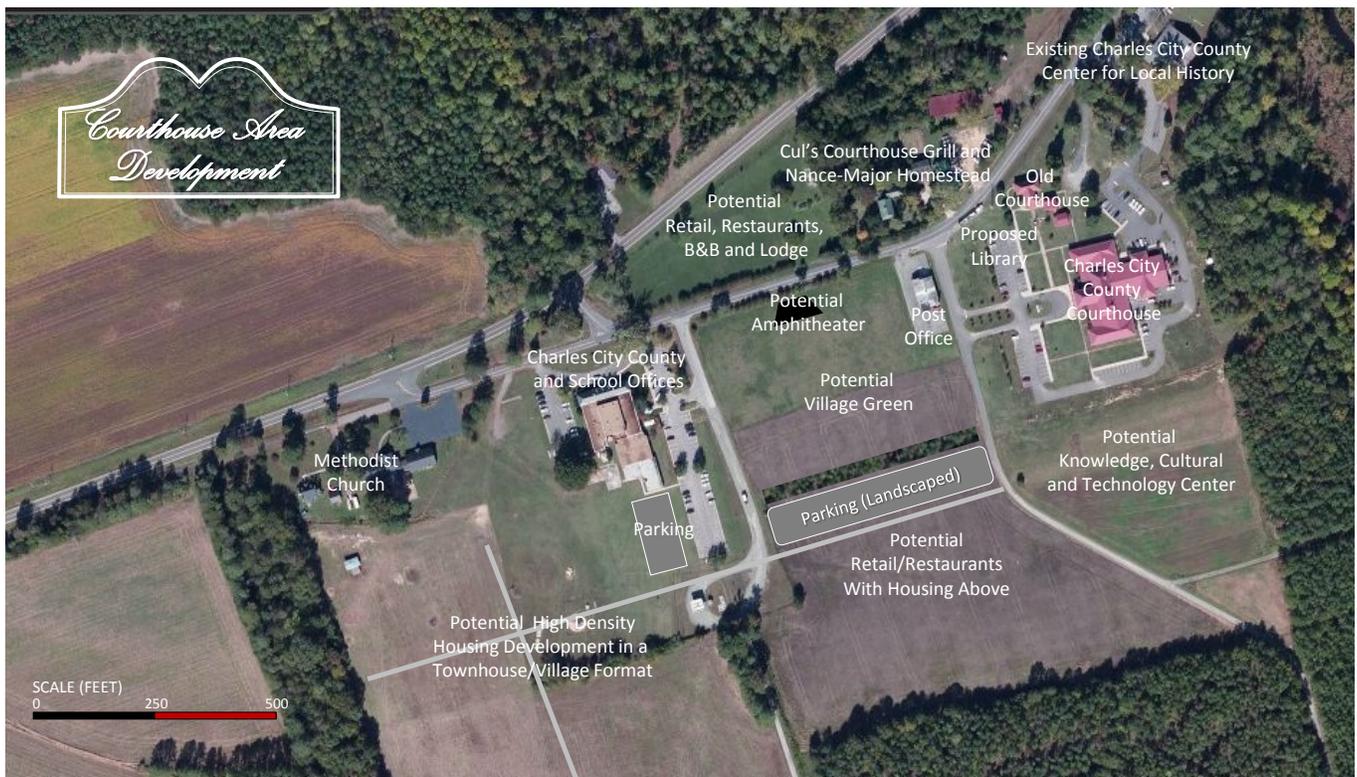
The Action Plan focuses on leveraging and expanding the three primary industries: Manufacturing, Agriculture and Forestry, and Tourism. In addition, a fourth initiative is to further develop the Courthouse area to create a focal point for the community, take advantage of the Virginia Capital Trail, and increase revenues for the County. There is also a fifth initiative related to enabling/supporting functions including marketing, labor awareness and training, utilities and infrastructure, and small business development.

As presented in the chart below, the five initiatives are interrelated, and there is a level of interdependency. This means there is coherence in the overall plan (that's good), but it also means that each of the initiatives cannot be implemented independently – there must be a degree of coordination. This is especially true with the Courthouse Area Project, which impacts each of the other initiatives. An overview of the five initiatives is provided below, and each is further detailed in Section 5 of this report.



**1. Develop the Courthouse Area** into an attractive and unique destination that reflects the original village before it was burned down by Federal troops in June 1864. The architectural theme would focus around repurposed structures relocated to the site or buildings designed to reflect the rural architecture of the area. Key elements of the village would include:

- A village green with an amphitheater (as a focal point for community activities and events) and ample parking areas.
- Additional restaurants, retail/consignment stores featuring locally made products, and a farmers' market featuring locally-grown farm and food products. This aspect of the village will ramp-up over time as demand driven by tourism from the Virginia Capital Trail and other activities (increases).
- A new B&B at the Nance-Major homestead and construction of a low-cost lodge for cyclists/other guests.
- A new library facility.
- A Center for Knowledge, Culture and Technology with multiple components: meeting hall, and shops for woodworking, sewing/beading, painting, pottery, and music, and later, a commercial kitchen for small-scale food businesses.
- High-density housing for local working professionals, 55+ adults and others, to be developed over time as the market expands. Currently, there are not enough community amenities to support the development of more than a few housing units and the issue with sewer capacity will need to be addressed.



## 2. Expand and Attract Selected Manufacturing and Energy Production Opportunities

- Machining operations
- Machinery and equipment manufacturing
- Plastic and composite parts manufacturing
- Light assembly of subassemblies or small equipment/machinery
- Furniture and fixture manufacturing (particularly wood products)
- Utility-scale solar, gas-generated electric power and biomass to electric power

The selection of industries and operations is based on their current presence in the County and region, as well as overall market trends driving demand. Stimulating this growth will take certain efforts related to the development of real estate (market-ready sites), utility upgrades (the telecom portion is underway), labor force enhancements, a competitive business environment, and marketing activities.



## 3. Enhance the Agriculture and Forestry Sectors, by:

- Diversifying agriculture by helping farmers take advantage of various market opportunities and access financial and technical assistance as needed.
- Developing a food product development center with access to a commercial kitchen for product development and small scale production. This is a longer-term initiative associated with the development of the Courthouse Area.
- Producing additional industrial and consumer wood products (e.g., selected line of tables, benches and other furniture from local/regional woods). This option will be integrated with the manufacturing efforts in Initiative 2 above.
- Utilization of crop and wood waste materials as a saleable product.
- Working with interested farmers to expand agritourism activities.



#### 4. Diversify and Expand Tourism and Related Economic Opportunities

The value of tourism to the County is derived from people visiting the community and spending money at local business establishments, generating tax revenues. For a tourism strategy to be successful, there must be attractions, activities, and events of interest as well as places where visitors can stay, shop, and dine. In addition, the destination must be properly promoted, and the local government supports tourism and business activity by providing infrastructure and services.

Tourism in Charles City County has traditionally focused on the unique collection of colonial plantations along the Route 5 corridor. However, interest in historic tours has dropped off over the past ten years and County tourism revenues have declined substantially.

With the completion of the Virginia Capital Trail this year, the County has a unique opportunity to diversify its tourism offerings and leverage cycling activity by expanding options to generate revenue through retail, restaurants and lodging. There are also opportunities for agritourism and nature-based tourism to drive additional visitation and spending.

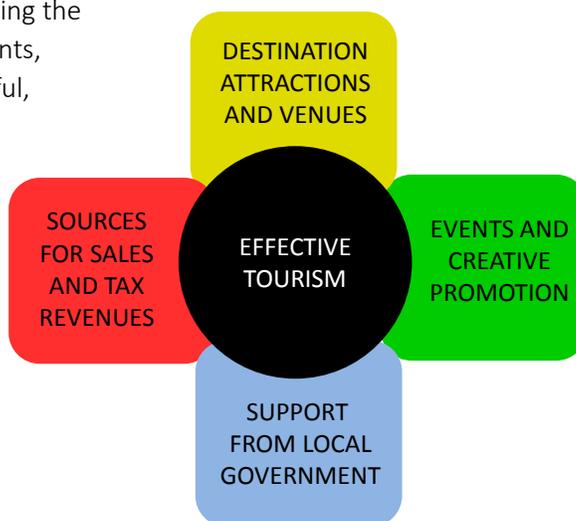
Specific recommendations that are addressed in the strategic plan include:

- Leveraging opportunities generated by the *Virginia Capital Trail* through bicycle tourism and the development of retail, restaurants, and retail options in the Courthouse Area.
- Supporting *nature-based tourism*.
- Broadening the options for *agritourism*.
- Providing signage and wayfinding information, expanding event activity, creating activity packages, and effectively marketing the County as a visitor destination.

#### 5. Enabling/Supporting Initiatives

Underpinning each of the four primary initiatives above are enabling/supporting functions that enhance resources and help promote the County to prospective companies and tourists.

- **Small business development** - tools, resources and support efforts to help start-up and emerging companies thrive in the County.
- **Labor awareness and training** - options and resources that facilitate local residents in their knowledge of job and small business opportunities along with the requirements to take advantage of the opportunities. Also communicate the availability of training, internships and mentoring options.
- **Enhance Utilities to Support Economic Growth** – sewer and telecom in the Roxbury and Courthouse areas of the County
- **Marketing** - build awareness of County for tourists visiting the County and for industrial firms potentially locating to the County. Provide signage to effectively direct visitors to selected destinations/venues throughout the County.

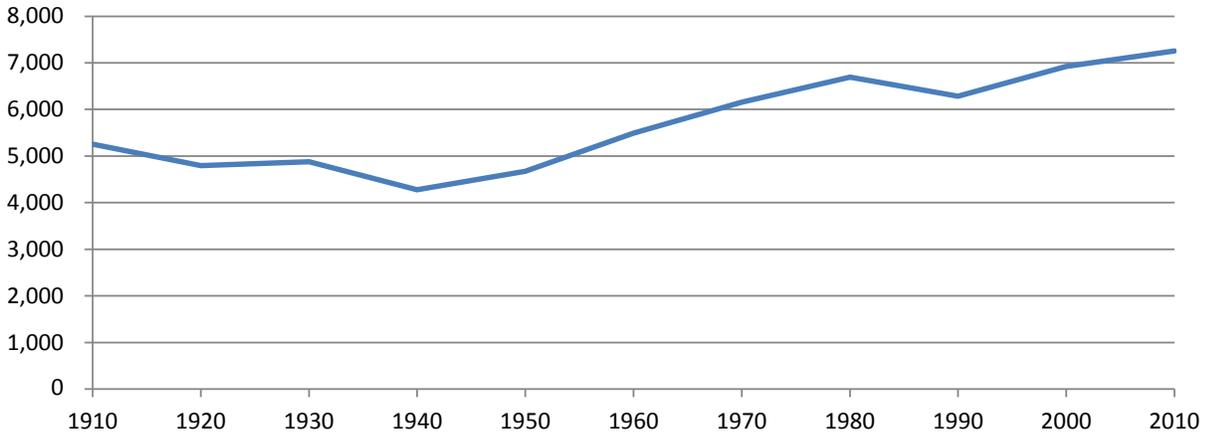


■ Section 2 - PROFILE OF AREA DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

**2.1 Population Dynamics**

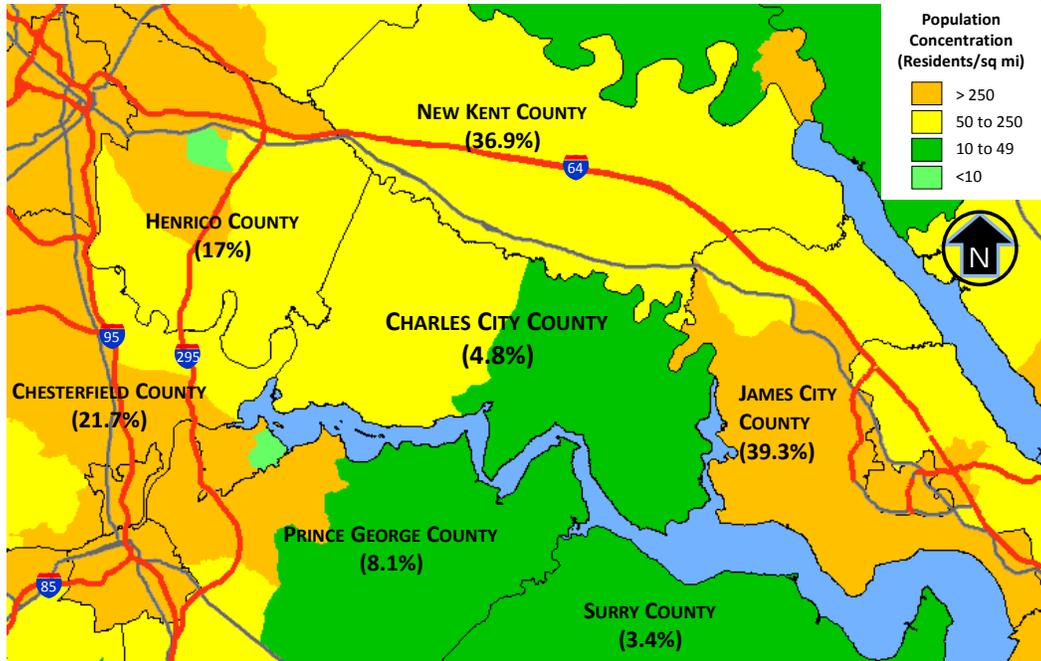
The population of Charles City County has been relatively stable over the past century, with a slight growth trend from 1940 to 1980 and a drop during the 1980s, followed by a return to very modest growth. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of residents in Charles City County increased 4.8%. Estimates published by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service place the 2014 population at 7,249, a marginal decline from 7,256 in 2010.

**POPULATION OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY (1910 - 2010)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010)

**REGIONAL POPULATION DENSITY AT A LOW DENSITY SCALE (10-YEAR POPULATION GROWTH NOTED)**



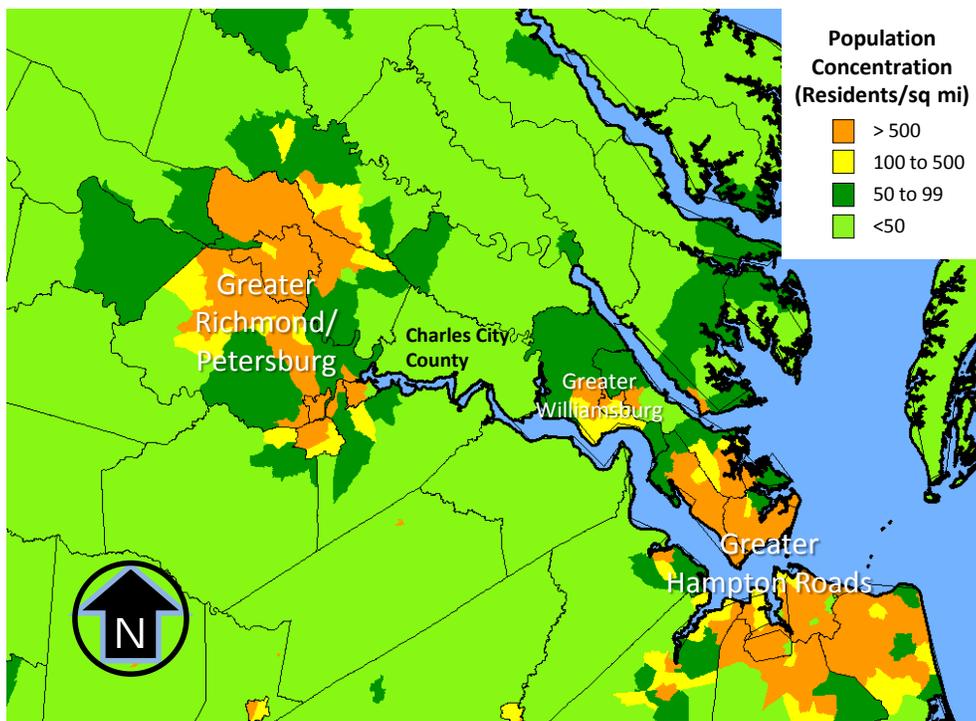
Note: the color coding is by census tract and not by county. The black outlines are the county borders.

The map demonstrates the slightly higher population density in the western portion of Charles City County and the lower density on its eastern end and to the south in Prince George and Surry Counties. The 2000 to 2010 population growth rates are shown below each county name. James City County has been on a rapid growth trajectory, but will soon run out of developable land for housing. It is reasonable to assume that developers will soon be looking “over the bridge” into eastern Charles City County for new development sites. New Kent County has also been growing rapidly, but from a much smaller population base (approximately 13,500 in 2000). New Kent’s population is now approaching 20,000. Although the pace of growth in Chesterfield and Henrico Counties has been somewhat less, their population bases are much larger, exceeding 300,000 in 2010.



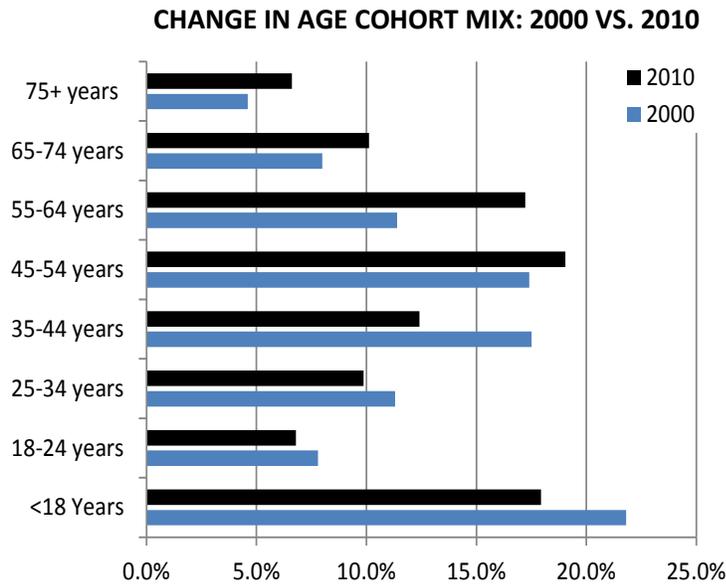
Housing development located on the eastern shore of the Chickahominy River in James City County.

**MULTI-REGIONAL POPULATION DENSITY BASED ON A HIGHER DENSITY SCALE**



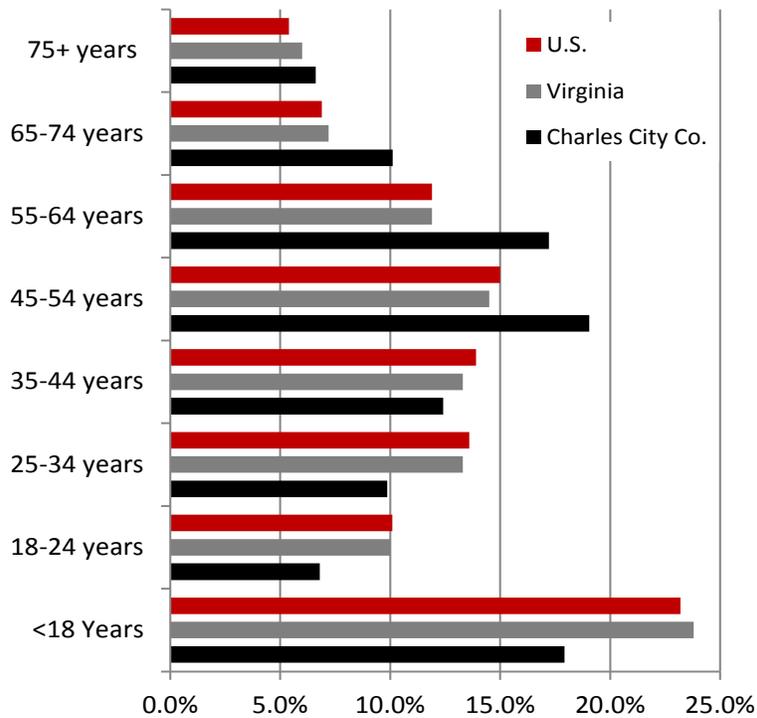
The lower threshold for population density has been raised up to 50+ residents per square mile and the resulting map indicates the major population centers within the Richmond and Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News regions. These areas are surrounded by low-density counties with predominantly agricultural economies and some scattered manufacturing operations.

## 2.2 Age Cohort (Bracket) Comparisons



Since 2000, the population of the County has been shifting to the older cohorts (age brackets) and the median age has increased from 39.9 to 46.6 years. If this trend were to be sustained, without migration into the County, the local workforce would be substantially reduced and the overall population would start to decline.

### AGE COHORT COMPARISON FOR CHARLES CITY COUNTY

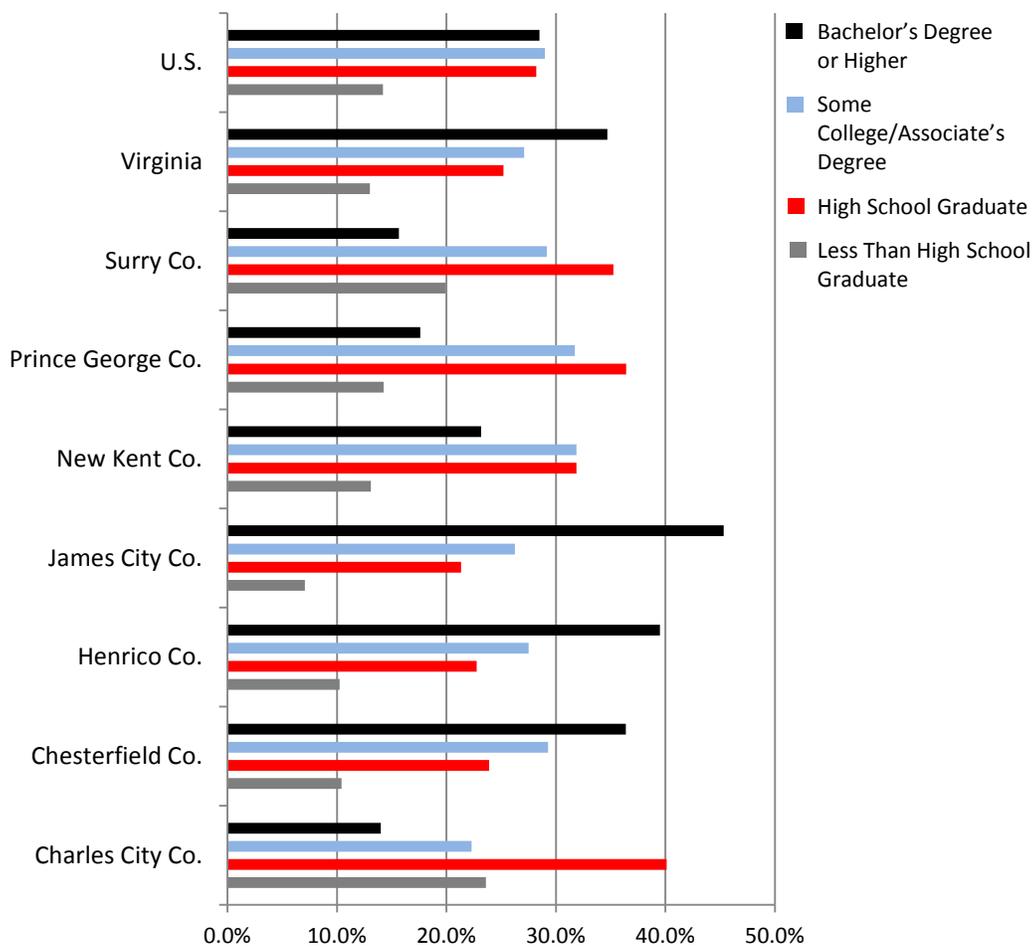


The comparison of age cohorts with those in Virginia and the U.S. shows that Charles City County has a much lower mix of cohorts under 45 years old and much higher mix in the 45-to-74 years old ranges. The median age of the population is 37.4 years in Virginia and 37.2 in the U.S. overall.

### 2.3 Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important indicator of workforce preparedness and job skills. As indicated below, Charles City County has the greatest proportion of residents whose highest attainment is a high school diploma, as well as the highest percentage *without* a high school education. The County also has one of the *lowest* proportions with some college, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree or higher. This indicates a relatively low level of skilled labor available, with limited technical and professional level talent. Businesses requiring these resources would need to recruit workers from outside the County.

**COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG RESIDENTS 25+**



Source: U.S. Census (2010)

### 2.4 Household Income

The median household income in Charles City County is just below the national average, but significantly below the state average, and it is lower than in most of the counties in the region. This reflects a combination of factors, including low educational attainment levels, an aging (possibly retired) population, and the relatively limited number of high-paying jobs available locally.

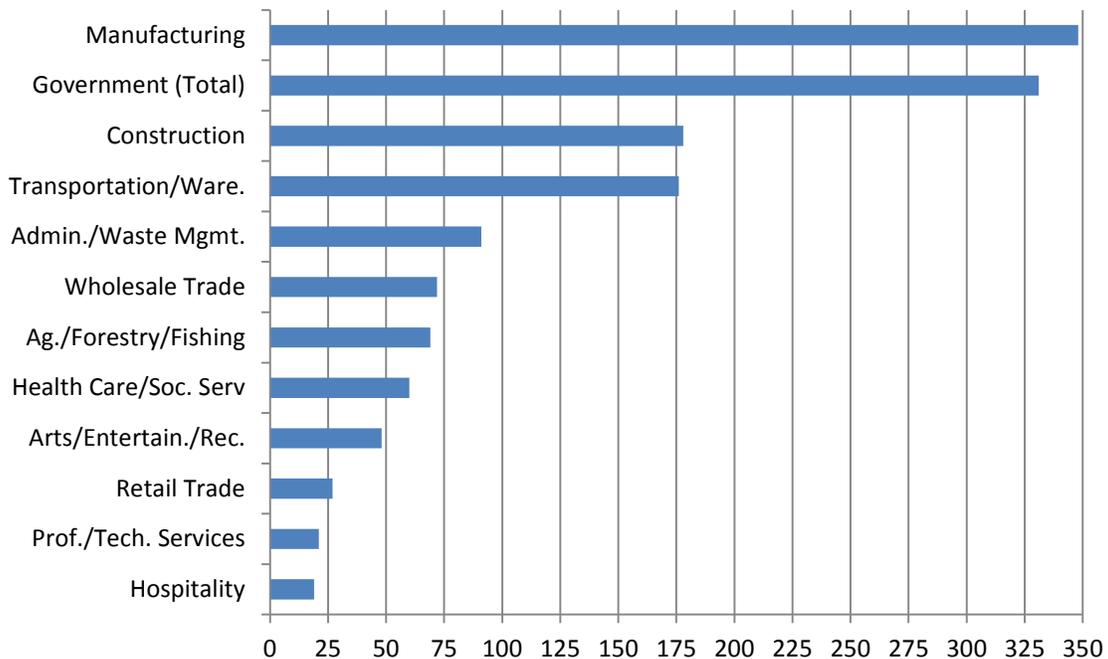
**COMPARISON OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME WITH CHARLES CITY COUNTY**



### 2.5 Overview on Industry Presence

The primary industries that bring cash into the local economy are manufacturing, transportation services, construction, and agriculture/forestry.

**EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY**



Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2013)

## Manufacturing Employment Within the Region

	Charles City	James City	New Kent	Henrico	Chesterfield	Surry	Prince George
Total Manufacturing	336	1,656	169	5,972	8,282	110	421
Beverage Mfg.							
Food Mfg.							
Textiles							
Wood Products							
Paper							
Printing/Related							
Chemicals							
Plastics/Rubber							
Nonmetallic Mineral							
Fabricated Metal							
Machinery							
Computer/Electronics							
Electrical Equipment							
Transportation Equip.							
Furniture							

**Level of Employment:** 20-99 100-249 250-499 500-999 1,000+

From the chart above, it is evident that the majority of manufacturing jobs in the region are in Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, which have a significant presence in beverage and food production, textiles (DuPont's nonwoven engineered products), chemicals, fabricated metals and machinery. There is a modest but consistent amount of wood product manufacturing in the region. An interesting point is the lack of manufacturing in New Kent and Surry Counties.

## Selected Major Industrial Employers in the Region

Location	Company	Description of Products
Chesterfield Co.	DuPont	Textiles/fibers/nonwovens from Kevlar, Nomex, Tyvek, etc.
City of Richmond	Pfizer Consumer Healthcare	Pharmaceuticals
Chesterfield Co.	Hillphoenix	Refrigeration cases for retailers
Chesterfield Co.	Honeywell	Nylon products for multiple applications
Chesterfield Co.	Alstrom Power	Turbine engineering and manufacturing; power automation
Chesterfield Co.	Sabra Dipping	Dipping products from hummus, Greek yogurt, salsa, etc.
Chesterfield Co.	Campofrio Food Group	Italian meats and prepared foods
Chesterfield Co.	Essentra Porous Technologies	Cigarette filters
Chesterfield Co.	Maruchan Virginia	Soup and noodles
Chesterfield Co.	Reynolds Foil	Aluminum foil
James City Co.	Anheuser Busch InBev	Brewery
James City Co.	Ball Metal Beverage Container	Beverage cans
James City Co.	Avid Medical	Medical surgical kits
James City Co.	Owens Brockway Glass	Beverage bottles
James City Co.	PrintPak	Food packaging

## Agriculture in the County

Location	No. of Farms	Total Sales	Average Sales
<b>Charles City Co.</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>\$23,680,000</b>	<b>\$299,751</b>
Chesterfield Co.	197	\$6,400,000	\$32,490
Henrico Co.	117	\$9,371,000	\$80,098
James City Co.	83	NA	NA
New Kent Co.	137	\$7,003,000	\$51,117
Prince George Co.	167	\$10,763,000	\$64,447
Surry Co.	127	\$27,723,000	\$218,291

Within the region, Charles City County has the smallest number of farms, but the highest average sales per farm and the second highest total farm sales after Surry County.

Item	2002	2012
<b>Total number of farms</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>79</b>
Total land in farms (acres)	28,676	31,182
Average farm size (acres)	326	395
Market value of ag. products	\$6,278,000	\$23,680,000
<b>Farms by gross sales</b>		
Less than \$10,000	66	47
\$10,000 to \$24,999	4	5
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1	5
\$50,000 to 99,999	1	3
\$100,000 and above	16	19
<b>Average revenue per farm</b>	<b>\$71,343</b>	<b>\$299,751</b>
<b>Farms by principal product</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>79</b>
Beef cattle ranching and farming	11	8
Cattle feedlots	3	0
Fruit and tree nut farming	8	1
Greenhouse/nursery	5	6
Hog and pig farming	1	1
Mixed/other animal production	24	20
Oilseed and grain farming	17	18
Other/mixed crop farming	14	13
Poultry and egg production	0	3
Sheep and goat farming	5	3
Vegetable and melon farming	0	6
<b>Livestock &amp; poultry inventory</b>		
Beef cows	NA	232
Sheep and lambs	100	90
Layers	351	476
<b>Crops harvested</b>		
Corn for grain (acres)	5,011	7,505
Forage (acres)	1,140	1,260
Wheat for grain (acres)	5,746	7,191
Soybeans (acres)	7,871	9,783

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

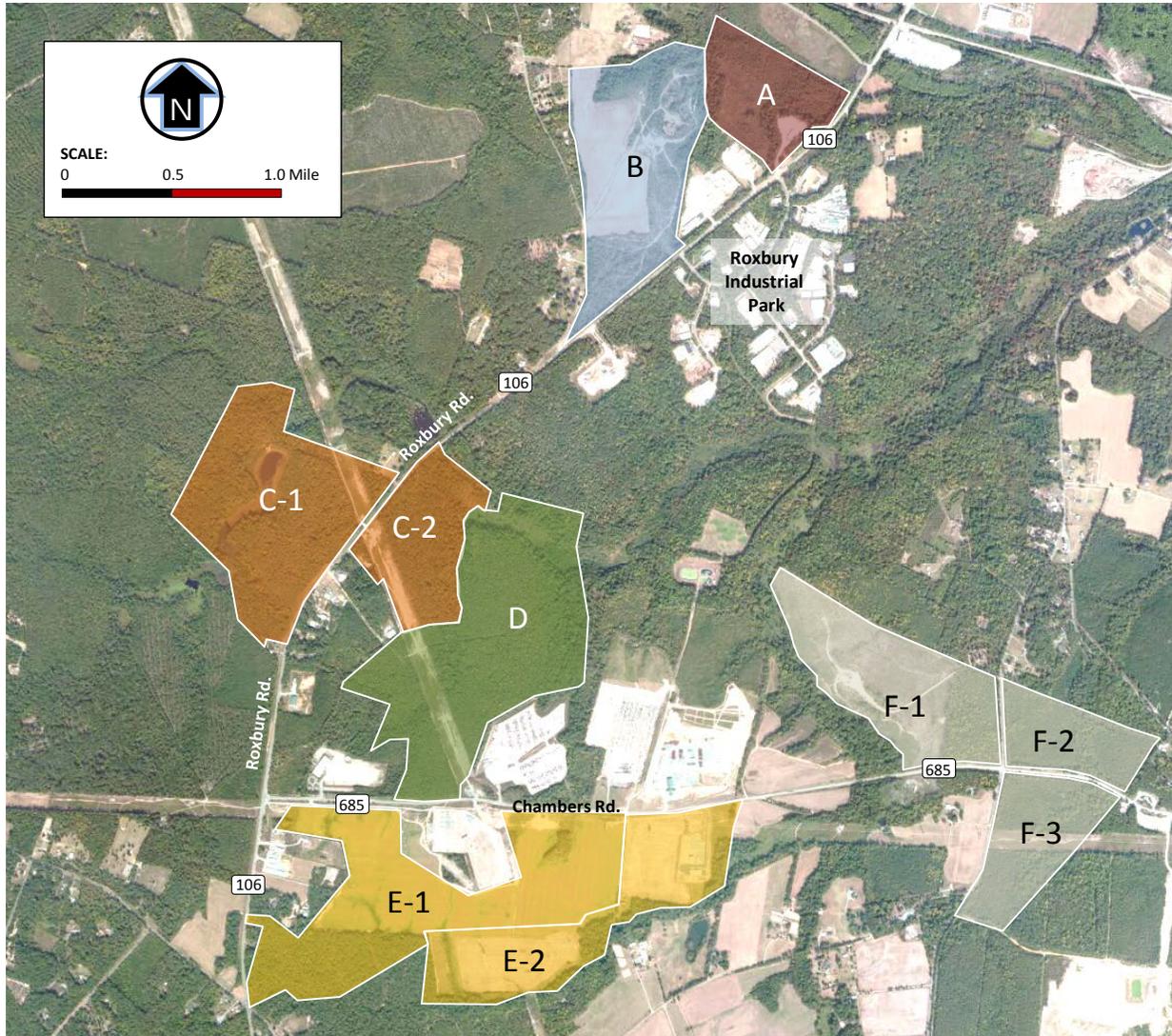
- Between 2002 and 2012, the total number of farms in Charles City County declined by 10% but the total land in agriculture expanded by about 2,500 acres.
- The average farm increased in size from 326 to 395 acres.
- Both the sales of agricultural products and the average sales per farm increased dramatically between 2002 to 2012.
- Three-quarters of the farms in 2012 produced grain and soybeans, raised beef cattle, or produced a mix of crops or animals.
- Corn, soy and wheat production expanded over the ten-year period.

■ Section 3 - ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES

**3.1 Real Estate**

The Comprehensive Plan designates the majority of the County as rural, with large tracts of land area dedicated to agriculture and forestry, conservation lands, and low-density residential uses. However, there is a designated industrial corridor along Route 106 with an area reserved for future industrial uses nearby. The County has also designated a Development Center to accommodate future residential, commercial, and institutional uses at Charles City Courthouse.

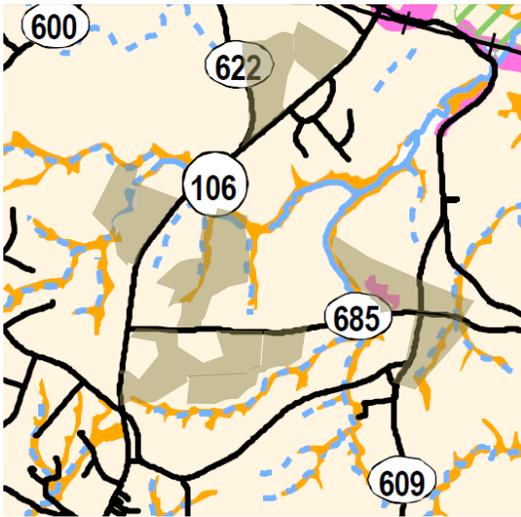
**LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL SITES IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY**



I.D.	Description of Site	Total Size (Acres)	Other Details
A	KWP North Tract	25	
B	Evans Tree Farm	85	
C	County Owned Tracts	C-1 (84); C-2 (35)	Back portion of C-1 has significant wetlands
D	Lowe Tract	125	
E	Chickahominy Substation Tract	E-1 (131); E-2 (54)	Major power lines cross over E-1
F	Adjacent to Regional Landfill	F-1 (85); F-2 (30); F-3 (43)	F-1 has a significant amount of wetlands

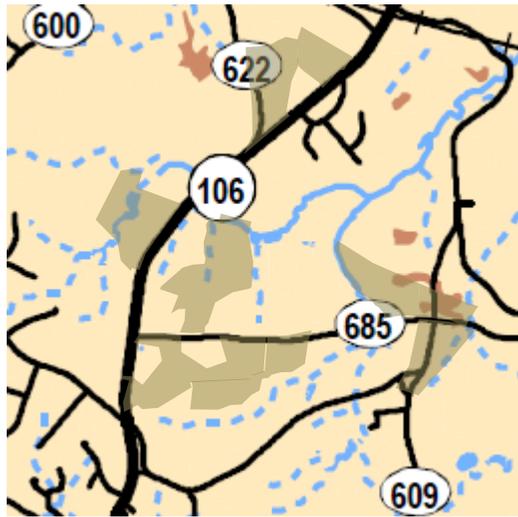
**MAPS NOTING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL SITES**

**Flood Potential**



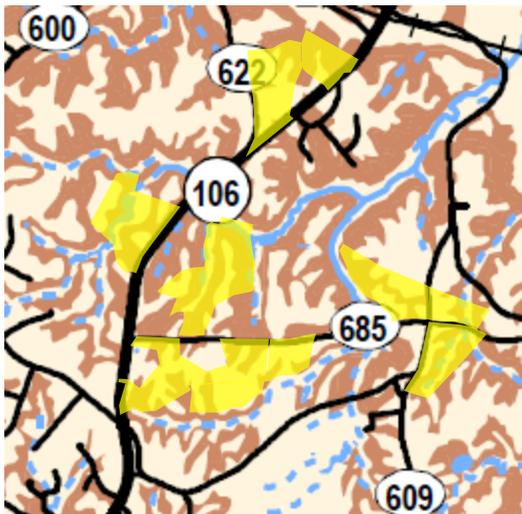
- 100-Year Flood Plain
- Frequent Flooding
- Occasional Flooding

**Soil Limitations for Septic Systems**



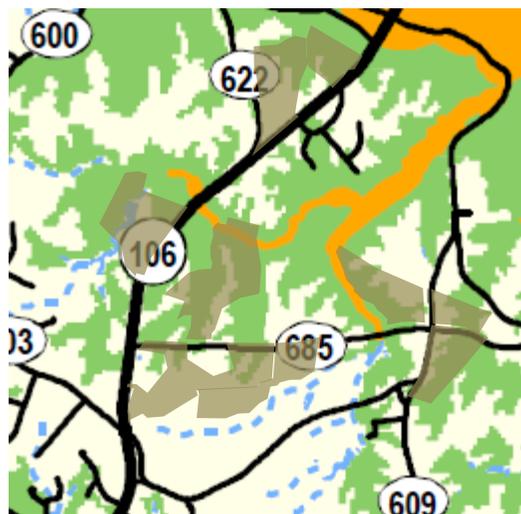
- Severe Limitation on Conventional Septic System
- Slight Limitation on Conventional Septic System

**Highly Permeable Soil**



- High Permeability Soil
- Not High Permeability Soil

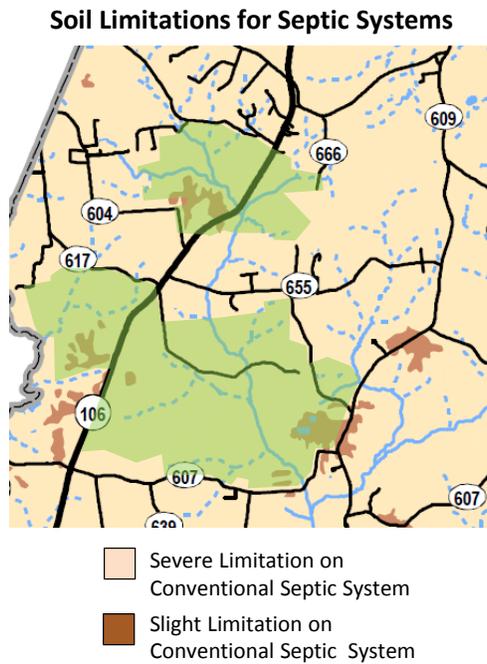
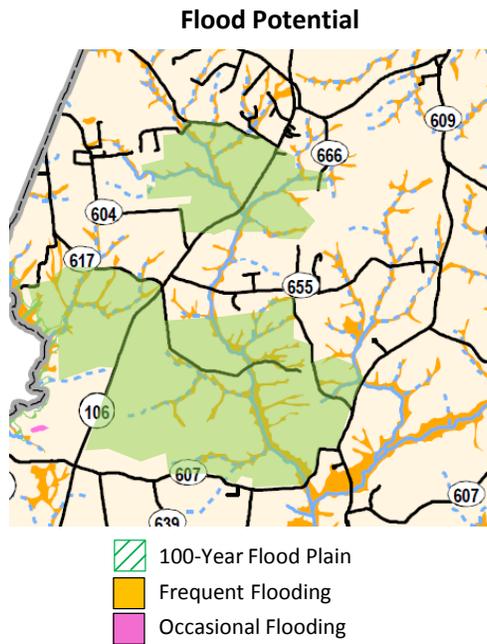
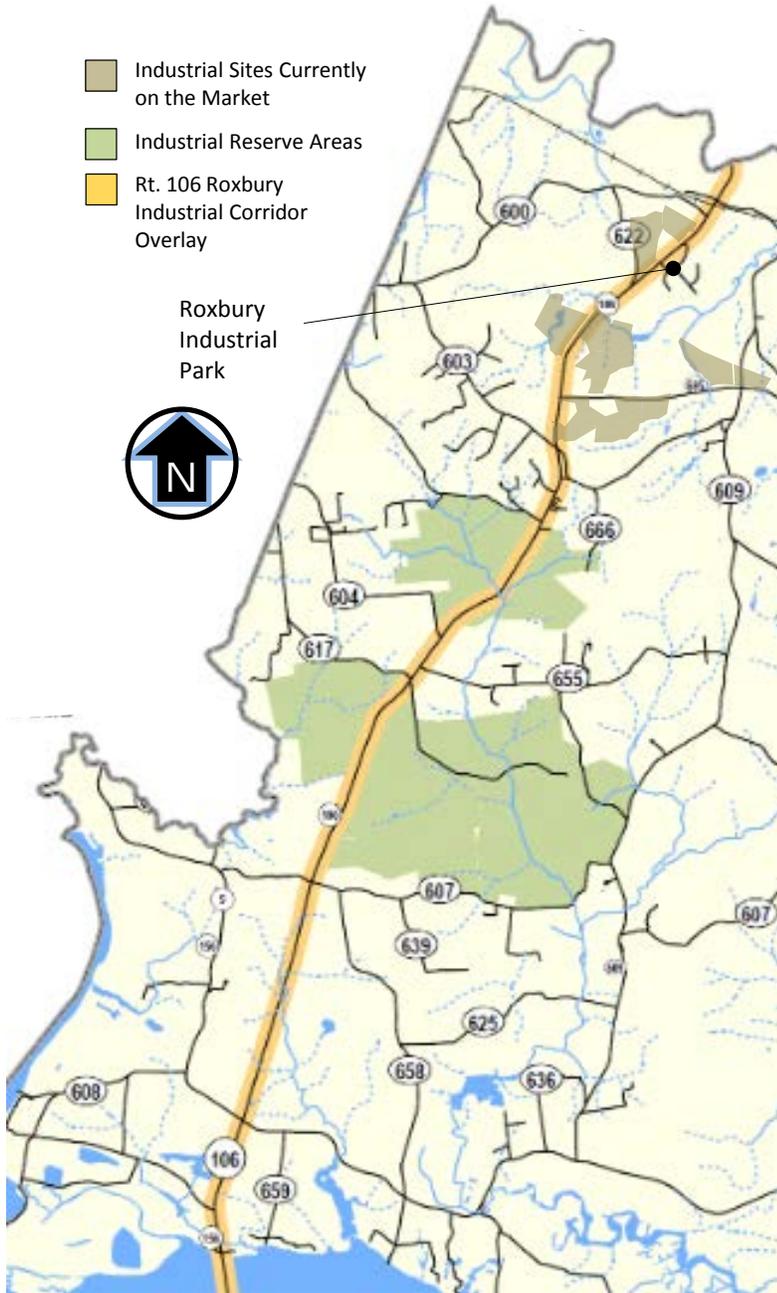
**Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection**



- Resource Protection Area
- Resource Management Area

In reviewing the flood map, there could be some issues with sites C-1, D and F-1 that would make a significant portion of these properties unsuitable for development. There seems to be a substantial presence of highly permeable soil (sand), but most areas are not favorable for conventional septic systems.

### FUTURE INDUSTRIAL RESERVE AREA ALONG THE ROUTE 106 CORRIDOR

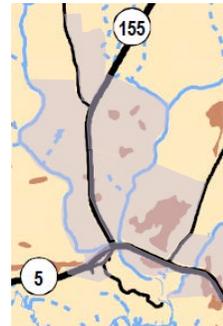


The substantial number of streams and wetlands within the designated areas reduce the effective useable area of each site. There are three locations (see map at lower right) where a conventional septic system would be appropriate.

**DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN COURTHOUSE AREA**



**Soil Limitations for Septic Systems**



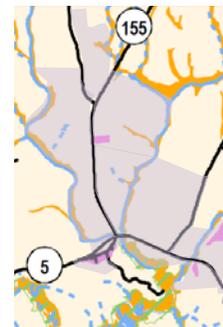
- Severe Limitation on Conventional Septic System
- Slight Limitation on Conventional Septic System

**Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection**



- Resource Protection Area
- Resource Management Area

**Flood Potential**



- 100-Year Flood Plain
- Frequent Flooding
- Occasional Flooding

Within the Courthouse Area, streams traversing portions of the site will reduce the effective area that can be developed. There are also significant Chesapeake Bay Protection and Management areas throughout the development area that will limit some types of development. One area on the right side of Route 155 is adequate for a conventional septic system.

### Selecting Real Estate: From a Company Perspective

When a manufacturing or distribution company is seeking real estate, it will typically have a formal or informal list of criteria and a process that reflects the following steps:

1. Identify strategic location(s) that will best fit the needs of the business based on overall operating cost, logistics (material and product flow) and the ability to serve the customer base.
2. Access to qualified labor force as well as amenities such as restaurants, hotels, retail for personal/business purchases, etc.
3. Access to interstate highway for truck traffic, the condition of the highway and level/type of traffic that may be an issue for trucks
4. Are there any buildings available that would meet the needs of the business? Critical criteria for a building evaluation:
  - Cost of purchase or lease.
  - Existing size (overall) and specific space for manufacturing, storage and office.
  - Height of ceilings and column spaces (height is important for certain operations).
  - Ability/ease of expanding the building in the future (overall size of site and usable space)
  - Age and condition of building (potential sources of contamination, code upgrades, etc.)

#### Details on Building Requirements for General Manufacturing Operations

There will be variations among companies, but here are some general criteria that companies search for when selecting a site and constructing a building:

CRITERIA	DETAILS
<b>Space Allocation</b>	Manufacturing space with some access doors, storage/minor warehousing space with drive-in and back-in dock doors, and ~10% of the space for office, training, break room, etc.
<b>Column Widths</b>	50'+ is desirable, will depend on type of operation
<b>Ceiling Heights</b>	30'+, some operations will take 25' but the trend is higher for storage and mezzanines.
<b>Crane Capabilities</b>	Having access to installed crane rails as well as an available bridge crane is import for some types of operations.
<b>Utility Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General manufacturers utilize 1,500+ amps, 480/277-volt, three-phase, four-wire service.</li> <li>• Water and sewer are not excessive but should be sized for sprinkler systems and some process capacity.</li> <li>• Some operations will require gas for process heating. Gas for space heating as the cost continues to drop relative to electric power.</li> <li>• Broadband capacity is becoming more important for handling order entry and file transfers.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Aspect Ratio</b>	Building layouts for manufacturing operations are typically more “square” than warehouses. (See discussion below)

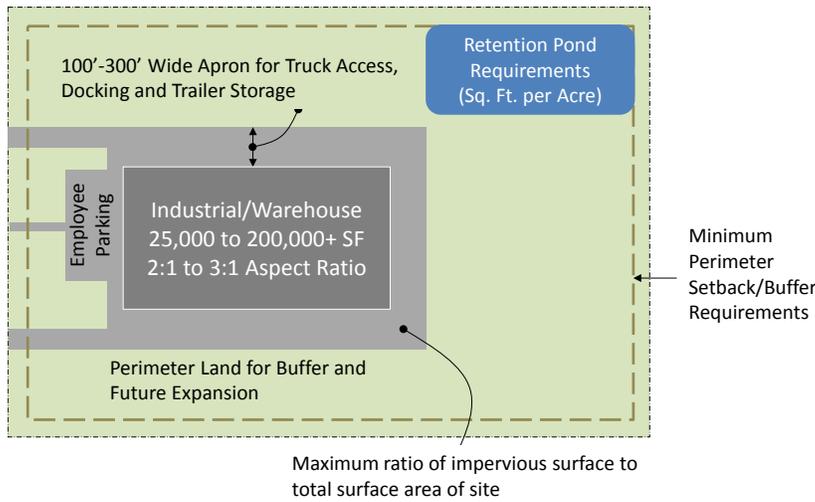
OVERALL SIZE AND DIMENSIONS OF BUILDING VS. ASPECT RATIO

Size (SF)	1.5 to 1	2 to 1	2.5 to 1	3 to 1
50,000	183 x 275	158 x 316	140 x 360	130 x 385
100,000	258 x 388	224 x 448	200 x 500	180 x 550
250,000	410 x 610	354 x 708	315 x 795	290 x 865
500,000	577 x 867	500 x 1,000	450 x 1,150	410 x 1,220
750,000	708 x 1,060	612 x 725	550 x 1,365	500 x 1,500
1,000,000	816 x 1225	708 x 1414	630 x 1,585	575 x 1,740

Manufacturing building aspect ratios may vary from 1.5 to 1 up to 2 to 1 depending on the type of operation. Multi-tenant buildings that are long and narrow will have higher aspect ratios.



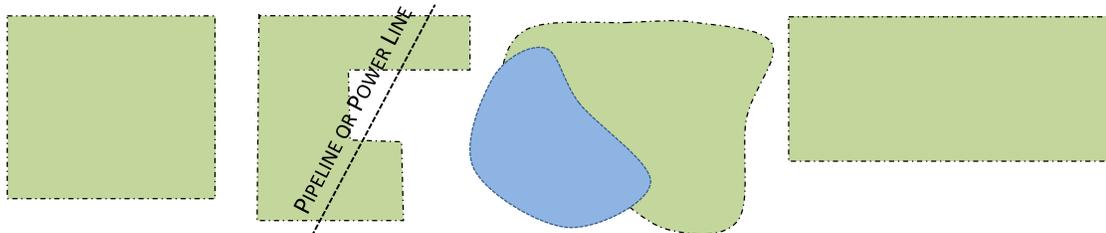
**TYPICAL LAYOUT FOR INDUSTRIAL/WAREHOUSE BUILDING**



5. If there are no available buildings, are there sites of appropriate size (effective usable acres) available?

Site evaluation criteria:

- Cost per acre.
- Existing size (overall) and effective use area (after accounting for wetlands, rights-of-way or utilities, poor soil conditions, etc.)
- Configuration of site (net useable space). How effectively can our building be placed on the site?



- Access to utilities (capacity, cost and availability of electric power, gas, telecom, water and sewer)
- Adjacent land use and types of operations near the site that are either very sensitive (residential, schools, hospitals, public parks, etc.) or could negatively impact the company’s operations.
- Maximum size of building and impervious surfaces relative to the overall size of the site.
- The ability to expand the building in the future.
- The size of the on-site retention required for storm water management purposes.
- Requirements/restrictions for outdoor storage, sound buffering and other requirements.
- Readiness of site (see discussion below)

**Site Readiness**

Understanding *site readiness* is simple. Assume you work for a company that is looking to build a new facility to support the expansion of a hot new product. The company has less than a year to get the site identified, build the building and



get the process up and running. There are two site choices: (1) a cleared site that is certified “Shovel Ready” and has a site plan already approved; or (2) an uncertified site that is currently heavily wooded and may have several sensitive species that will need to be addressed.

Overall site readiness can be classified in different ways, here is an example:

**LEVELS OF SITE READINESS**

Level	Description
1	Building in place, move-in ready quality
2	Building in place, some renovations required/shell building
3	Virtual building designed/approved by local jurisdiction, site is cleared and certified shovel ready
4	Site is cleared and certified shovel ready
5	Site is not cleared but certified shovel ready
6	Site is not cleared, not certified shovel ready but is zoned industrial or for equivalent use
7	Site is not cleared, not certified shovel ready and is currently zoned agriculture or residential

Most companies will start looking for a Level 1 building and then work down the list is needed. If your property readiness is lower than Level 5, many companies will not consider the site.

**“Certified Shovel Ready” Site**

A typical site that achieves a certified (Shovel Ready level) status has undergone the following actions:

- Ownership has been transferred from the original owner to the local government, economic development organization, developer or other third party and a price for individual lots has been determined. The transfer of property typically includes a boundary survey, title search and Phase I Environmental Assessment.
- The required technical studies and surveys have been completed (e.g., soils analysis, wetlands and flood plain assessment, endangered species evaluation, historical/archeological survey, etc.). Depending on the type of site, a traffic study has also been performed.
- A general site plan has been prepared and approved by local agencies.



Many developers will go beyond the *Shovel Ready* status to *Pad Ready* by grading the site and installing the roads and stubbing the utilities to the site. There is also a frequently utilized technique of designing a virtual building for the site that has been approved for construction by the local planning review board. This cuts down the delivery time substantially while setting the standard for building design. There is flexibility in the design to allow some modification of building size and height as well as parking requirements.

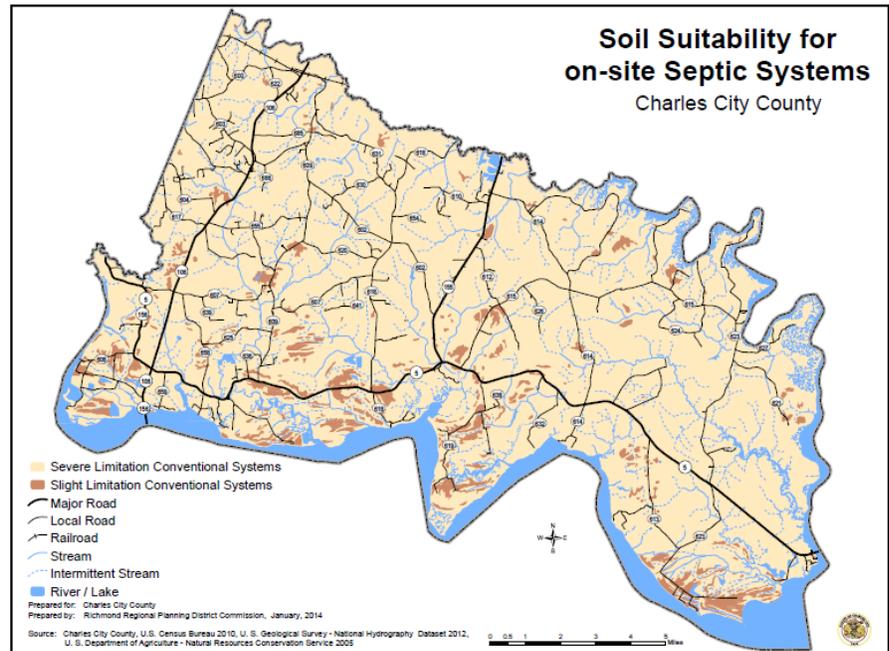
**Criteria That Make a Site “Certified Shovel Ready”**

- Contact information for the site is provided.
- Details about the site are defined, including, size of site/lots, current condition of site, adjacent uses, distance to airport and interstate exit, and other information.
- Ownership of the site is officially documented and in the hands of a third party ready to sell.
- Basic tests completed for the site, such as:

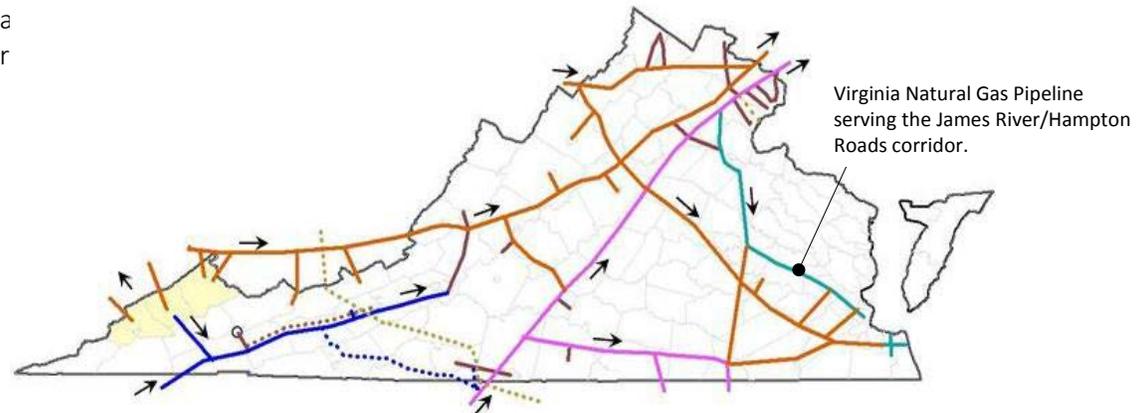
- Soils analysis for structural integrity based on core samples that provide evidence of karst deposits, depth to groundwater, depth to bedrock, etc.
- Environmental Site Assessment - Phase I (ASTM E1527-05 Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments)
- Assessment of site's historical significance (buildings, Indian sites, graveyards, battle sites, etc.)
- Wetlands analysis, 100-year flood plain presence, etc.)
- Rare wildlife species present or ecologically sensitive areas on site.
- A general site plan has been developed to define net usable land, water retention areas, and access roads.
- Utilities and road access have been identified and the cost/timing for any required installation is reasonable.

### 3.2 Utilities

- Electric Power (500kV, 230 kV and 115 kV) - the County is host to the primary transmission lines serving the Hampton Roads area with a major regional substation near County Route 106 and Chambers Road. This provides significant power resources for the Roxbury Industrial Park and the upper portion of CR 106.
- Water/Sewer – the majority of the County is served by individual wells and septic systems. Selected areas in the County have significant clay deposits and/or a high water table that produces very low percolation rates and thus are not appropriate for the traditional septic tank and drainage field wastewater disposal system. The Roxbury Industrial Park and the Courthouse areas have wells and packaged treatment facilities that can handle relatively low demands. Four other package plants serve selected residential areas of the County. The County is not equipped to handle a high water/sewer use operation without major investments in infrastructure.
- Telecom/Internet - The County recently received a \$600,000 grant along with support from a Tier 1 communications provider to substantially upgrade Internet access along the upper Route 106 industrial corridor and the lower Route 155 corridor in the vicinity of the schools and the Courthouse area.



- 16" Gas - the Virginia Na section of the County pr customers.

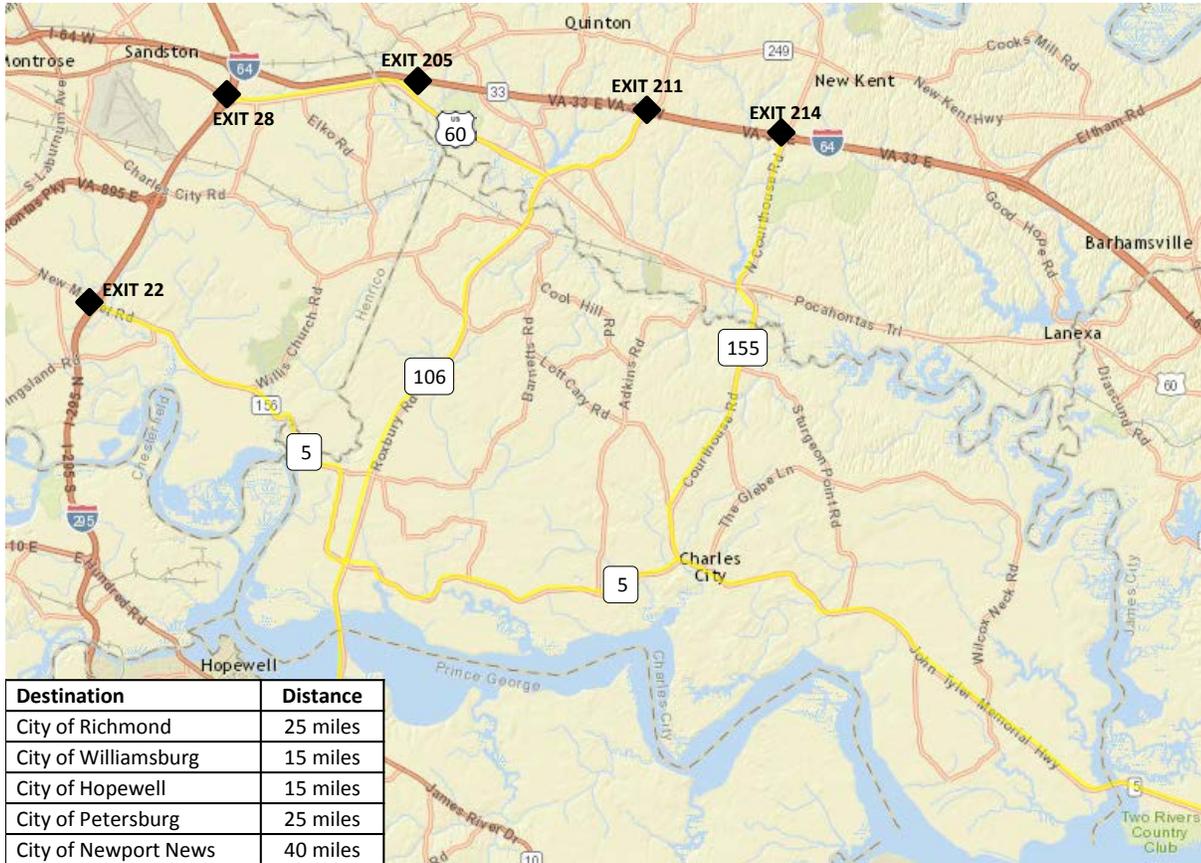


Source: [www.energy.vt.edu/vept/naturalgas/NG\\_pipelines.asp](http://www.energy.vt.edu/vept/naturalgas/NG_pipelines.asp)

### 3.3 Transportation

The county’s primary highways corridors are Routes 106 and 155 north/south and Route 5 east/west. Travel distances to selected destinations are noted below. Urban destinations are at least 15 miles from the Courthouse area.

#### PRIMARY ROUTES IN/OUT OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY



### 3.4 Work Force

The resident workforce is ~3,400 with about 25% working in the county and 75% commuting to destinations within the region, including, Henrico County, the City of Richmond, New Kent County and James City County.

It’s estimated that about 700 residents from Henrico, Nottoway, Chesterfield, New Kent and James City Counties commute to jobs within the County.



<b>Commuters into the County</b> (1,070)	<b>Live/Work in the County</b> (910)	<b>Residents Commuting out of the County</b> (2,460)
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**Primary Commuter Origins into the County:**

- Henrico Co.
- Nottoway Co.
- Chesterfield Co.
- New Kent Co.
- James City Co.

**Primary Commuter Destinations out of the County:**

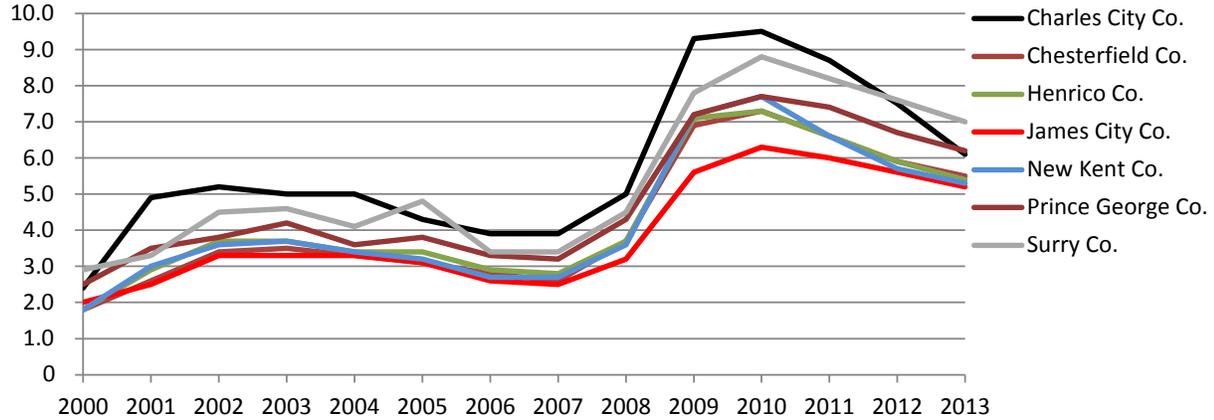
- Henrico Co.
- City of Richmond
- New Kent Co.
- James City Co.
- City of Williamsburg
- Chesterfield Co.
- Hanover Co.

Source: U.S. Census 2006-2010 Data

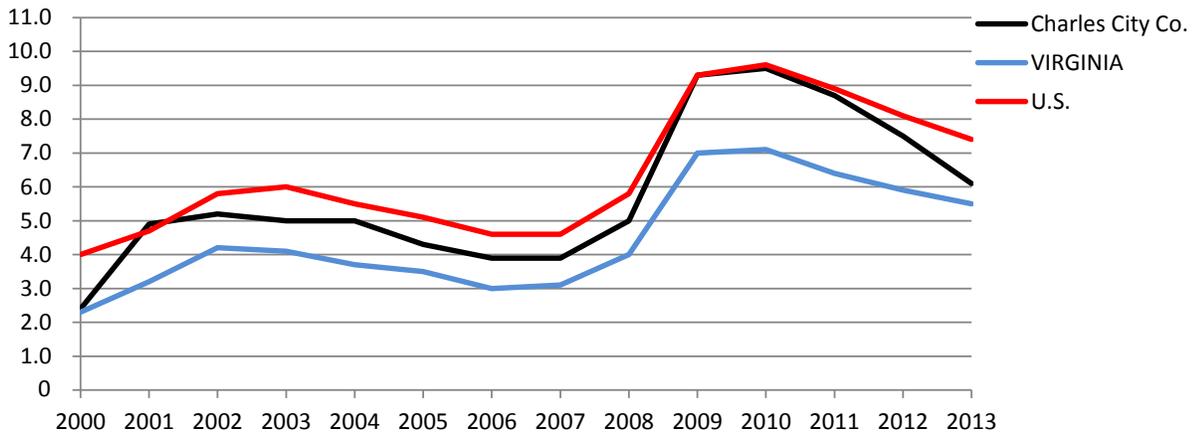
### Unemployment Rate Comparison

The unemployment rate for residents of the County tracks national averages but stays higher on average than other counties in the region and is more volatile during economic downturns.

**UNEMPLOYMENT COMPARISON OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY WITH ADJACENT COUNTIES WITH (ANNUAL AVERAGES)**



**UNEMPLOYMENT COMPARISON OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY WITH VA AND U.S. (ANNUAL AVERAGES)**



### Labor and Quantity Wage Evaluation for Selected Manufacturing Positions

Occupation Code	Description	Richmond Region		Norfolk/Newport News		National Avg.
		Quantity	Mean Annual Wage	Quantity	Mean Annual Wage	Mean Annual Wage
51-1011	First Line Production Supervision	2,140	\$62,890	3,510	\$63,950	\$58,100
51-2092	Team Assemblers	1,930	\$27,860	2,620	\$29,850	\$30,590
51-4041	Machinists	740	\$45,000	2,470	\$45,300	\$41,020
51-4021	Welders, Cutters, Brazers, Solderers	1,140	\$41,320	2,920	\$42,770	\$39,110
51-7011	Cabinetmakers/Bench Carpenters	430	\$29,300	300	\$36,140	\$32,960

Less than favorable compared to national averages.
Favorable to national averages.

With the presence of the Newport News Shipyard and major industrial employers such as DuPont in the Richmond and Norfolk regions, the cost of labor for some positions is higher than national averages.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF POPULATION 10 MILES AROUND THE COURTHOUSE AND ROXBURY ROAD AREAS



Location	Population	Median Age	Population Density	Households	Median HH Income
A. Roxbury	32,494	43.0	120.5	12,733	\$61,880
B. Courthouse	13,086	46.1	50.6	5,216	\$63,583

### 3.5 Education and Training

Total enrollment in Charles City County Public Schools is about 700. A comparison of high school graduation statistics for Charles City County and surrounding areas is presented below. The statistics demonstrate the high on-time graduation rate for the County, which is favorable. However, the size of the graduation class is very small, reflecting a rural area.

	Graduates and Completers, 2013-2014						Total Graduates and Completers 2013-2014	On-Time Graduation Rate (Class of 2013)	H.S. Grads Continuing Education (2012-2013)
	Advanced Studies Diploma	Standard Diploma	Modified Standard Diploma	Special Diploma	GED	Certificate			
<b>Charles City Co.</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>					<b>41</b>	<b>93.7%</b>	<b>79.3%</b>
Chesterfield Co.	2,703	1,650	-	36	50	-	4,545	90.2%	86.0%
Henrico Co.	1,870	1,395	46	60	27	13	3,518	89.9%	87.7%
City of Williamsburg/James City Co.*	505	263	-	11	26	-	830	87.8%	89.2%
New Kent Co.	127	92	-	-	-	-	229	89.5%	78.4%
Prince George Co.	168	202	-	-	-	-	379	83.2%	90.8%
City of Hopewell	89	131	-	12	11	-	243	78.8%	72.0%
Surry Co.	28	23	-	-	-	-	54	96.1%	86.3%
* School district is jointly operated									
Source: Virginia Department of Education									

#### Bridging Communities Regional Career & Technical Center

Established in fall 2012, the Bridging Communities Regional Career & Technical Center provides high school students in Charles City, King and Queen, King William, Middlesex, and New Kent Counties with academically challenging and specialized technical education skills and training. Students may earn industry certifications and can follow pathways to the workforce, specialized trade programs, community college, or four-year institutions.



Juniors and seniors from the five counties participate in rigorous, workplace-based curriculum that provides access to numerous occupations and creates a link between technical skills and academic skills. All programs provide skills in career clusters focusing on current and future occupational opportunities with courses linked to post-secondary dual enrollment. Programs include criminal justice, culinary arts, diesel technology, HVAC, nurse aide, pre-engineering, and web and game design.

According to the school superintendent, 17 students from Charles City County schools are currently enrolled in technical education at the Bridging Communities Regional Technical Center (BCRTC).

#### Rappahannock Community College / New Kent Site

Rappahannock Community College offers dual enrollment opportunities to BCRTC students. The college is co-located at the Center and offers degrees in programs such as EMS, web and game design (software), general engineering technology and HVAC. There are aspects of the general engineering technology and HVAC that can be applied to different manufacturing and distribution jobs.

Students can also be recruited from community colleges within the greater region, including Thomas Nelson, J. Sargeant Reynolds and John Tyler Community Colleges.

### 3.6 Resource Requirements for Industrial Employers

Resource requirements for manufacturing and other industrial employers are outlined below and will be compared to existing resources that were previously identified.

#### MANUFACTURING (MACHINING, METAL FABRICATION, WOOD PRODUCTS, PLASTICS MOLDING, LIGHT ASSEMBLY, ETC.)

Resource	Description of Needs
<b>Real Estate</b>	<u>Primary</u> : existing expandable building (25,000 to 50,000+) available for lease or sale. <u>Secondary</u> : Shovel Ready/pad ready site available for construction (tests have been completed and the site is cleared and level).
<b>Labor</b>	Local labor that is eager to work, is trainable to learn job specifics, can work in teams and available at competitive labor rates.
<b>Utilities</b>	<u>Power</u> : industrial grade power (13.8 V 3 phase with 1,000 to 2,000 amps reduced to 480/208 V) at competitive rates. <u>Water/Sewer</u> : moderate to low needs (<150,000 gallons per day). <u>Telecom</u> : DSL/T1 line is good enough for most operations. <u>Gas</u> : Required for certain process operations.
<b>Transportation</b>	Mid-size companies with significant truck activity typically seek locations within five to ten miles of an interstate. Exceptions are made if the highways are well maintained and not significant retail, schools and other traffic intense activities between them and the interstate.

**Source:** Based on consultant's experience from previous projects and company interviews.

### 3.7 Resource Gaps

Real Estate: Several industrial buildings on the market along the Route 106 corridor. There is a very limited supply of sites with a high level of readiness (tests completed, plans defined/approved, etc.)

Labor: the labor supply for skilled labor requires recruiting in from other locations in the region. There is a need for improvement of basic skills for the lower level workforce. Building an awareness among potential workers as to the qualifications for specific jobs will help close the skills gap.

Utilities: electric power and gas are available at required levels. Water is from selected well sites and sewer is either a drain field or small package plant. High water/sewer users are not going to be attracted to the County. Telecom/broadband is being upgraded in the Roxbury area and via tower near the Courthouse area.

■ Section 4 – DEFINING A VISION AND STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

To develop an economic vision for Charles City County, the project team visited the area in December 2014, conducting interviews and roundtable discussions with about 100 stakeholders. The team also presented basic concepts and identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges related to economic development. Some of the key information that was presented to the community is highlighted below.

**4.1 Summary of Basic Concepts Presented**

**Point #1: Current situation – the County is at a crossroads**

The County faces multiple challenges that need to be addressed in order to sustain an adequate level of economic viability. Current conditions include:

THE COUNTY IS AT A CROSSROADS

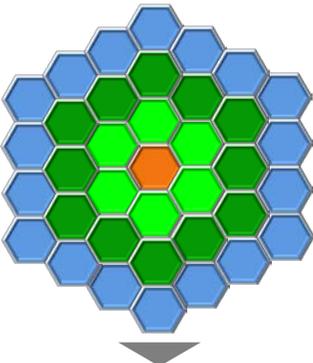
- Population growth is essentially flat.
- Declining County revenues due to reduced tipping fees at regional landfill.
- Substantial portion of work force leaves the County for work.
- Heritage tourism is declining with less interest by next generation . . . historic homes used as wedding and meeting destinations.
- Limited new business growth.
- Very limited retail options within the County.



**Point #2: Defining and evaluating your “Economic Portfolio”**

A local economy is comprised of resources that support economic opportunities at three levels: Level 1 businesses bring cash flow into the economy; Level 2 businesses support the Level 1 businesses; and the Level 3 businesses are consumer- focused. Each level is important but they need to be balanced to assure a healthy and balanced economy.

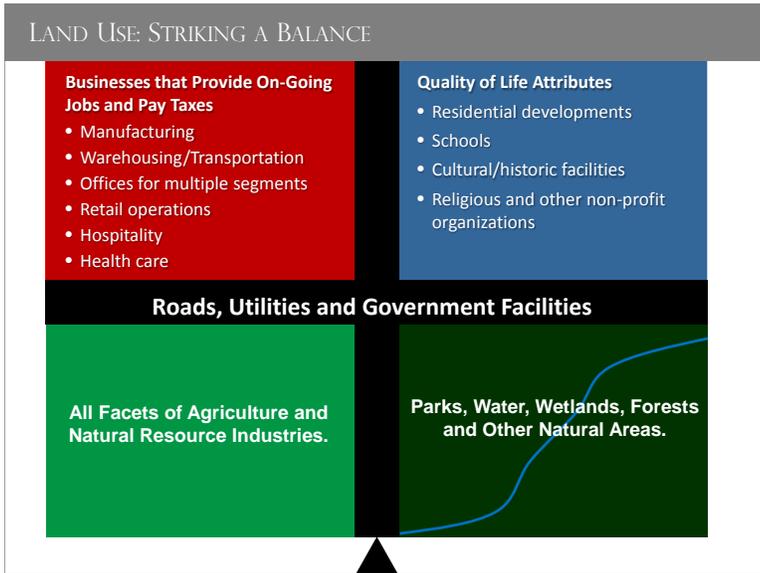
TYPICAL LOCAL ECONOMY



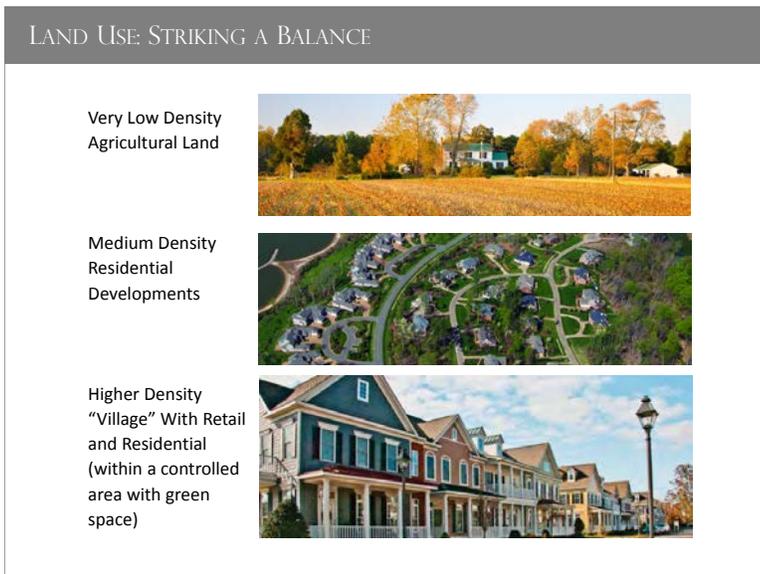
- ◆ **Resources** (Real estate, labor, utilities, education/training, natural resources transportation, financing, etc.)
- ◆ **Level 1 - Primary Industries**  
Employers that infuse money into the county from outside sources, such as:
  - Tourism
  - Agriculture / Forestry / Fishing
  - Manufacturing
- ◆ **Level 2 - Business Support Services**  
Provide support service to the primary industries and consumer businesses located in the area
- ◆ **Level 3 - Consumer-Related Industries**
  - Retail
  - Health Care
  - Construction
  - Other Services

- Jobs/Local Businesses
- Overall Quality of Life
- Local Taxes

**Point #3: Need to strike a balance regarding land use, particularly in a county where significant land resources are constrained by wetlands, flood plains, and other natural features:**



**Point #4: Additional housing is needed to facilitate some level of economic growth. There are different options for housing density that can be considered.**



**Point #5: What is attractive about a destination (for tourism and quality of life) will vary by life stage/style and areas of interest.**

ATTRIBUTES THAT ATTRACT VISITORS

Destination expectations vary by life style/stage and area of interest . . .

	Unique settings that are "authentic"		Meeting places with great food and beverages
	Hands-on experiences		Outdoor activities: biking, boating, birding, etc.
	A place to really learn something		Unique retail reflecting area cultures.

. . . But there are some common themes.

## 4.2 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

### Strengths/Assets

- Strategic location between Norfolk and Richmond
- Competitive cost structure
- Diversity of people/cultural backgrounds
- Attractive natural environment
- Preserved historic assets
- Access to water (lakes/rivers)
- Undeveloped industrial land (having land defined for industrial use is good, but it is at a low level of readiness , making it less attractive to fast-track businesses)
- Electrical and gas infrastructure
- Prime agricultural land
- Telecom/internet access (an issue that is being addressed in 2015)
- Access to education/training resources
- Supportive local government and residents towards economic growth opportunities

### Weaknesses/Challenges

- Limited retail/health care options for residents and employees working in the county
- Low population density and aging population
- Limited labor force and diversity of skills
- Proximity to I-64 (~5 miles) . . . further away than competing locations within the region
- Wetlands and flood plains
- Public water and sewer capacity are very limited throughout the county

**Opportunities**

- Diversify tourism . . . particularly with hands-on activities
- Leverage Virginia Capital Trail . . . increase local spending
- Develop retail in targeted areas
- Expand small manufacturing
- Build residential base in selected locations

**Threats**

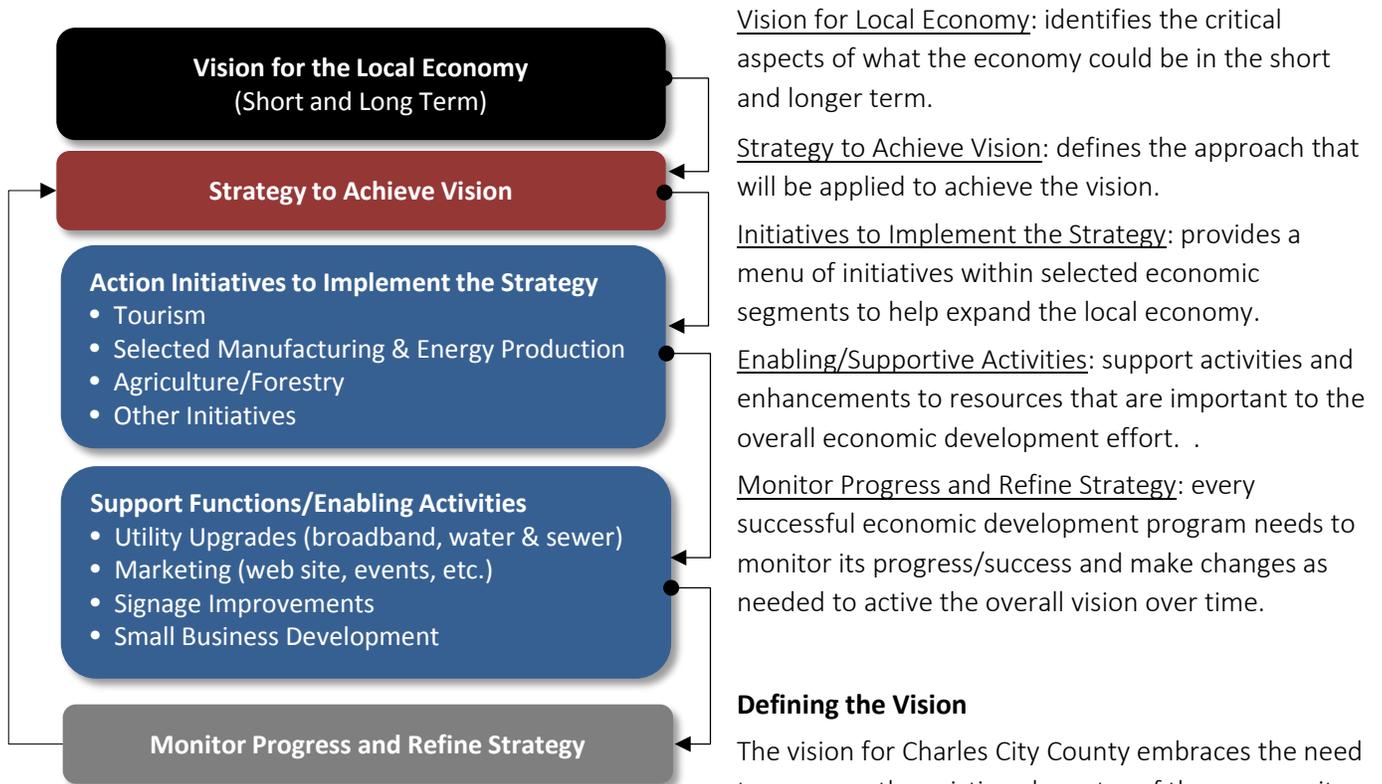
- Competition from nearby counties
- Fear of sprawl may impede any growth opportunities
- Failure to reach a “critical mass” in population and tourism activity to support incremental retail, dining, and other opportunities
- Growth without too much traffic
- Failing to embrace a shared vision going forward

### 4.3 Defining a Vision for Economic Growth



Defining a vision for the County’s economic future is the foundation for achieving growth and opportunity. Development of the vision is an integral part of the overall strategic model for economic growth as outlined below.

#### Key Elements of the Strategic Model for Economic Growth



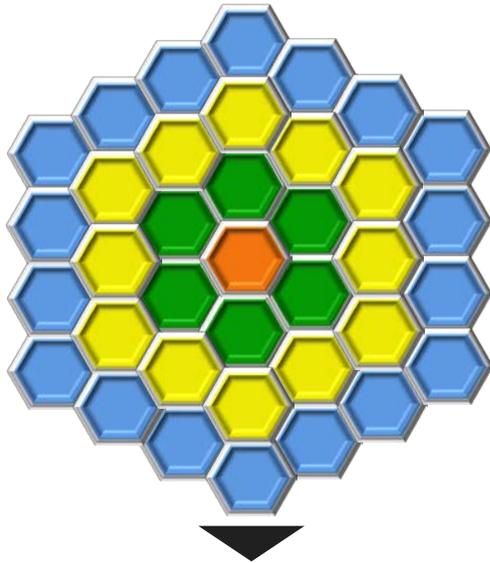
The vision for Charles City County embraces the need to preserve the existing character of the community

while taking advantage of opportunities and moving the community forward. Elements include:

- Preserve and leverage the County’s natural and historic qualities while embracing a modest level of compatible development and population growth.
- Based on a realistic assessment of local resources, expand employment and small business opportunities for local residents to help retain/attract the emerging next generation.
- Facilitate the growth of small businesses (from start-up to acceleration of existing firms) throughout the County to provide increased economic opportunities.

- Enhance the quality of life with amenities and services (e.g., retail, restaurants, cultural/recreational activities, health care services) to serve residents and visitors and sustain the population base in the County going forward.
- Develop a portfolio of diverse economic activities that produce the tax base required to sustain the operation of the County.

**FRAMEWORK AND PORTFOLIO OF ECONOMIC SEGMENTS**



- Broadened job/local business opportunities
- Enhanced quality of life (retail/restaurants culture, recreation, health care and housing)
- Expanded local tax base



**Resources** (Real estate, labor, utilities, education/training, natural resources, transportation access, financing and competitive cost, etc.)



**Level 1 - Primary Industries**  
Businesses that infuse money into the local economy from outside sources:

- Tourism
- Diversified Agriculture/Forestry
- Selected Manufacturing
- Transportation Services (for clients outside the county)



**Level 2 - Business Support Services**  
Provide support service to the primary industries and consumer businesses that are local.



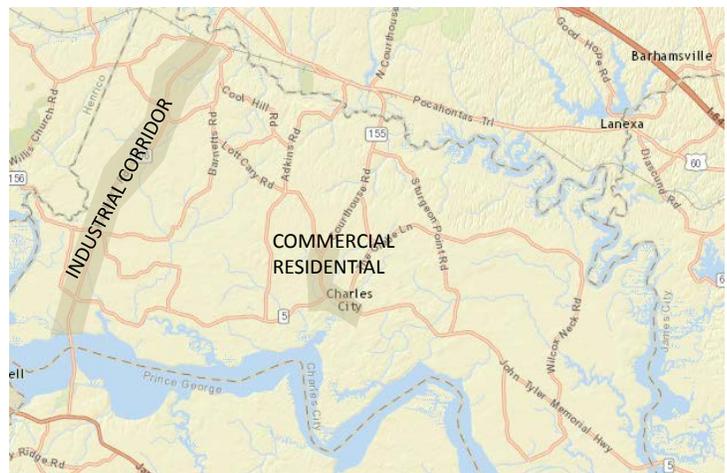
**Level 3 - Consumer-Related Industries**

- Retail/Restaurants (leveraged with Tourism)
- Health Care (small clinics)
- Home Construction
- Other Services

**4.4 Strategy to Achieve the Vision**

Each aspect of the strategy focuses on a particular aspect of the vision as stated in the previous section.

- Support economic development while preserving and protecting the natural and historic aspects of the County - This will be accomplished by land use regulations and zoning enforcement, as well as defining specific areas in the county for development activities. The Route 106 corridor has been designated as an industrial development area with selected parcels that are amenable to development, and a setback/buffer is required to shield activity from the road. This will maintain the rural character of the area while allowing for expansion of the industrial sector. Similarly, the lower Route 155/Route 5 area between the



schools and the Courthouse area are designed for more intensive commercial and residential development that is in line with the look and feel of the overall community.

- Based on realistic assessment of local resources, expand employment and small business opportunities - Over the next five years, the highest-potential economic opportunities include the following:
  1. Leverage the existing industrial base (manufacturing) and continue to expand/attract these businesses by offering available buildings and shovel ready sites, adequate utilities and reasonable taxes. Build relationships with local educational institutions to communicate the needs of businesses and introduce students to potential employers through internships and work experiences.
  2. Work with agricultural and forestry businesses to facilitate their growth in scale and diversity of product base. Stimulate niche farming, agritourism, small-scale and value-added food processing, the diversification of wood products and use of wood wastes, etc.
  3. From a tourism perspective, develop more retail/restaurant options in the Courthouse area to provide a channel to sell locally produced goods, expand small businesses, and offer spending options for tourists coming into the County.
- Facilitate the growth of small businesses (from start-up to acceleration of existing firms) throughout the County - Offer training and support (mentorship, business services, and access to financial resources) to small businesses throughout the County to facilitate their growth.
- Enhance the quality of life with amenities and services (e.g., retail, restaurants, cultural/recreational activities, health care services) – Given the County’s small, rural population, additional stores and services will only come to the area if the community leverages the presence of visitors to make these businesses viable. If additional tourism activity takes place because of the bike trail or a special event, more visitors will require lodging, restaurants, and other services. These opportunities will also be available to local residents. Establishing a mind-set that links “tourism” to “quality of life” for residents will help to achieve success in both areas.
- Develop a portfolio of diverse economic activities that produces the needed tax base - for each economic opportunity listed above, the estimated contribution to the local tax base will be calculated and compared to the projected needs of the County.

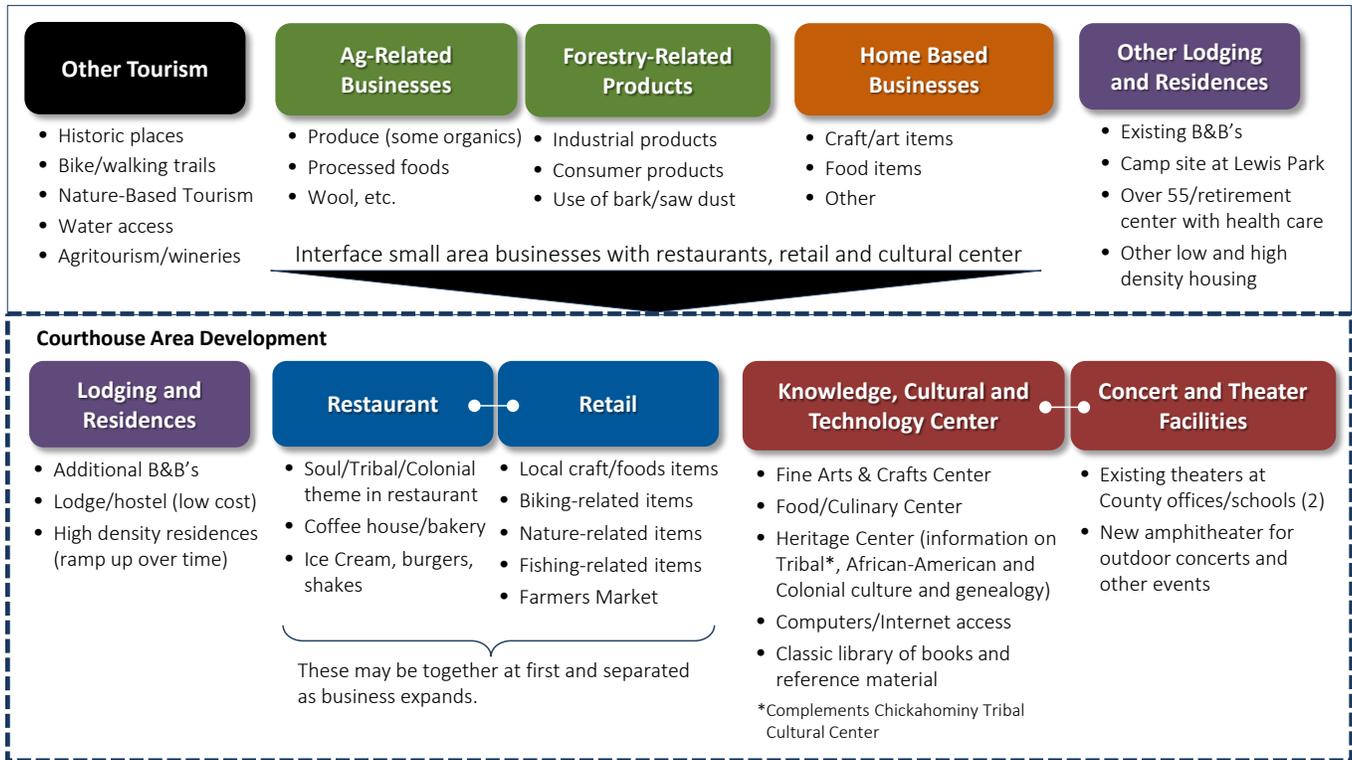
Type of Tax	Economic Segment		
	Retail	Agriculture	Manufacturing
Personal Property		Vehicles	Vehicles
Real Estate	Structures		Structures
Machinery & Tools	-	-	Schedule for Equipment
Sales	Product Sales	Local purchases	Local purchases
Merchants Capital	On Business Activity	-	-

### 4.5 Action Initiatives to Implement the Strategy

The primary initiatives to support economic development in Charles City County are summarized below. As the chart indicates, these initiatives are interconnected. Details on each initiative are provided in Section 5 of this report.

**1. Develop the Courthouse Area** into a village center as envisioned in the County’s Courthouse Area Plan, with restaurants, retail stores, and additional lodging as well as (eventually) higher-density residential uses.

#### INTERACTION OF TOURISM WITH DIVERSE SMALL LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE



Support the start-up/acceleration of all small business in the County through web site and other marketing, additional packaging of activities/lodging/restaurants and special events, special signage, support services/mentoring, access to finances, etc.

The development of the Courthouse Area will require a modest ramp-up, leveraging the incremental tourism generated from the promotion of the Virginia Capital Trail and other activities. The architectural theme will focus around repurposed houses, barns and other structures relocated from the outlying areas. This would create an attractive and unique village-look that would reflect the original Courthouse area before it was burned down by Federal troops in June of 1864. Specific development activities include:

- A village green with an amphitheater (as a focal point for community activities and events) and ample parking areas.
- Additional restaurants, retail/consignment store(s) and a farmers’ market that would expand over time.
- A new B&B at the Nance-Major homestead and construction of a low-cost lodge/hostel for cyclists.
- A Center for Knowledge, Culture and Technology with multiple components as noted above.
- High-density housing for local working professionals, 55+ adults, and others, to be ramped up over time as the market expands. Currently, there are not enough retail, restaurants and services to support a large population and the issue with sewer capacity will need to be addressed.

**2. Selected manufacturing and energy opportunities** that include the following potential industries:

- Machining operations
- Machinery and equipment manufacturing
- Plastic and composite parts manufacturing
- Light assembly of subassemblies or small equipment/machinery
- Furniture and fixture manufacturing (particularly wood products)

Note: The selection of industries and operations is based on current presence in the County and the region as well as overall market trends driving demand.

- Energy-related projects include solar, gas and biomass fuels.

**3. Identify additional agriculture and forestry-related opportunities** that include:

- Additional crops
- New food product development (access to commercial kitchen for product development and small scale production)
- Agritourism options
- New industrial and consumer wood products (e.g., selected line of furniture from local/regional wood)
- Utilization of crop and wood waste materials

**4. Tourism Derived From Virginia Capital Trail** that includes the following opportunities:

- Special events
- Leverage purchases of retail, restaurants and lodging

#### 4.6 Support Functions and Enabling Activities for Economic Growth

Support functions and enabling activities facilitate economic growth and include diverse efforts such as:

- Addressing utility issues in key development areas (telecom/internet and wastewater treatment).
- Providing business start-up/acceleration support for small businesses.
- Conducting tourism marketing and promotion.
- Installing signage to support tourism.
- **Small business development** - tools, resources and support efforts to help start-up and emerging companies thrive in the County.
- **Labor awareness and training** - options and resources that facilitate local residents in their knowledge of job and small business opportunities along with the requirements to take advantage of the opportunities. Also communicate the availability of training, internships and mentoring options.
- **Enhance Utilities to Support Economic Growth** – sewer and telecom in the Roxbury and Courthouse areas of the County
- **Marketing** - build awareness of County for tourists visiting the County and for industrial firms potentially locating to the County. Provide signage to effectively direct visitors to selected destinations/venues throughout the County.

#### **4.7 Monitor Progress and Refine Strategy**

Ultimate success in economic development is derived from creating a plan, monitoring its progress and then modifying the plan as needed. The monitoring function includes methods of measuring and reporting progress as well as having specific times identified to reflect on progress and determine any changes needed going forward. Metrics for monitoring progress may include:

- Growth in new businesses by type and size (revenue and employment)
- Progress in the completion of a specific task or project
- Incremental tax revenues collected
- Other factors

## ■ Section 5 – ACTION INITIATIVES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### 5.1 Overview of Action Initiatives

The *Action Initiatives* are the bridge between the vision for economic growth and making the vision a reality. Each initiative has an integral role within the overall economic development plan, and activities are synchronized to produce optimum results. For each initiative, we have provided a brief description; a summary of the potential impact, revenue opportunities, risks, costs, and potential funding sources; detailed recommendations; and a schedule for implementation.

### 5.2 Initiative #1: Develop Courthouse Area into a Village Center and Destination for Tourists

<b>Description</b>	The Courthouse Area has the potential to become a village center and visitor destination, with restaurants, retail stores, and additional lodging, as well as (eventually) higher-density residential uses. Development of this area would enhance the quality of life for residents, while creating a tourism destination through the development of a Knowledge, Cultural and Technology Center and event facilities.
<b>Potential Impact</b>	Leveraging the existing tourism base as well as the anticipated growth resulting from the completion of the Virginia Capital Trail, the development of the Courthouse Area will provide numerous opportunities to generate local sales activity. This, in turn, will support multiple local businesses and jobs and increase County tax revenues.  A secondary benefit is that this initiative will enhance the local quality of life by providing residents with amenities and services. This may stimulate interest among non-residents in moving to Charles City County, building the critical population mass required to support additional retail stores, restaurants, and services.
<b>Revenue Opportunities for the County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales taxes</li> <li>• Property taxes</li> <li>• Merchants capital</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	If the rollout of this initiative is not properly synchronized, investment in businesses and infrastructure will not produce the anticipated return. This project may need up to ten years to be fully realized, assuming the overall economy holds at a reasonable level.
<b>Related Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a master plan that defines land uses, design guidelines, architectural standards, layouts, and infrastructure needs.</li> <li>• Construction of buildings and housing on a step-by-step basis.</li> <li>• Installation of utilities (sewer and water), roads, parking, green space, etc. to support development of the site.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	The majority of the commercial and residential development will be the responsibility of the private sector. The project ramp-up will need to be tested and set on a path that matches market demand. Public infrastructure, such as sewer, water and roads, is critical to the success of the development. This will need to be a County investment funded through bonding. The overall effort will be the result of a strong public/private partnership investment that has definable/reasonable returns for both segments.

**Details on Action Initiative**

The development of the Courthouse Area along Routes 155 and 5 in Charles City offers an opportunity to create a unique destination that will support expanded tourism while enhancing the quality of life for local residents. Key features of the proposed development include:

- A Courthouse Village with a village green and an outdoor amphitheater; restaurants, retail stores, and low-cost lodging; a Knowledge, Cultural, and Technology Center; and high-density housing to be developed over time.
- Additional high-density residential uses across Route 5 and along Route 155 near the school.
- Commercial uses along Routes 155 and 5.
- Areas for lower-density single family homes and open space.

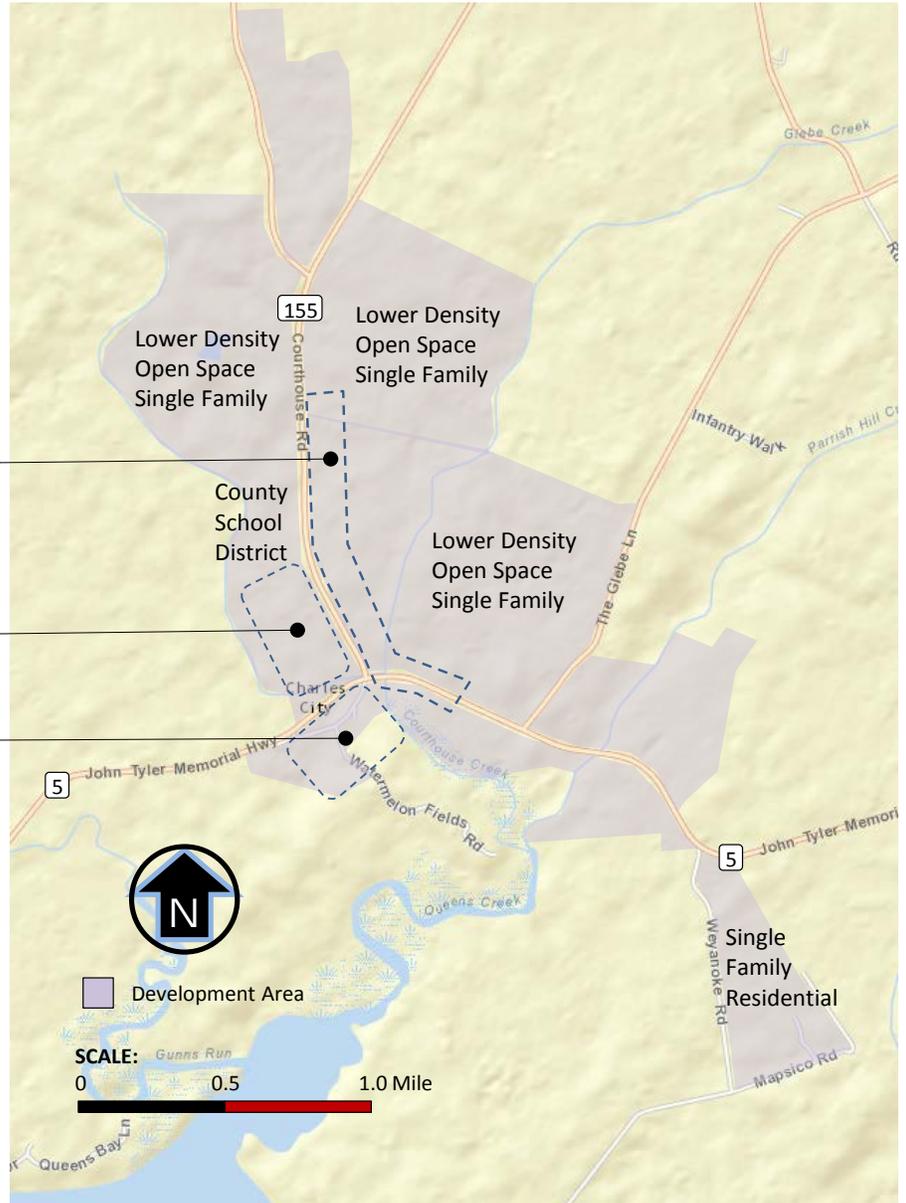
Commercial Area With Well Defined Architectural Standards

High Density Planned Residential

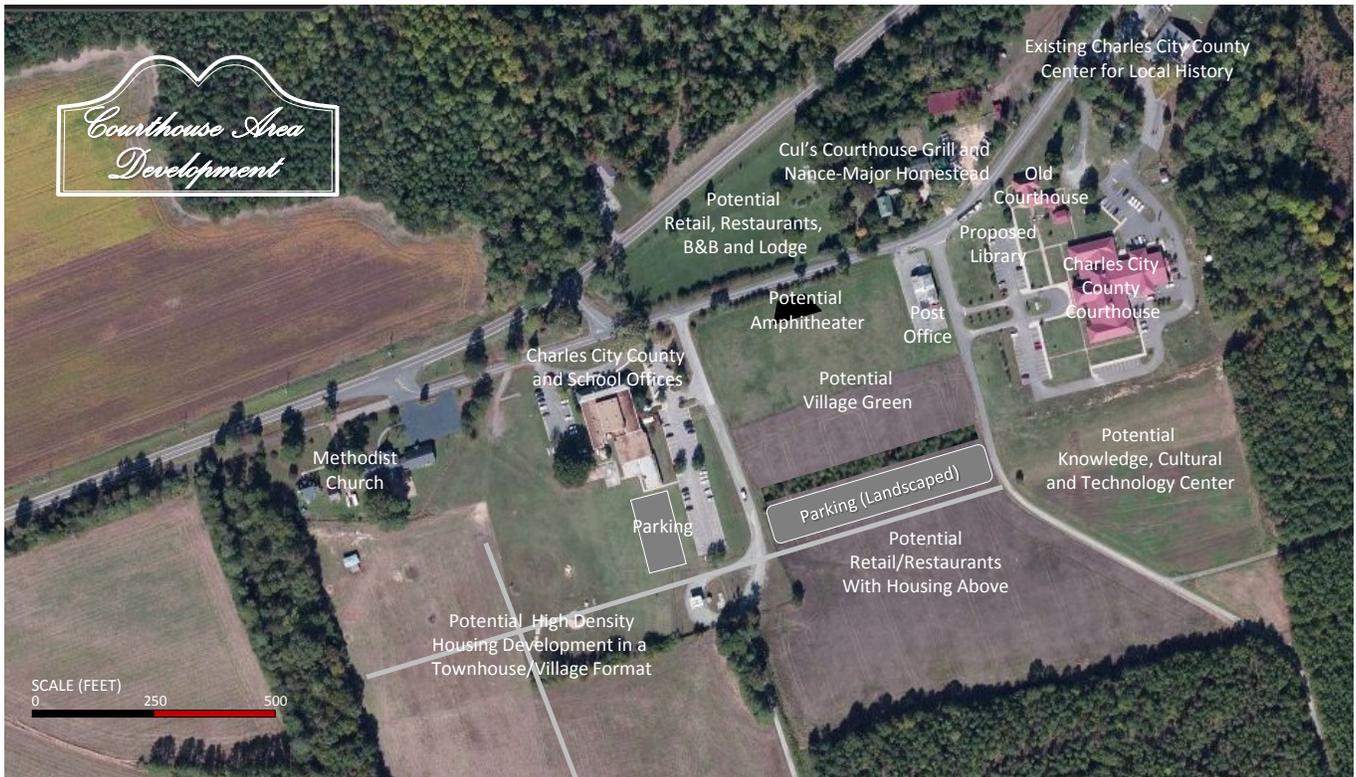
Charles City Courthouse Destination Village

Details on the layout of the Courthouse Village are provided on the next page.

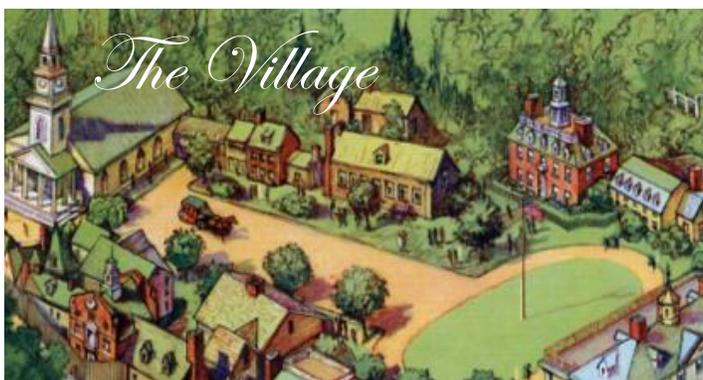
**PROPOSED COURTHOUSE AREA DEVELOPMENT**



**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR THE AREA ADJACENT TO THE COURTHOUSE (DESTINATION VILLAGE)**



The area in the vicinity of the Courthouse is laid out to reflect an early colonial village with a center green as a focal point and a location for an outdoor amphitheater. There will be a concentration of shops, restaurants and lodging to the north along Courthouse Road and south of the green. A proposed library would be located west of the Courthouse complex. The *Knowledge, Cultural and Technology Center* will be located just south of the Courthouse and high density housing is proposed for the west side of the village. There may also be housing above retail stores on the south side of the green.



KNOWLEDGE, CULTURAL & TECHNOLOGY CENTER  
CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VA

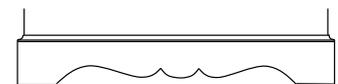


**Functional Areas Would Include:**

- Fine Arts & Crafts Center for painting, pottery, leather, bead work, music woodworking, performing arts, etc.
- Food/Culinary Center with small commercial kitchen
- Heritage Center on Tribal\*, African-American and Colonial culture and genealogy
- Computers/Internet access

\*Complements Chickahominy Tribal Cultural Center

Designing a building that reflects a typical Virginia barn style will reduce cost while producing a structure that is unique and appeals to residents and tourists. The Center offers classes that can be marketed to tourists and offered to local residents as an enhancement to quality of life.



CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT FOR BUILDING

Woodworking Shop	Pottery Studio	Painting Studio
Great Hall With Chairs, Small Tables and Art/Project Displays		
Open Classroom	Sewing and Beadwork	Demonstration Kitchen

# *The Shops at Courthouse Village* CHARLES CITY, V A



Restored or newly designed houses, barns , schools or other structures to reflect the local architectural heritage and utilize as retail space for a consignment shop, country store and niche restaurants. Ideal venue for marketing locally made goods, backed by a web site for follow-up purchases.



Utilize former school buildings for shops decorated with pictures commemorating former students and teachers.



## Concerts on the Green CHARLES CITY, V A



Construct an amphitheater stage on the north end of the village green for concerts and other events.



Low cost/attractive lodging for cyclists and others.

## Strategy to Implement the Initiative

1. A primary assumption is that funding will be limited (particularly in the early stages when risks are higher) and there will be a need for a creative/innovative approach in order to be successful. Potential funding sources include tourism taxes (e.g., room tax, admission fees), grants from the public and private sectors, government bonds, and private investors. “Sweat equity” contributions by residents may help to reduce funding needs.
2. The initiative should be positioned as a community-wide effort with outcomes that are of potential value to every resident in the County.
3. There is a significant amount of complexity to the initiative and it needs to be divided up into individual projects that are coordinated through a master plan over a ten-year period.
4. The order of execution will be critical due to market dynamics and the need for public infrastructure (sewer, roads, parking, parks, water/sewer upgrades, etc.)
5. The region has a significant presence of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century structures in varying condition. One approach is to utilize locally available refurbished/repurposed structures (houses, barns, former schools, other structures) that are moved to the Courthouse Village. This will not only reduce costs but make the destination unique and highly attractive to tourists. Some structures could also be modified pole barns or other simple designs that are relatively inexpensive to construct.

The amphitheater can be prefabricated by specialty wood firms (some in Virginia) and brought to the site.

There may also be an opportunity to utilize timber from Charles City County for certain aspects of the project.

## Implementation Plan

The overall initiative is divided into three phases for implementation, spread out over ten years. A Critical Path chart is provided on the next page to demonstrate the interrelationship between the phases and the individual projects/tasks.

### ■ Phase I: Initial Evaluation (2015-2016)

During this initial time period, an overall Master Plan is developed for the Courthouse Area that defines land uses in specific locations, development options, and basic guidelines and architectural standards to support quality growth and development of the area.

Within the Courthouse Village, an overall layout is developed along with design guidelines for structures. A survey of potentially available structures to utilize in the Courthouse Village is undertaken to validate this approach as an option.

Also during this phase, a list of local businesses/individuals that produce local goods (e.g., jams, wool blankets, organic produce, woodcraft items, Indian beadwork, printed t-shirts, etc.) will be developed and efforts will be made to promote these products through Cul’s Courthouse Grill, a mini-farmers’ market, small kiosks, or other methods to “test” market demand.

### ■ Phase II: Monitor Market Activity/Begin Initial Construction (2017-2021)

At this point, several years’ worth of information on Virginia Capital Trail usage and other tourism activity will be compiled, and visitors will be surveyed for input on potential development options in the Courthouse Area (e.g., retail/restaurant options, lodging for cyclists, amphitheater, fine arts/crafts classes, etc.). Based on the information, trends, and the overall condition of the economy, some projects can be initiated, such as:

- Construction of small retail/restaurant A and then B

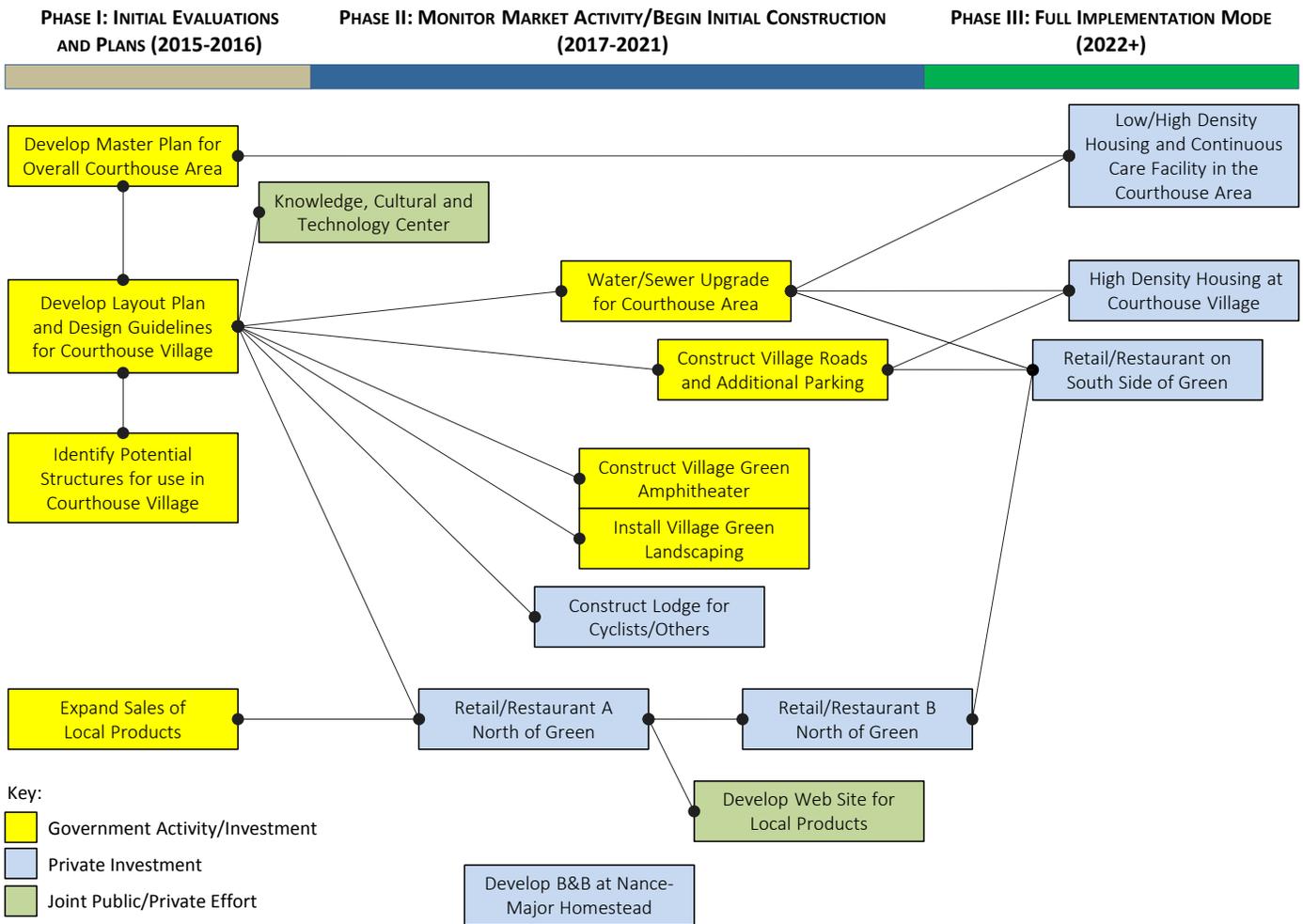
- ❑ Development of a web site for marketing local products
- ❑ Conversion of Nance-Major homestead into B&B
- ❑ Construction of a low-cost lodge for cyclists
- ❑ Installation of Village Green landscaping and amphitheater
- ❑ Installation of a road and parking at south end of Village Green
- ❑ Initial construction of the Knowledge, Cultural & Technology Center (this may be one large building or several smaller buildings interconnected)
- ❑ Development of sewer/water infrastructure as the Courthouse Village expands

**Phase III: Full Implementation Mode (2022+)**

In this phase, there will be further expansion of shopping and dining facilities as well as housing in the Courthouse Village and the overall Courthouse Area. Postponing the launch for several years is recommended for two reasons: (1) it gives the County time to address the water/sewer system requirements and (2) it allows the tourism market to expand and ramp-up demand on a gradual basis. This minimizes the risk of developing housing prematurely, before a sufficient market exists, and relying on residential growth to support retail uses.

**Action Plan Details**

**PROJECT ROLLOUT FOR ACTION INITIATIVE NO. 1**



## **Phase I: Initial Evaluations and Plans (2015-2016)**

### ■ Task 1 – Develop Master Plan for Overall Courthouse Area

- Assemble technical and local stakeholder team
- Develop plan that defines land uses in specific locations, development options, basic guidelines and architectural standards to support quality growth and development of the area
- Provide opportunity for public input and comment
- Finalize document

### ■ Task 2 – Develop Layout Plan and Design Guidelines for Courthouse Village

- Assemble technical and local stakeholder team
- Develop overall layout plan for the Courthouse Village and apply/refine guidelines from the Master Plan in Task 1. (There may be stricter design/architectural standards in the Courthouse Village.)
- Gather public input and comment as required
- Finalize document

### ■ Task 3 – Identify Potential Structures for Use in the Courthouse Village

- Assemble a small team (Planning Department staff, student intern, consultant, etc.)
- Engage in a visual survey and discussions with property owners about potentially available buildings
- Gather data on each building (type, location, owner/contact information, size, condition and accessibility) and photographs on each side and interior
- Develop document with the profiles of each structure for future use

### ■ Task 4 – Expand Sales of Local Products

- Assemble a small team (Economic Development staff, student intern, consultant, etc.)
- Conduct survey of local producers of farm and food products, arts and crafts, clothing, blankets, etc.
- Develop opportunities to sell local products and test new venues (e.g., consignment at Cul's Courthouse Grill, small-scale farmers' market in-season, small kiosks and vendor displays at events)
- Utilize feedback on demand for certain products as the basis for potentially opening a consignment store in the Courthouse Village in the next 2-4 years

## **Phase II: Monitor Market Activity/Begin Initial Construction (2017-2021)**

### ■ Task 5 – Knowledge, Cultural and Technology Center

Note: the project team is aware that efforts have been made to design and develop cost estimates for a new library in the County. The proposed multi-functional approach to the facility will require some reevaluation of design criteria.

- Assemble a small team of technical experts and local stakeholders
- Refine the scope and needs of a multi-functional facility with work rooms, information storage, reading rooms, computer area, small commercial kitchen, etc.
- Consider using a repurposed barn or other available structure or simplified design as a creative approach to create a unique building environment at a lower overall cost
- Develop recommendations, conceptual drawings and cost estimates
- Seek funding via grants, private donations (funds, time or materials) and other sources
- Develop construction drawings and specifications

- Bid out specific portions of the work scope
- Set aside certain tasks to be complete on a “sweat equity” basis
- Secure any applicable permits prior to commencing construction
- Complete construction

■ **Task 6 – Water/Sewer Upgrade for Courthouse Area**

- Engage consulting engineering firm to provide cost estimates for different alternatives to service the Courthouse Area over the next 25 years
- Select alternative and seek refined cost estimate
- Issue bonds and/or seek other funding to cover cost of system upgrade
- Develop construction drawings and specifications
- Secure approvals from State and local departments and jurisdictions
- Complete construction
- Operate and maintain system

■ **Task 7 – Construct Village Roads and Additional Parking**

- Retain engineering firm to develop plans and specifications
- Bid paving job
- Construct roads/parking

■ **Task 8 – Construct Village Green Amphitheater**

- Assemble small team to define needs/types of activities for amphitheater
- Develop Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for amphitheater design and installation
- Issue RFQ and receive design and price quotes
  - GazeboCreations.com • 5410 Route 8, Gibsonia, PA 15044 • Phone: 1-888-293-2339  
[www.gazebocreations.com/CustomAmphitheaterQuote.aspx](http://www.gazebocreations.com/CustomAmphitheaterQuote.aspx)
  - StreamLine TimberWorks • 999 Harvestwood Rd, Floyd, VA 24091 • Phone: 1-540-230-5505  
<http://streamlinetimberworks.com/>
  - Poligon Park Architecture • Holland, MI • Phone: 1-616-399-1963  
[www.poligon.com](http://www.poligon.com)
- Secure funding for project
- Issue contract and complete construction

**EXAMPLES OF STAGE DESIGNS**



■ **Task 9 – Install Village Green Landscaping**

- Assemble small team and retain landscaper to offer advice on landscaping the green
- Develop formal plan and estimated cost
- Secure funding for landscaping (could be combined with Task 8)
- Retain landscaping services to complete project (consider using volunteers for some tasks when possible)

■ **Task 10 – Construct Low-Cost Lodge for Cyclists**

- Location identified by Courthouse Layout Plan (Task 2)
- Design and construction provided by private investor
- Government support with required permits

■ **Task 11 – Retail/Restaurant A (North of Village Green)**

- Location and design criteria identified by Courthouse Layout Plan (Task 2)
- Private investor constructs building or relocates/refurbishes existing building
- Government support with required permits
- Lease out to operator and paid in part by consignment transactions of local goods

■ **Task 12 – Retail/Restaurant B (North of Village Green)**

- Follow Task 11 if market demand expands

■ **Task 13 – Develop Web Site for Local Products**

- Assemble small team of technical and local stakeholders (consultants input)
- Define components of the web site and potential vendors
- Determine platform to be used incorporating requirements for product bundling, fulfillment and payments
- Develop site and start-up . . . maintain on an ongoing basis

■ **Task 14 – Develop B&B at Nance-Major Homestead**

- Project developed by private investor
- Government support with permit requirements

**Phase III: Full Implementation Mode (2022+)**

■ **Task 15 – Lower/High Density Housing and Continuous Care Facility**

- Location and design criteria identified by Courthouse Area Plan (Task 1)
- Private investor constructs buildings/housing
- Government support with permitting (including special permit for care facility)

■ **Task 16 – High Density Housing in the Courthouse Village**

- Location(s) and design criteria identified by Courthouse Village Layout Plan (Task 2)
- Private investor undertakes projects based on market opportunities
- Government support with permitting

■ **Task 17 – Retail/Restaurant (possibly with residential on second floor) on South Side of Green**

- Location(s) and design criteria identified by Courthouse Village Layout Plan (Task 2)
- Private investor undertakes projects based on market opportunities
- Government support with permitting

**Overall Project Schedule**

Outline of Phases/Tasks	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Phase I</b>										
1. Master Plan for Courthouse Area										
2. Layout/Design Plan for Courthouse Village										
3. Identify Potential Structures for Village										
4. Expand Sales of Local Products										
<b>Phase II</b>										
5. Knowledge, Cultural & Technology Center*										
6. Water/Sewer Upgrade in Courthouse Area										
7. Construct Roads and Parking in Village										
8. Amphitheater in Village Green										
9. Landscaping in Village Green										
10. Lodge for Cyclists/Others										
11. Retail/Restaurant A North of Village Green										
12. Retail/Restaurant B North of Village Green										
13. Web Site for Local Products										
14. B&B at Nance-Major Homestead										
<b>Phase III</b>										
15. Lower/High Density Hsg./Cont. Care Facility										
16. High Density Housing in Courthouse Village										
17. Retail/Restaurant South of Village Green										

\*Conduct conceptual planning in 2018 and architectural design and construction drawings in 2019, build in 2020.

### 5.3 Initiative #2: Expand and Attract Selected Manufacturing and Energy Opportunities

<b>Description</b>	Charles City County needs to maintain a pro-business environment and have the resources in place to expand existing and attract additional manufacturing operations in select industry segments, such as metal fabrication, machinery, light assembly, plastic and composite parts, wood products, etc. It also includes solar, gas and biomass fueled power generation. The resources required include real estate available at the right level of readiness, labor, utilities, training, and financial incentives.
<b>Potential Impact</b>	Manufacturing typically provides a strong contribution to the tax base while providing jobs that pay good wages.
<b>Revenue Opportunities for the County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Machinery and tool tax</li> <li>• Real estate tax</li> <li>• Personal property (registered vehicles)</li> <li>• Industrial utility tax (not significant)</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	The County invests in infrastructure and real estate that does not achieve the return on investment from incremental taxes and jobs.
<b>Related Costs</b>	Investment in the upgrade of utilities (water, sewer and telecom/Internet band width) and in preparing land to be at a high level of readiness (shovel- or pad-ready). Construction of a 25,000+ SF shell building after existing building inventory is depleted.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line item in annual budget (modest projects each year over a defined period)</li> <li>• Issue bond to raise larger levels of capital quickly</li> <li>• Grants from federal and state sources</li> <li>• Private investment and public/private partnerships</li> </ul>

#### Strategy to Expand and Attract Selected Manufacturing Operations and Attract Energy Projects

In order to sustain and expand a strong manufacturing base, it is critical to have available resources that meet the needs of companies. Meeting these needs can be accomplished through the following strategy:

1. **Real Estate:** Maintain at least one (1) 25,000 + SF building with ceilings 25+ feet high, and have at least a 20-acre site (effective usable acres in a favorable configuration) that is certified shovel-ready and at least 5 acres that are pad-ready. This can be accomplished either through public or private investment.

2. **Utilities:**

- Telecom/Internet - A grant has been received to upgrade telecom/Internet access along the Route 106 industrial corridor.
- Water and sewer - The existing water and sewer systems that serve the Roxbury Industrial Park and the Route 106 corridor to Chambers Road need to be evaluated for current use vs. overall capacity. Install a cooling line (non-potable water) to serve the Route 106 corridor for energy generation and selected manufacturing.

3. **Labor:** Build stronger relationships between the local high school, the Bridging Communities Regional Technical Center, Rappahannock Community College, and local manufacturing employers to assure a sustainable labor supply for the manufacturing sector.



4. **Business Environment:** Demonstrate and document responsiveness to permit reviews and other government review processes. Assure that tax levies are in-line with peer county governments in the region.
5. **Marketing and Promotion of County:** Develop communications tools (resource profile and enhanced web site) that promote opportunities for manufacturing firms in the County. Communicate local resource opportunities to VEDP, the regional brokerage community, and site selectors.

### Action Plan Details to Implement the Strategy

#### ■ Task 1 – Develop Real Estate Resources

A discussion of real estate resources is provided in Section 3.1 and includes existing parcels on Chambers Road and Route 106 as well as longer-term sites further south on Route 106.

- Identify portions of existing sites that will produce nearly square configurations of 10, 20 and 50 acres taking into consideration wetlands, buffers, offsets, etc.
- Determine whether to retain the land as County property and invest further in site readiness, or sell certain parcels to private developers (at very competitive rates) with stipulations on what needs to be done to the site to achieve a high level of readiness on a defined schedule.
- Select a large high-potential site (based on access to roads, distance from power and gas lines, “high and dry” status, and uses of adjacent land) and engage in the Shovel Ready Certification process described in Section 3.1. Also, remove trees and other vegetation from at least five (5) acres of the site, grade and seed. Make sure utility services are at the road or stubbed to the site.



#### ■ Task 2 – Upgrade Utilities

- Upgrade the bandwidth for industrial customers along the Route 106/Chambers Road corridors. This effort is currently underway.
- Define the available capacity of both water and sewer resources, on a gallons per day basis, for the Roxbury Industrial Park area. This will indicate the extent to which certain types of operations that require extensive water and sewer resources should be excluded from efforts to attract businesses to the industrial park.
- Determine the capacity and existence of water and sewer lines feeding other sections of Route 106 and Chambers Road for future industrial development activities.

#### ■ Task 3 – Improve Quality/Quantity of Labor

Labor is a critical asset for any local economy. Based on discussions with local industrial employers, there needs to be an improved supply of trainable, qualified and motivated labor to help sustain growth in the manufacturing sector. This can be accomplished through a team approach with the local school district, the Bridging Communities Regional Career & Technical Center and Rappahannock Community College through the following initiatives:

- Regular meetings and communications on the projected needs of local employers and opportunities for recent graduates and retrained labor.
- Annual job fairs and facility tours to introduce students to local employers and job opportunities.



- Employers offering internships, short-term work experiences, and mentoring to prospective students considering manufacturing as a career option.

■ **Task 4 – Develop Rail Access Agreement**

Develop a rail access agreement for one-time shipment of oversized equipment as well as ongoing access to rail siding with owners of existing rail sidings in the County. That will enhance the position of the County in having access to rail for new businesses considering locating in the County or in shipping large power generation and other equipment to the County.

■ **Task 5 – Maintain a Competitive Business Environment**

- Sustain the streamlined planning review process while balancing the needs of companies with the expectations of County residents. A favorable policy that currently exists is maintaining a buffer along the roadside to shield development from the view of vehicular traffic.
- Offer a tax package that is competitive while generating needed revenues for County operations.

**TAX LEVY SUMMARY FOR SELECTED COUNTIES WITHIN THE REGION**

Description of Tax Levy	Charles City Co.	New Kent Co.	James City Co.	Henrico Co.	Chesterfield Co.
<b>Real Estate Tax</b>					
Assessment Ratio	100%	98.3%	100%	96.2%	98%
Nominal Tax Rate/\$100	\$0.72/\$100 Going up in 2016: \$0.76/\$100	\$0.85/\$100	\$0.77/\$100	\$0.87/\$100	\$0.95/\$100
Effective Tax Rate	\$0.70/\$100	\$0.84/\$100	\$0.77/\$100	\$0.84/\$100	\$0.93/\$100
<b>Machinery &amp; Tool Tax</b>					
Basis	Original Cost	Original Cost	Original Cost	Original Cost	Original Cost
Applied Rate	\$3.00/\$100	\$1.50/\$100	\$4.00/\$100	\$1.00/\$100	\$1.00/\$100
Assessment Ratio	1 <sup>st</sup> Year: 50% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year: 40% 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year: 30% 4 <sup>th</sup> Year: 20% Thereafter: 10%	1-3 Years: 35% 4-6 Years: 30% 7-10 Years: 25% 11+ Years: 20%	1+ Years: 25%	1 <sup>st</sup> Year: 80% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year: 77% 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year: 69% 4 <sup>th</sup> Year: 61% 5 <sup>th</sup> Year: 54% 6-10 Years.: 27% 11-12 Yrs.: 21% 13-14 Yrs.: 16% 15+ Yrs.: 10%	1-10 Yrs.: 25% 11-20 Yrs.: 20% 21+ Yrs.: 15%
<b>Personal Prop. (Vehicles)</b>					
Assessment Basis	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Rate	\$3.75/\$100	\$3.75/\$100	\$4.00/\$100	\$3.50/\$100	\$3.60/\$100

**Comments on Tax Levies:**

- Real Estate Tax - Charles City County is the lowest among its local peers by at least 10%.
- Machinery & Tool Tax - If one assumes an initial value of \$10M and projects it over 10 years:

Year	Charles City Co.	New Kent Co.	James City Co.	Henrico Co.	Chesterfield Co.
1	\$150,000	\$52,000	\$100,000	\$80,000	\$25,000
2	\$120,000	\$52,000	\$100,000	\$77,000	\$25,000
3	\$90,000	\$52,000	\$100,000	\$69,000	\$25,000
4	\$60,000	\$45,000	\$100,000	\$61,000	\$25,000
5	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$100,000	\$54,000	\$25,000
6	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$100,000	\$27,000	\$25,000
7	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$100,000	\$27,000	\$25,000
8	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$100,000	\$27,000	\$25,000
9	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$100,000	\$27,000	\$25,000
10	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$100,000	\$27,000	\$25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$441,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$476,000</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

- Personal Property (Vehicle) Tax - Charles City County has the lowest effective rate.

■ Task 5 – Promote Manufacturing and Energy-Related Opportunities in the County

Charles City County is far too small to engage in a substantial marketing program, but it can maximize its ability to leverage what it can do. Recommended industrial marketing efforts include:

- Develop a *Resource Profile* of the area to post on the Internet, submit to VEDP, and distribute in response to inquiries.
- Promote existing buildings and sites on LoopNet and other web-based real estate databases
- Promote Certified Shovel-Ready site - there are very few small certified sites and only a few large certified sites in Virginia

### 5.4 Initiative #3: Enhance Agriculture, Forestry and Related Businesses

Charles City County has been actively engaged in farming and forestry since colonization in the early 1600s. These activities remain major contributors to the local economy. A 2013 study produced by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service estimates the direct impact of agriculture and forestry-related industries on Charles City County at \$63.5 million in industry output, with the *total* impact (which includes the “ripple effect” on the local economy) at \$77 million. The combined sectors also account for nearly 600 jobs and \$30.0 million in value-added impact.



<b>Description</b>	Support the diversification and growth of agriculture and forestry. These sectors have been an important aspect of the local economy since the early 17 <sup>th</sup> century, and there is a desire to see family farms, lumber mills, and other agricultural and forestry operations succeed.
<b>Potential Impact</b>	The outcome of this effort is the enhanced profitability of farms; value-added production of food and beverage products, furniture, and other items made from local crops and timber resources; and the expansion of agritourism.
<b>Revenue Opportunities for the County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales taxes</li> <li>• Machinery and tool taxes</li> <li>• Property taxes</li> <li>• Additional local purchases</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	The risks for small business success and agritourism are moderate, but with the strength of the existing agriculture and forestry sectors, the demand for local foods and beverages, market exposure through the Virginia Capital Trail, and the demonstrated commitment of individuals toward their businesses, there should be significant success.
<b>Related Costs</b>	There is minimal cost to Charles City County except for consulting fees to support Action Team startup, research activity and supporting special events
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line item in budget for specific programs/projects</li> <li>• Grants for tourism (short-term resource)</li> <li>• Programs that offer grants and/or loans for agricultural business development and rural economic development activities – e.g., the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID), USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grants</li> </ul>

**Land Used for Agriculture and Forestry**

According to the County’s Comprehensive Plan, “The far eastern portion of the county contains the fewest acres of farmland, with the rest of the county’s farmland being evenly distributed throughout the remainder of the county to the west.” Soil surveys indicate that 43,500 acres or 37% of the land area in Charles City County is prime agricultural land, generally defined as “soils that are the best suited for producing food, feed, fiber, and oilseed crops — with low erodibility, good drainage and other similar features.” Less than half of the area classified as prime agricultural land is currently being used for agricultural purposes.

**COMPOSITION OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY (TOTAL LAND AREA = 183 SQ. MI. OR 117,120 ACRES)**



**Forest Lands (73% of Land Area)**

- Saw Timber (44,606 acres)
- Pole Timber – Smaller Diameter (21,566 acres)
- Saplings/Seedlings (13,437 acres)
- Reforestation (13 tracts total of 876 acres)

**Agriculture (26%)**

- Corn
- Soy
- Cotton
- Wheat
- Turf
- Other

Source: 2013 study produced by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

The green shaded area on the map to the right identifies areas of the county that are or would be optimum for agriculture. The primary determinants are soil types, erosion potential due to topography and away from wetlands which are extensive throughout the county, particularly on the east side.

**LOCATIONS OF PRIME FARM LAND IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY**



## AERIAL VIEW OF CURRENT LAND USE IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY

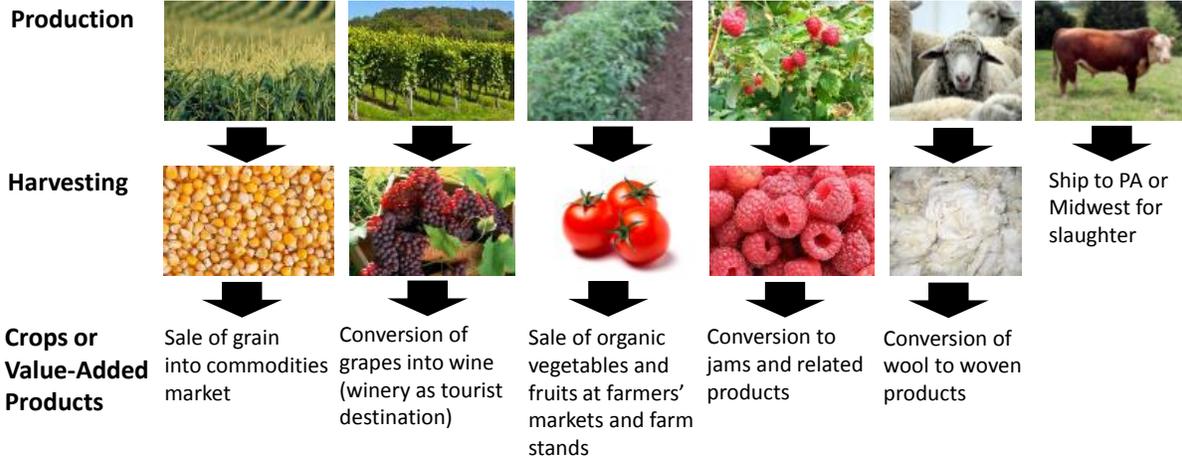


The largest and most productive farms and the highest concentration of farmland are in the southern portion of the County on the James River. These farms are primarily focused on commodity grain production (corn, wheat, and soybeans). In the southwest portion of the County, Shirley Plantation raises cotton as part of its rotation and a vineyard has been planted in conjunction with a new winery to open in Fall 2015. (see next page).

## Agriculture in Charles City County

Agricultural activity in Charles City County is primarily focused on high-volume commodity grain production (corn, wheat, and soy beans), nursery and greenhouse products, turf grass, cotton, and beef cattle, with smaller numbers of farms raising sheep for wool and meat, and producing vegetables, fruit, and mixed berries.

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS



The County also has a small but apparently growing number of farmers who produce and sell niche food products, offer agritourism activities, or make value-added products, as the following examples show:

- **Amy's Garden**, the only certified-organic farm in the County, raises a variety of vegetables and cut flowers. The farm sells its products mainly through farmers markets and CSAs.
- **Barry's Berries and Jan's Jams** started out as a pick-your-own fruit operation with blueberries, blackberries, cherries, and figs in season. It has since expanded into the production of artisan jams, crafted from its hand-picked, home-grown fruit. The farm was selected as Virginia State University's "Small Farmer of the Year" in 2013.
- **Clearview Farm & Ranch Alpacas** is 20-acre farm that is currently home to more than 40 Huacaya alpacas. Established in 1999, the farm offers breeding, sales, and boarding, and has an online store where consumers can purchase alpaca products (e.g., yarns, gloves, sweaters). Farm tours are available by appointment.
- **Tomahund Farm** is the site of an aquaculture operation where several ponds are being utilized to raise hybrid striped bass and rainbow trout. It is one of 20 fish farms in the Virginia Aqua-Farmers Network, which is planning to develop a state-of-the-art processing facility in Farmville. The fish are sold to specialty markets, including a few restaurants in Williamsburg. (Freshwater shrimp are also being raised at Shirley Plantation.)
- **Wandering Cow Farm** is a small, family-run livestock and fiber farm that produces locally-grown wool products, handcrafted soaps, lotions, and other items for sale online and at artisan markets.

The most recent agricultural project in the County is the establishment of Upper Shirley Vineyards, a winery and wedding/events venue currently under construction. Located on waterfront property next to Shirley Plantation, Upper Shirley Vineyards will be the County's first winery, offering tastings and tours. The business is scheduled to open in **open in late fall 2015**, although grape production has already begun. It is anticipated that the winery – along with other venues in the Richmond area – will serve as a catalyst in making the Route 5 corridor a destination for visitors interested in food, wine, and craft beers.

## STATISTICS FROM THE 2012 AGRICULTURAL CENSUS

Location	No. of Farms	Total Sales	Average Sales
Charles City Co.	79	\$23,680,000	\$299,751
Chesterfield Co.	197	\$6,400,000	\$32,490
Henrico Co.	117	\$9,371,000	\$80,098
James City Co.	83	NA	NA
New Kent Co.	137	\$7,003,000	\$51,117
Prince George Co.	167	\$10,763,000	\$64,447
Surry Co.	127	\$27,723,000	\$218,291

Item	2002	2012
<b>Total number of farms</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>79</b>
Total land in farms (acres)	28,676	31,182
Average farm size (acres)	326	395
Market value of ag. products	\$6,278,000	\$23,680,000
<b>Farms by gross sales</b>		
Less than \$10,000	66	47
\$10,000 to \$24,999	4	5
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1	5
\$50,000 to 99,999	1	3
\$100,000 and above	16	19
<b>Average revenue per farm</b>	<b>\$71,343</b>	<b>\$299,751</b>
<b>Farms by principal product</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>79</b>
Beef cattle ranching and farming	11	8
Cattle feedlots	3	0
Fruit and tree nut farming	8	1
Greenhouse/nursery	5	6
Hog and pig farming	1	1
Mixed/other animal production	24	20
Oilseed and grain farming	17	18
Other/mixed crop farming	14	13
Poultry and egg production	0	3
Sheep and goat farming	5	3
Vegetable and melon farming	0	6
<b>Livestock &amp; poultry inventory</b>		
Beef cows	NA	232
Sheep and lambs	100	90
Layers	351	476
<b>Crops harvested</b>		
Corn for grain (acres)	5,011	7,505
Forage (acres)	1,140	1,260
Wheat for grain (acres)	5,746	7,191
Soybeans (acres)	7,871	9,783

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture (2002, 2007 and 2012)

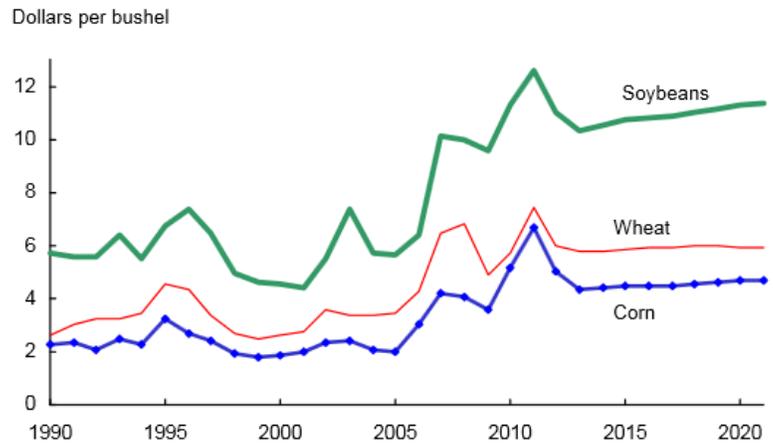
- Charles City County has the smallest number of farms in the region, but the highest average sales and the second highest total farm sales after Surry County.
- Between 2002 and 2012, the total number of farms declined by 10%, while total farm acreage increased by about 2,500 acres.
- The average farm increased in size from 326 to 395 acres.
- In 2012, Charles City County ranked 21<sup>st</sup> among Virginia counties in the sales of crops, including nursery and greenhouse products. It also ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in Virginia in grain and soybean sales.
- Farm profitability in the County has improved: more than 53% of the farms made a profit in 2012, compared to 22.7% in 2002. Statewide, 41.3% of farms had net gains in 2012.
- A total of 33 farms had hired labor in 2012, employing 121 workers with \$1.7 million in annual payroll.
- Most of the crops grown in the County are field crops: corn, wheat, and winter wheat for grain, and soybeans. Corn, soy, and wheat production increased substantially over the ten-year period.
- Other crops include nursery and greenhouse products, vegetables, cut Christmas trees, fruits, nuts, and mixed berries.
- Livestock raised in Charles City County include beef cattle, horses, sheep and goats, pigs, alpacas, and llamas, as well as chickens, quail, and other poultry. "Aquafarmers" raise trout and freshwater prawns (Shirley Plantation), and beekeeping occurs on several local farms.
- Local farm activities in 2012 included:
  - Selling products at farmers' markets and farm stands (10 farms)
  - Producing/selling value-added commodities (6)
  - Selling products directly to retail outlets (4)
  - Earned income from agritourism (4)
  - Distributing products through community-supported agriculture (3)
  - Certified organic production (1)

## The Grain Market

Local farmers have set records and won national awards in both corn and winter wheat production. Farmers have been engaging in a “no-till” approach to soil management, greatly reducing soil erosion and nutrient runoff into the Chesapeake Bay.

U.S. farm-level prices for corn, wheat and soybeans have been trending up since 2005 but recently softened. As of mid-February 2015, corn is at \$3.90/bushel, wheat is at \$5.35/bushel, and soybeans are at \$10.08/bushel. The dynamics in the price of petroleum impacting the ethanol market and the value of the U.S. dollar in the world currency market are among the factors affecting grain prices.

**U.S. farm-level prices: Corn, wheat, and soybeans**



Source: USDA, 2013

## Opportunities for Agriculture

The potential exists for additional diversification and growth of agriculture in Charles City County. The opportunities identified are based upon a number of trends, including:

- Demand for local foods.** Consumer demand for locally-produced and sourced food is strong and increasing. This has resulted in a growing number of farmers’ markets, particularly in urban areas. Charles City County lies between two cities (Richmond and Williamsburg) with popular, long-running farmers’ markets that feature not only fresh produce but also free-range chickens, honey, baked goods, plants, and other local farm and food products. There are additional markets in Chesterfield County and other locations nearby.
- Organic foods growth.** According to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, U.S. demand for organic foods has been growing at a rate of more than 9% per year, and this market is expected to continue to expand for the foreseeable future. While organic farming can be profitable, it is very knowledge-intensive, and there are strong cultural and institutional barriers to organic production. Converting existing farmland to organic also requires a three-year transition period before those crops can be sold as USDA-certified organic. Nevertheless, some consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic products. Charles City County is home to one of the 104 farms in Virginia certified organic as of 2012.
- Specialty foods.** The specialty food market continues to be one of the fastest growing industries in the country. According to the Specialty Food Association, total sales of specialty foods (defined as “products that have limited distribution and a reputation for high quality”) reached \$88.3 billion in 2013. Locally-produced specialty food and beverage products (e.g., artisan chocolates, fine wines) are often popular among tourists, who associate such items with their visit and may want to share them with friends back home.

Many Virginia farmers are finding new ways to sell their products, whether through farmers’ markets, online stores, or community-supported agriculture. They are also diversifying their operations in an effort to increase their income and improve their financial stability. In 2012, 2,677 Virginia farms produced and sold value-added commodities – up from 2,058 in 2007.

- **Agritourism.** Agricultural tourism, or agritourism, has increased in popularity, perhaps harkening back to simpler times when most of the population lived on farms. The demand for healthy, fresh foods; the need to escape an urban environment (or busy lifestyle); an interest in nature and the outdoors; and a desire for authentic travel experiences – these are among the factors driving this trend. The Census of Agriculture indicates that income earned by Virginia farmers from agritourism and farm-related recreational activities increased from \$2.7 million in 2002 to \$15.2 million to 2012. These figures are only for working farms, however – they do not count income earned by stores that sell locally-grown products, farm-to-table restaurants, agricultural museums, etc. – so sales associated with agritourism are probably higher.

In Virginia, **agritourism** is defined in statute as “any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.”

- **Breweries and cideries.** According to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, craft breweries, cideries, and distilleries are growing at a dramatic rate, providing opportunities for farmers who grow grain, hops, apples, and other ingredients. The demand for craft beers made with local grains has stimulated agricultural research activity and efforts by Virginia farmers to provide fresh local hops to brewers and beer enthusiasts. A new law that went into effect in 2014 allows Virginia’s Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to license farm-based breweries. These are small-scale breweries that manufacture no more than 15,000 barrels of beer per year, are located on a farm in Virginia, and use agricultural products that are grown on the farm in the manufacture of their beer. The law is expected to create new opportunities for breweries in rural areas as well as for hops and barley production.

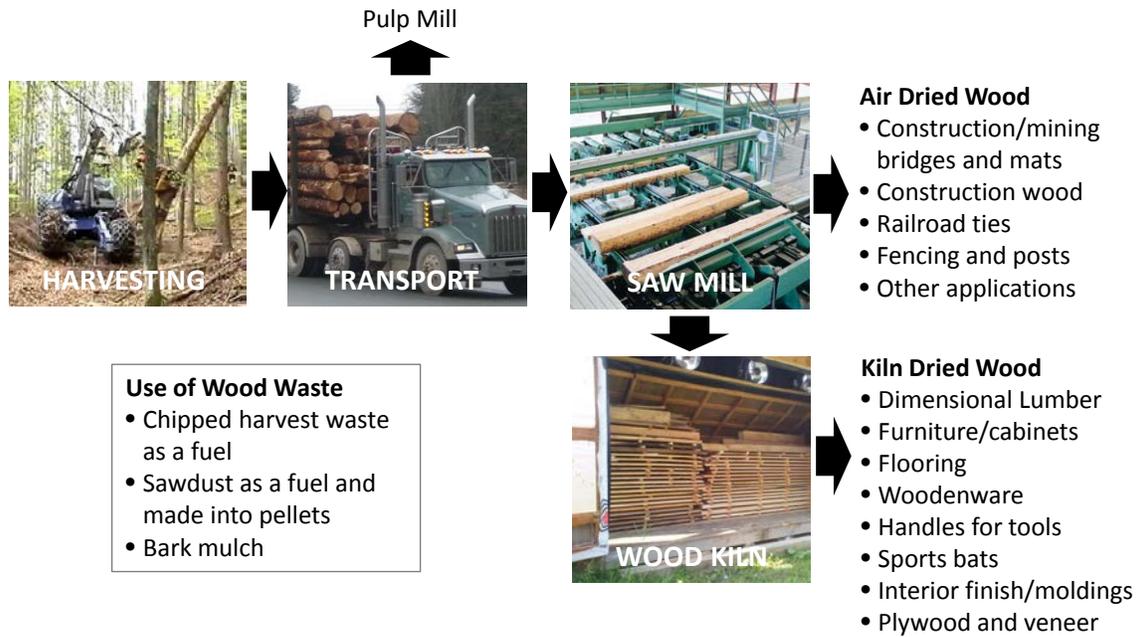


- **Wineries.** Wineries and vineyards are also increasing in popularity. “As of 2012, Virginia was home to more than 230 wineries and about 3,000 acres of vineyards,” reports an article in the online publication *Virginia Agriculture*. “This expanding commodity not only generates sales, but also draws tourists to the bucolic vineyards for tastings and other events.” Nationally, Virginia is ranked 8th in commercial grape production. *Wine Spectator* magazine recently named the commonwealth a top world destination for wine lovers to visit. With the exception of Upper Shirley Vineyards, which opens later this year, most wineries are to the north and west of Charles City County – there are three in New Kent County and one in Williamsburg – but that could change. Wineries are often more successful when there are several in a single geographic area where they can share customers and benefit from cooperative advertising.

### Forestry in Charles City County

Charles City County has approximately 80,000 acres of mixed hardwood and softwood timberland owned primarily by private landowners and the forestry industry, while the state maintains a wildlife management area on the eastern end of the County along the Chickahominy River. Most of the private timberlands are actively managed; periodically thinned and then clear cut. Information on the industry is presented below.

#### OVERVIEW ON FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY



**Note:** The figure represents potential future aspects of the industry; there is no kiln in the County for wood pellet production.



Due to climate and soil conditions ranging from dry sandy areas to wet bottom lands with clay, the area is host to a variety of hardwood and softwood trees. The top commercial species include red and white oak, loblolly pine, beech, poplar and hickory. Each type of wood has different characteristics in terms of strength, density, natural color, fiber length, grain pattern, open/closed grain, preservation potential in an outside environment, etc.

**SAMPLES OF COMMERCIAL WOODS IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY**



**LOCAL TREE SPECIES WITH COMMERCIAL VALUE**

Species	Mature Size H=Height, D=Dia.	Habitat	Commercial Uses
<b>Hardwoods</b>			
White Oak	80-100'H/3-4'D	Deep well drained loamy soils	Lumber, furniture, barrels, flooring and fuel
Northern Red Oak	70-90'H/2-3'D	Deep, well drained loamy soils	Paneling, furniture, cabinets and flooring
Southern Red Oak	60-80'H/1-2'D	Uplands with dry, poor, sandy or gravelly soils	Construction lumber, veneers and furniture
Yellow-Poplar	90-110'H/2-3'D	Moist, well-drained sites, along streams	Lumber, trim, veneers, flake/chip board, plywood, furniture core, pulpwood, fuel
Red Maple	90'H/2.5'D	Varies - dry ridges to swamps	Furniture, turnery, woodenware, pulpwood
Bigtooth Aspen (White Poplar)	60-80'H/10-20"D	Moist, fertile, sandy uplands	Pulpwood, particle board, structural panels, pallets, boxes, fuel.
Bitternut Hickory	50-70'H/1-2.5'D	Most rich slopes, also poor dry soils	Tool handles, furniture, paneling, flooring, pulpwood, lumber, fuel
American Beech	60-80'H/2-3'D	Rich, well drained bottom areas	Furniture, flooring, veneer, rough lumber, tools, baskets, fuel
<b>Softwoods</b>			
Loblolly Pine	90-110'H/2-3'D	Fields, sandy soils, borders of swamps, water near surface	Lumber, pulpwood, plywood, poles/pilings, fuel

The primary markets for local timber are pulpwood for regional paper mills, graded lumber sent to mills outside the County, and a local saw mill. Charles City Forest Products and its subsidiary, Charles City Timber and Mat, converts air-dried pine and hardwoods into construction mats/bridges, railroad ties and large dimension timbers. It also sells bark as a mulch.

From 2002 to 2012, the average volume of wood harvested in the County was 4,038,000 cubic feet per year at an annual value of \$1.8 million. Of 125 counties and independent cities in Virginia, Charles City ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in harvest volume and 45<sup>th</sup> in harvest value based on averages for the 2002-12 period.



Charles City Forest Products and its Charles City Timber and Mat subsidiary

**TYPE OF TREE SPECIES HARVESTED WITHIN CHARLES CITY COUNTY (1,000 CUBIC FEET)**

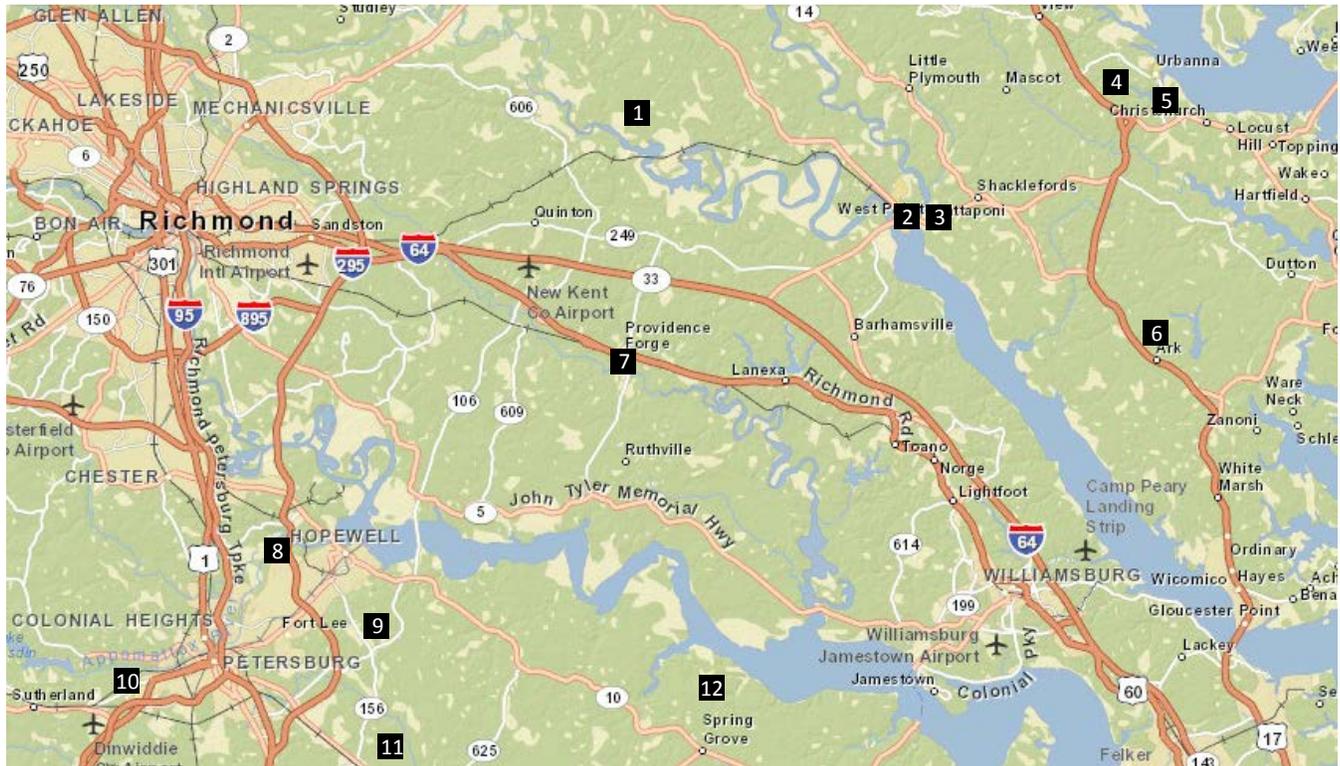
Type of Species	All Products	Saw Logs	Veneer Longs	Pulp Wood	Residential Fuel	Post/Pole/Piling
Hardwood	1,558	1,137	41	50	323	7
Softwood	1,088	268	15	730	24	51

Source: USDA, Forest Service (2013)

**TYPE OF FOREST BY TREE SPECIES WITHIN CHARLES CITY COUNTY (ACRES)**

Loblolly/Short Leaf	Oak/Pine	Oak/Hickory	Oak/Gum Cypress	Elm/Ash	Total
37152	11678	27102	8437	5796	90165

Source: USDA, Forest Service (2013)

**LOCATION OF LUMBER AND PULP MILLS IN THE REGION**

No.	Company	Location	Product(s)	Has a Kiln
1	AHI-Augusta Lumber	West Point	Hardwood sawmill	Yes
2	West Point Veneer	West Point	Hardwood veneer	Yes
3	Rock-Tenn	West Point	Pulp and paper mill	No
4	Pitts Lumber Company	Saluda	Hardwood/softwood saw mill	Yes
5	Carlton & Edwards	Saluda	Softwood saw mill	No
6	Borden's Saw Mill	Gloucester	Hardwood/softwood saw mill	No
7	Charles City Forest Products	Providence Forge	Hardwood/softwood saw mill	No
8	Rock-Tenn	Hopewell	Pulp and paper mill	No
9	Hopewell Hardwood	Hopewell	Hardwood sawmill	Yes
10	AA Gibbs Lumber Company	Petersburg	Softwood sawmill	No
11	Roy L. Mattox	Disputanta	Hardwood sawmill	No
12	Seward Lumber Co.	Claremont	Hardwood sawmill	No

The mills typically draw their timber resources from a 100-mile radius or less.

## Strategy to Expand Agriculture and Forestry-Related Activities

Leveraging the successful economic activity currently in the County, the following strategy seeks to sustain and expand agricultural and forestry-related activities and broaden the base of individuals participating in these sectors.

1. Establish and maintain channels of communication with existing businesses, emerging/expanding businesses, and potential entrepreneurs in various aspects of agriculture, forestry and value-added production.
2. Facilitate the use of events, tourism and Internet marketing to promote the growth of agriculture, forestry, and related value-added operations.
3. Support the identification and research of new business opportunities in agriculture and forestry.

## Action Plan Details to Implement the Strategy

### ■ Task 1 – Maintain Communications With Agricultural and Forestry Operations and Potential Entrepreneurs

- **1.1 Create and maintain an inventory of local farms and farmland property owners**, with contact information. Use this list to keep farmers informed of funding opportunities, educational events, and other information of interest to the agricultural community.
- **1.2 Facilitate an annual roundtable discussion and hold occasional meetings with local farmers** to discuss issues, challenges, and potential opportunities for Charles City County farmers.

- Invite representatives from Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other state and federal agencies to participate and provide information on the services and programs they offer.
- Identify local, state, and federal resources for business planning, marketing, training, and technical assistance as needed. This could include helping farmers take advantage of funding that can be used for value-added processing, diversification, and expansion.
- Promote topics such as succession planning for farmers who have operated for 20 years or more, to ensure a successful transfer to the next generation or to new ownership. The Virginia Cooperative Extension offers farm transition workshops, and farm transition planning materials are also available online.
- Discuss the opportunity for grain farmers (particularly corn growers) to supply non-wood fiber material to the new Chinese paper mill in Chesterfield County in the next three years.
- Discuss opportunities to protect farmland from future development by securing conservation easements or using other land preservation techniques as appropriate. This would apply only to willing property owners. Approximately 2,000 acres in the County are permanently protected from development through conservation easements held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Williamsburg Land Conservancy, James River Association, and other organizations (although not all of this property is in agricultural use).



- **1.3 Identify agricultural property available for rent, sale, or lease-to-own** to farmers interested in starting or expanding a farm operation in Charles City County. This could be just a few acres of a larger parcel. Also, increase awareness among property owners of Virginia FarmLink, an online tool designed to link farm owners, including retiring farmers, with new and aspiring farmers. The fact that land does not come up for sale very often makes it a challenge to attract new farmers to the County.
- **1.4 Develop seminars on agriculture, forestry and value-added career/business opportunities** for high school students and local residents to stimulate the pool of future business leaders in these sectors.
- **1.5 Consider participating in Virginia’s Use Value Assessment Program.** Virginia law allows eligible land in agricultural, horticultural, forest or open space to be taxed based on the land's value in *use* as opposed to the (typically higher) *market* value. Use value taxation is designed to preserve scenic natural beauty and open spaces and assure “a readily available source of agricultural, horticultural, and forest products” for the population; it is also aimed at alleviating the development pressures that force many landowners to convert their properties to more intensive uses. Charles City County has never authorized use-value taxation, but it is a tool that could be considered in the future to sustain agriculture and forestry.

■ **Task 2 – Facilitate the Use of Events, Tourism and Internet Marketing to Promote Business Growth**

- **2.1 Develop an annual (or semi-annual) Charles City County farm tour** to raise public awareness of agriculture and attract visitors. Work with interested farmers to designate a day or weekend when they will offer farm tours, demonstrations, and related activities to the public. Use the Courthouse Area as the starting point, where visitors can register and receive a map with information on each farm, access public restrooms, and view exhibits. Solicit vendors to sell refreshments and other items on-site. The farm tour should be marketed in local and regional media and online. Long-term, this event could be held in partnership with one or more adjacent counties for an even greater impact.



As a potential long-term strategy, consider partnering with Surry County on agritourism activities. Of neighboring counties, Surry is the most similar to Charles City County in terms of its history, rural character, and reliance on agriculture. Activities could include, for example, a regional event that would allow visitors to tour farms in *both* counties, or the development of self-guided tours of working farms. Potential benefits include the ability to market a critical mass of farms and farm-based activities, share successes, and ultimately attract a higher level of visitation.

- **2.2 Work with interested farms to increase agritourism activities and create farmstays.** While not suitable for all farmers, agritourism and recreational activities can serve as a source of income to supplement the sales of farm products. Workshops on developing an agritourism enterprise are offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension, which also has an extensive array of materials online. Another opportunity is to work with local B&Bs to offer farmstay itineraries for visitors.

- **2.3 Support the marketing of Charles City County food and farm products and crafts.** Develop an overall web site to promote/market locally produced goods that allows tourists to buy on-line after they have been to the farm or met the crafts person. This could be supported by the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID).
- **2.4 Consider developing additional events focused on agriculture in Charles City County.** This would be a potential longer-term strategy. Examples include a weekly farmers’ market, or a food-and-wine festival. As with the farm tour described above, events should be promoted through social media as well as “word-of-mouth” marketing.

#### Insights on Agritourism

While agritourism can help farmers diversify, it is not for everyone. Potential drawbacks include the work involved to keep the farm clean, safe, and presentable to the public; impact on existing farm operations; liability risks; finding and hiring qualified workers, if needed; and regulatory requirements/zoning specific to the proposed activities (such as serving food). For some farmers, however, agritourism offers an interesting and often rewarding way to supplement their income. As with any endeavor, planning is essential. Farmers will need to carefully evaluate their ability to host guests and provide a quality experience. Some examples of potential farm-based activities include:

- Barbecues
- Bed and breakfast
- Birthday parties
- Blacksmithing and other crafts
- Camping
- Corn mazes
- Cut your own Christmas tree
- Equestrian therapy
- Farmstands
- Farm weddings
- Haunted Houses
- Hay rides
- Horseback riding
- Nature education programs
- Petting zoos (baby animals)
- Pumpkin patch
- “U-pick” fruit, vegetables, etc.
- Wine tasting
- Zip lines

Another opportunity is to create farmstays – become a “working guest” for a short period of time. The practice is done in Europe and provides lodging and meals along with an opportunity to assist in some chores (like feeding animals) or other activities to give the participant an authentic “farm experience.”

#### ■ Task 3 – Support the Identification and Research of New Business Opportunities

- **3.1 Develop a community kitchen to support small-scale food production in the County.** Shared-use or community kitchens offer the opportunity for farmers and aspiring food entrepreneurs to develop new products without incurring the high costs associated with upgrading a home kitchen. Like restaurants, community kitchens are permitted to produce marketable products after meeting appropriate government health and safety requirements, but they are developed for shared use, with space and equipment rented out for a nominal fee. A community kitchen is identified as one of the activities in the proposed Knowledge, Cultural and Technology Center at the Courthouse Square (see Economic Development Initiative No. 1).



- **3.2 Develop model business plans** for small scale farms, food processors, and a small furniture company that makes tables, benches and other simple but useful furniture out of local/regional woods.



- **3.3 Amend zoning regulations to better accommodate agritourism and agricultural business development.** Agritourism is often restricted by rules and regulations that make it difficult for farmers to earn supplemental income through commercial and recreational ventures. The County's zoning ordinance should be reviewed and amended with an eye towards increasing support for agritourism and agricultural business development. Changes might include clarifying what activities are allowed on agricultural land; broadening the definition of agriculture and defining terms such as aquaculture and agritourism; reducing permitting requirements for B&Bs; strengthening the permitting of incidental uses (e.g., wedding facilities, accessory farm restaurants); and adopting state code language regarding farm-based breweries, wineries, and craft distilleries.
- **3.3 The potential use of sawdust waste stream was evaluated (during the project)** There is a strong European market for waste sawdust convert into wood pellet fuel. A representative of the wood pellet industry discussed this market and the costs involved with Charles City Forest Products (Charles City Mat and Timber). The company generates a waste with mixed hardwoods that does not provide a uniform waste stream. Due to the non-uniformity of the waste stream this option was eliminated during the report preparation stage of this project.

### **Implementation Approach, Ownership and Schedule**

The details below provide an approach to implementing each of the tasks along with task ownership and a schedule for implementation. It should be emphasized that the County may have a role in each task, but success will only come if the task is supported by members of the community and private sector businesses.

#### **■ Task 1 – Maintain Communications With Agriculture and Forestry Operations and Potential Entrepreneurs**

##### **Approach**

A Communications Action Team representing a cross-section of related businesses needs to be established to support this effort and keep representatives of the agriculture and forestry sector engaged in the process. The team should consist of about 6 to 12 members with a rotating chairperson or co-chairpersons. There may be limited interest by large farm and forestry-related businesses and more interest by smaller or less profitable firms.

The initial business inventory should be conducted by the County or perhaps a summer intern who has an interest in farming/forestry.

The Annual Roundtable should be scheduled in the off-season months so as not to interfere with farm/forestry activities. Select a location that will be conducive to discuss while accommodating the expected number of participants. Prepare an agenda with relevant issues that will be of interest to the membership.

Establish a subcommittee focused on the seminar for high school students and residents interested in farming, forestry or value-added businesses.

#### Ownership

The County Economic Development office with Virginia Cooperative Extension and forestry-related organizations can team-up to select the Action Team Members and guide the activities going forward.

#### Schedule

The initial inventory of related businesses should take place during the summer of 2015, first roundtable in early 2016 and the first student/resident seminar in 2016.

### ■ Task 2 – Facilitate the Use of Events, Tourism and Internet Marketing to Promote Business Growth

#### Approach

Leverage the existing tourism committee with members of the agricultural community to develop an Agritourism Action Team. Engage the team in planning tourism events and activities that will generate activity for multiple attractions in the County. For example, a farm tour event could include existing farms selling their products as well as tours of the plantations focusing on historic farming techniques and products.

#### Ownership

The County Economic Development office can facilitate the establishment of the effort that would ultimately be transferred to the Agritourism Action Team.

#### Schedule

It will take a year to get the action team established and ideas for Agritourism defined and processed. Consider a major farm tour event in the fall of 2016.

### ■ Task 3 – Support the Identification and Research of New Business Opportunities

#### Approach

The County Economic Development office could establish a small advisory board to evaluate potential opportunities for agriculture, forestry and related businesses that require further research. A small fund of perhaps \$5,000 to \$10,000 could be established to hire consultants or interns to study opportunities and present the information to the advisory board and interested stakeholders in the community.

#### Ownership

The Agriculture/Forestry Advisory Board would ultimately take the lead in this effort.

#### Schedule

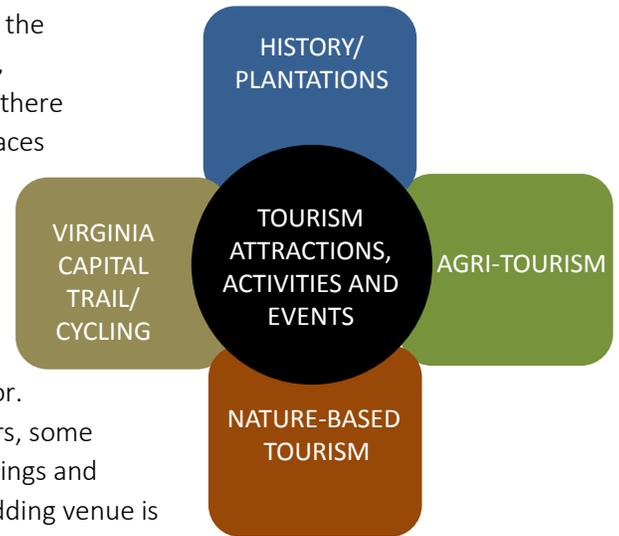
Establish the board and begin researching the feasibility of a commercial kitchen (in coordination with the Knowledge, Cultural and Technology Center proposed as part of the Courthouse Area project) as well preparing model business plans. Complete these efforts by mid-2016.

**5.5 Initiative #4: Diversify and Expand Tourism**

The value of tourism to the County is derived from people visiting the community and spending money at local business establishments, generating tax revenues. For a tourism strategy to be successful, there must be attractions, activities, and events of interest as well as places where visitors can stay, shop, and dine. In addition, the destination must be properly promoted, and the local government may need to support tourism and business activity by providing infrastructure and services.

Tourism in Charles City County has traditionally focused on the unique collection of colonial plantations along the Route 5 corridor. As interest in historic tours has dropped off over the past ten years, some plantations have focused on other activities such as hosting weddings and meetings and offering lodging to close the gap; a new winery/wedding venue is scheduled to open in the fall. However, County tourism revenues have declined substantially. The Virginia Tourism Corporation ranked Charles City County dead last in terms of travel economic impacts in 2013.

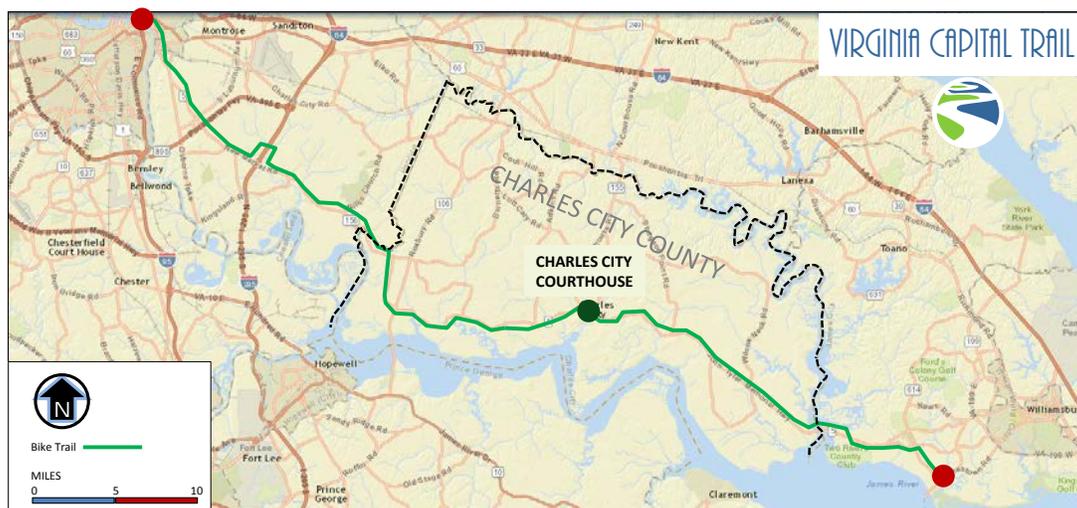
With the completion of the Virginia Capital Trail later this year, the County has a unique opportunity to diversify its tourism offerings and leverage cycling activity by expanding options to generate revenue through retail, restaurants and lodging. There are also opportunities for agritourism (discussed in 5.4) and nature-based tourism to drive additional visitation and spending.



<b>Description</b>	Continue to diversify and grow the tourism economy in partnership with the private sector. Broaden the range of attractions, activities, and events; expand the number of restaurants, retail stores, and other businesses that provide tax revenues; and (with VTC funding recently awarded) develop and implement a comprehensive marketing program to build awareness.
<b>Potential Impact</b>	The outcome will not only enhance County tax revenues, but also provide employment and business opportunities for residents.
<b>Revenue Opportunities for the County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased sales taxes</li> <li>• Real estate taxes on tourism-related properties</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	The primary risk is whether the County is able to capitalize on the Virginia Capital Trail by offering shopping, dining, and lodging opportunities to cyclists and other visitors. The Virginia Capital Foundation estimates that the trail will be used by thousands of riders each year. It will be important to offer a unique and high-quality experience as people visit the Courthouse Area and stimulate repeat visits and spending.
<b>Related Costs</b>	Other than the costs involved in the development of the Courthouse Area (see 5.1), funding will be needed by the County for signage/wayfinding, ongoing marketing, and possibly the production of special events.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VTC Marketing Leverage Program</li> <li>• County budget items and bonding</li> <li>• Private sector investments</li> <li>• Other grants for specific projects (e.g., spur trails) to be determined</li> <li>• Tourism taxes</li> </ul>

## Bicycle Tourism: Leveraging the Virginia Capital Trail

The completion of the Virginia Capital Trail, scheduled for September 2015, represents a potentially significant opportunity for tourism and economic development in Charles City County. The 52-mile trail links downtown Richmond with the historic Jamestown settlement in James City County. The trail traverses Charles City County for 27 miles and the Charles City Courthouse is essentially at the midpoint of the trail, making it a strategic destination.



Although portions of the trail are not yet complete, it is already being used by residents and visitors, bringing new business to local restaurants like Cul's Courthouse Grill. The Williamsburg Area Bicyclists, a recreational cycling club with more than 300 members, has weekly rides along the Virginia Capital Trail. The trail has the potential to attract not only avid cyclists, but also casual riders, families with children, and people of all ages and abilities who simply want to stay active and enjoy the scenery. In communities just east of Richmond, the trail is being used by commuters; in fact, several new residential developments have incorporated spurs that connect to the trail, and there is interest in creating additional spur trails in Varina.

Based on similar trails around the country, the VCTF anticipates that the Virginia Capital Trail could eventually be used by as many as 400,000 riders per year. This could have a significant impact if Charles City County is able to capitalize on the trail's economic potential.

### The Market for Bicycle Tourism

*Bicycle tourism is increasing in popularity because of its appeal to aging populations and the manner in which it can straddle the boundaries between heritage, adventure and sustainable tourism. Cycling also provides a tourism experience that allows for the participant to enjoy the journey as much as the destination...*

- Jeff Pratte, "Bicycle Tourism: On The Trail to Economic Development"

Bicycle tourism has become a huge and emerging niche in the U.S. travel market, with an increasing number of communities highlighting their appeal for cyclists and others who enjoy the outdoors. The term **bicycle tourism** can be defined as any travel-related activity for the purpose of pleasure which incorporates a bicycle. It may encompass a range of activities: leisurely bicycle rides for a few hours, or a full day; independent or organized group tours, typically for several days or longer; and cycling festivals, events, and competitions, which draw both participants and spectators. Communities may focus on road biking, mountain biking, or both. Another form of bicycle tourism is

“destination” bicycling, in which off-road trails or other features attract cyclists to visit a particular location (Moab, Utah, for instance, has become a major mountain biking destination). Bicycle tourism can take many forms, and similarly, involve many different types of riders.

There are no national statistics documenting the growth of bicycle tourism. Advocates point to trends such as the ongoing popularity of bicycling, increases in the number of frequent cyclists (particularly among Baby Boomers), the growth of groups that promote “bike culture” and touring, and more recreational cycling events. Numerous studies have highlighted the economic benefits of bike trails from an economic development and tourism perspective. For example:

- The 130-mile Great Allegheny Passage, which links Cumberland, MD to Pittsburgh, PA, attracts visitors from all

Virginia Creeper Trail ~ Abingdon/Damascus/Whitetop, VA



over the country for bicycling, hiking, and other recreational opportunities. According to the 2012 Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study, 23% of users reported a trip of three days or longer along the trail, with the majority staying at campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, hotels, and motels. On average, overnight trail users spent \$114 a day on lodging. Trail users also spent money in the trail communities on meals, snacks, beverages, and other items. Business owners along the Great Allegheny Passage attributed an average of 30% of their gross revenues directly to trail traffic.<sup>1</sup>

- In determining the Virginia Capital Trail’s economic potential, the Virginia Creeper Trail is most often cited as a model. This 34-mile rail trail runs from Abingdon to Whitetop near the North Carolina border. Its use has had a major impact on the small community of Damascus, known as Trail Town USA, with virtually all local businesses catering to visitors, trail users, and/or the owners and employees of tourism-related businesses. With an estimated 70% of trail users from out of state, the Creeper Trail plays a vital role in attracting spending dollars from outside Virginia. In 2003, nonlocal visitors were responsible for generating \$1.6 million in annual economic impact in the communities surrounding the trail. Most of these visitors were cyclists.<sup>2</sup>
- The Greenbrier River Trail is an 81-mile rail trail in southern West Virginia. A 2001 assessment of the trail determined that trail users were highly educated and had above-average income levels; 60% of them resided

<sup>1</sup> Center for Regional Progress, Frostberg State University, *2012 Trail Town User Survey Report for The Progress Fund and 2012 Trail Town Business Survey Report for The Progress Fund*, both May 2012. Accessed at [www.atatrail.org/au/impact.cfm](http://www.atatrail.org/au/impact.cfm).

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Bowker et al, *The Virginia Creeper Trail: An Assessment of User Demographics, Preferences, and Economics*, December 2004.

outside West Virginia, the majority in Virginia. Nearly 40% of the trail users – virtually all visitors from out of state – spent more than \$500 on their trips to the area, primarily on lodging, travel, and food.<sup>3</sup>

There is no typical profile of a cyclist; cycling appeals to people of all ages and many different demographics. The same is true of bicycle tourists. Research shows, however, that bicycle tourists:

- Tend to be well-educated adults, ages 45 and older, in households with above-average income levels.
- Often travel in groups of friends or family members.
- Value scenery, rural character, authentic places, and unique experiences.
- Prefer campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, and inns over chain hotels/motels.
- Take time to explore the communities they visit, seeking out local restaurants, brewpubs, farm stands, historic sites and museums, and interesting things to see and do.

According to one report, individuals who take long-distance, multi-day bicycling vacations spend between \$100 and \$300 per day on food, lodging, and other items, with cyclists who come from further away spending the most. Spending by bicycle tourists varies, however, based on the rider's cycling ability, degree of self-sufficiency, the amount of time allocated for travel, and desired amenities, as well as the type of activity. In general, cyclists on day trips spend the least, while those on guided tours spend the most.

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond L. Busbee. *Maximizing Economic Benefits from a Rails-to-Trails Project in Southern West Virginia: A Case Study of the Greenbrier River Trail*, 2001. Accessed at <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/greenbrierecon.pdf>.

## Building Bicycle Tourism

Later this year, Richmond will host the 2015 Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) World Road Cycling Championships. This prestigious cycling event is expected to draw 450,000 spectators to the region, generating an estimated \$72 million in visitor spending, according to a Chmura Economics and Analytics study. It will also focus significant media attention on Greater Richmond, providing an unparalleled opportunity to market the Virginia Capital Trail and other attractions to cyclists and event spectators.

In 2014, Frommer's named Richmond one of its top destinations, citing its proximity to many of the Civil War's most important battles, its historic sites and museums, and the city's "growing slate of breweries [and] farm-to-table restaurants." A full-page ad in the March 2015 issue of *Bicycling* magazine highlights Richmond as the place to go for "gears and beers," appealing to touring cyclists who tend to ride hard during the day and relax at restaurants and brewpubs at night.

Charles City County has many of the resources necessary to capture a piece of the bicycle tourism market. First and foremost is the Virginia Capital Trail. Less experienced cyclists and families with children prefer using off-road bike trails for rides of up to 30 miles a day. These cyclists can park at the midpoint of the trail in Charles City County and easily access visitor information and public restrooms when their rides have concluded. They may choose to start and end in Charles City County rather than in Richmond because they perceive it as less crowded (and therefore safer); it also affords opportunities to visit other attractions while they are in the area.

Experienced and touring cyclists ride for longer distances, covering anywhere from 25 to 100 miles a day. They are more likely to ride the Virginia Capital Trail from end to end. However, Charles City County has many lightly-traveled country roads that will also appeal to them. These roads could be incorporated into longer routes and itineraries to increase cycling options and extend visitor stays in the County.

An important point to remember is that cyclists are not on their bikes all of the time. They will need to stop for snacks, beverages, and restrooms. Staying hydrated and keeping their energy levels up, with food as their "fuel," is a priority, as bicycling burns up to 450 calories an hour. Touring cyclists will seek food options at farm stands, snack bars, restaurants and cafes, convenience stores, and grocery stores.

Bicycle tourists also look for other attractions they can visit or activities they can enjoy. Some cyclists will take the time to stop at historic sites or visit a winery during the course of their ride, while others prefer to go after they have finished riding, or on a day off from cycling.

As Richmond's "gears and beers" ad suggests, many touring cyclists enjoy craft beers. (The connection between drinking beer and cycling apparently goes back to the practice of consuming alcohol to reduce fatigue during European cycling competitions in the early 1900s.) There are beer-and-bike tours throughout the U.S. and in Europe. Touring cyclists also take great pleasure in food as a reward after a challenging ride. Hearty breakfasts



and healthy menu options are appreciated by bicycle tourists, who tend to focus more on health and fitness than the average visitor.

The Adventure Cycling Association lists the most important items that communities need in order to be “bike-travel friendly”: food and water, accommodations, bike storage, communications (wifi and cell service), hygiene (shower and laundry facilities), and basic bike tools and supplies.<sup>4</sup> Bike storage is an item that is critical, yet often overlooked. *If cyclists do not have a secure place to park their bikes – preferably within sight – they will not stop to explore, shop, or dine.* Also, cyclists who are spending the night are much more comfortable having their bikes in their room, or at least indoors. As a blogger who writes about bicycle travel says: “For the touring cyclist, the bike is everything.”<sup>5</sup>



In rural communities, access to bike supplies can be problematic, as the nearest bike shop can be some distance away. One solution is for a local business or two to carry such items as a basic flat repair/patch kit, a tire pump, extra u-locks (to secure bikes to a rack), and a couple of spare tubes in various sizes. There is also a product called a Bike Box with an assortment of cycling essentials (available via [www.24hrbikeshop.com/Bike\\_Box.html](http://www.24hrbikeshop.com/Bike_Box.html)) that can be placed inside a store, café, or B&B. The contents of the box can be customized and even branded. The locations of Bike Boxes are then advertised online.

### Strategies to Support/Enhance Bike Tourism in Charles City County

- **Continue to work with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation on coordinated marketing of the bike trail.** With the completion of the trail later this year, it is imperative for Charles City County to work in partnership with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF) and adjacent communities on marketing and promotion. The website of the VCTF contains an interactive map that shows the route of the bike trail, as well as points of interest, including trail access points, parking, restrooms, restaurants, lodging, bike shops, attractions, etc. The Visit Charles City County website should at a minimum provide a link to this map to make it easy for visitors to find. A version optimized for mobile devices such as cell phones and tablets is in the works.
- **Highlight the Virginia Capital Trail in tourism advertising for Charles City County.** The trail should be mentioned in all updated ads, marketing brochures, and the Visit Charles City County website. Images of cyclists and bicycles should also be included in promotional materials.
- **Ensure that directional signs are in place to orient cyclists as well as motorists.** Cyclists should not have to ride miles out of their way in search of food or water. Wayfinding signs and/or display maps should be placed along cycling routes to direct people to visitor services and attractions. Public restrooms should also be easy to find.
- **Provide secure bike parking.** Bike racks should be available in convenient locations near local businesses, parks, public restrooms, visitor services, and other places where cyclists are likely to stop.

<sup>4</sup> The League of American Cyclists also has a Bicycle-Friendly America program with tips for communities and businesses working to be bike-friendly (see <http://www.bikeleague.org/bfa>).

<sup>5</sup> “5 Easy Ways to be a Bike-Friendly Business,” <http://pathlesspedaled.com/2011/05/5-easy-ways-to-be-a-bike-friendly-business>.

- **Encourage local businesses to consider the retail, dining, and service needs of cyclists and other trail users.** The County and its partners (e.g., VTC, VCTF) should work with existing businesses to determine how they can better serve cyclists. For example, a B&B could provide bagged trail lunches to guests for a small fee; a convenience store could carry a small array of bike supplies.
- **Combine cycling with other activities to accommodate a more diverse market.** Some cyclists like to learn about the places they visit while they ride. This is especially true of families and active seniors who prefer a slower pace of travel and easy access to services, but are also interested in historical and cultural destinations. One way to accommodate these visitors is to create guided (or self-guided) bike rides connecting significant historic sites, landmarks, and other points of interest in the County. Some bicycle tour companies have organized their own tours that pair cycling with visits to historic sites. Another possibility is to establish an annual event that combines cycling with local food or wine. Several communities in the U.S. have hosted a fun, family-friendly event known as the Tour de Farms, a cycling and tasting tour that offers the opportunity for participants to bicycle through scenic farm country, sampling local farm products at designated stops.
- **Encourage B&Bs to make bikes available to their guests to use and/or rent bikes to visitors.**
- **Educate local businesses and residents to welcome cyclists (and other visitors).** Every cyclist that passes through Charles City County is a potential customer for some local businesses. Providing an environment that welcomes them and seeks to deliver great service can help enhance spending in the County.
- **Educate/remind cyclists about bicycle safety and etiquette.** Work with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation to provide user guidelines for the trail (including guidelines for pedestrians) on signs and in marketing materials. There are many examples online. Gently remind cyclists about bicycle laws, safety, and etiquette to avoid conflicts and crashes.

### **Potential Longer-Term Considerations**

- **Create bike loops and spur trails where appropriate to expand local cycling opportunities.** Bicyclists often look for additional touring routes and side trips beyond designated trails. Cue sheets and maps for rides in the region, including Charles City County, are available on the website of the Richmond Area Bicycling Association (see [www.raba.org/cuemap.php](http://www.raba.org/cuemap.php)). This information could be provided to visitors. Additional bike loops could be created using scenic paved or gravel roads that are off the beaten path. The construction of spur trails off the Virginia Capital Trail, perhaps leading to parks, scenic views, or other attractions, should also be considered. Route descriptions with clear, detailed maps should be available at the visitor center and online for printing or downloading to a smart phone.
- **Stage an additional event to promote the Virginia Capital Trail.** The Cap2Cap ride, held each year in the spring, is the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation's largest fundraiser, and one of the largest cycling events in Virginia. The event typically draws more than 2,000 cyclists, who start at both ends of the trail and ride 25, 50, or 100 miles. Organized bike rides like the Cap2Cap, and races like the UCI World Road Cycling Championships, are an effective way to raise awareness of bike destinations and attract visitors who need food and lodging, generating revenues for local businesses. In the future, Charles City County may want to organize an additional bike ride or race to promote the Virginia Capital Trail along with other local attractions.

### Trail Town

The Trail Town Program is an economic development and community revitalization initiative along the Great Allegheny Passage. Its purpose is to help communities and businesses realize the economic potential of the trail, with four goals:

1. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses;
2. Recruit sustainable new businesses;
3. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination;
4. Improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination.

With financial support from the Appalachian Regional Commission, state agencies, and various foundations, the program offers technical and financial assistance to Trail Town communities as well as new and prospective businesses in business assistance and development, marketing, economic research, real estate development, small business loans, and community connections. Matching grants are available for business signage, bike racks, and improved trailheads.

The Trail Town Program is an excellent program model, as it addresses trail-wide issues and opportunities and works to ensure that communities along the trail are able to benefit economically. The development of a similar initiative for the communities along the Virginia Capital Trail, possibly through the Virginia Tourism Corporation, would be extremely beneficial.

Reference: [www.trailtowns.org](http://www.trailtowns.org)

## Nature-Based Tourism

As a rural county with unspoiled natural beauty, open space, and significant natural resources, including two major rivers, forests, wetlands, and habitat for plants and animals, Charles City County is a good candidate for the development of nature-based tourism.

*Charles City County has the inherent ability to attract visitors who need a break from urban forms and come and take advantage of county's rural nature.*

Broadly defined, **nature-based tourism** involves travel and visitation to enjoy, appreciate, and learn about the environment. The flora, fauna, and natural and cultural history of the community or region are the primary attractions. Activities may include bird and butterfly watching, wildlife viewing, plant identification, stargazing, and nature photography.

### The Market for Nature-Based Tourism

Nature-based recreation now involves millions of Americans. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), 71.8 million U.S. residents aged 16 and older – nearly a third of the population – participated in observing, feeding, and/or photographing wildlife in 2011.<sup>6</sup> Wildlife watchers spent approximately \$54.9 billion on their activities. Trip-related expenditures, including those for food, lodging, transportation, and tours, accounted for more than \$17 billion (31%) of that total. Individuals who traveled away from home to watch, feed, or take photos of wildlife

<sup>6</sup> In contrast, 37.4 million U.S. residents went fishing and/or hunting in 2011. It should be noted that there is considerable overlap in activities among anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers.

were more likely than the U.S. population to be white, ages 35 to 64, have completed at least one year of college, and earn \$50,000 or more per year.<sup>7</sup>

Birdwatching, or birding, is the most popular form of wildlife watching. Using a conservative definition of birding, the FWS estimated that there were 46.7 million birders in the U.S. in 2011. The majority of them watched birds around their homes and in their backyards, while nearly 38% (17.8 million) took trips *away* from home to view wild birds. There was a high correlation between household income and the likelihood of traveling away from home to watch birds.

A subsequent analysis by the FWS reported that the average birder was “53 years old and more than likely has a better than average income and education. She is slightly more likely to be female,” in contrast to hunting and fishing, where the overwhelming majority of participants are men.<sup>8</sup> Birders are, however, a relatively diverse group, with wide variation in their skills, experience, and activity levels.

Another source, the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), offers an historical perspective. This survey has collected data on Americans’ participation in outdoor recreation activities since the 1980s. A comparison of data from the 2000 and 2007 surveys showed a 4.4% increase in the total number of people who participated in at least one form of outdoor recreation, and a whopping 25% increase in the number of days of participation (summed across all participants and activities). *Nature-based* recreational activities were among the fastest-growing, with double-digit increases in total days of participation. In fact, *four of the top five* involved viewing, identifying, or photographing elements of nature: flowers, trees, natural scenery, birds, and other wildlife.<sup>9</sup>

A 2014 study by the Outdoor Foundation lists birdwatching as one of Americans’ five “favorite adult outdoor activities,” based on frequency of participation. Birding ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> after running, jogging, and trail running, and bicycling. Wildlife viewing ranked 4<sup>th</sup>.

The importance and value of birding as a unique segment of the overall tourism market is well-recognized. Birders and other nature tourists generate substantial revenues in some communities. For example:

- The annual Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival in Brevard County, Florida attracted over 5,000 people during six days of activity in 2014. Registered attendees and exhibitors came from 43 states and 9 countries, with two-thirds of the attendees from outside the County. First held in 1997, the festival has an estimated economic impact of well over \$1 million every year.<sup>10</sup>
- The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas is one of the leading birding destinations in the United States. In 2011, expenditures by individuals who traveled to the Valley specifically for the purpose of birding and enjoying nature totaled an estimated \$300.1 million.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau. *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. Revised February 2014.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*. Dec. 2013, pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> H. Ken Cordell, “The Latest on Trends in Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation.” *Forest History Today*, spring 2008, pp. 4-10. Viewing and photographing birds was also the fastest-growing recreational activity in the country from the 1980s to 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival website.

<sup>11</sup> South Texas Nature Marketing Coop and Texas A&M University. *An Initial Examination of the Economic Impact of Nature Tourism on the Rio Grande Valley*. September 2011.

- Birders who visit the 456-acre Lower Cape May Meadows and other sites in Cape May, New Jersey generate nearly \$313 million per year in spending on lodging, restaurants, tours, and retail goods, according to a recent study.<sup>12</sup>
- Each year, more than 70,000 visitors travel to Nebraska’s Central Platte River Valley to witness the annual migration of Sandhill Cranes. In 2009, tourism activity associated with the crane migration generated \$8.1 million in direct economic impact for the region.<sup>13</sup>

### Resources for Nature-Based Tourism in Charles City County

Charles City County has three publicly-accessible natural areas where residents and visitors can enjoy nature-based recreational activities:

- Owned and managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the 5,200-acre **Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area** (WMA) is located at the County’s eastern end. It offers opportunities for hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, wildlife viewing, and horseback riding. A public boat ramp provides access to Morris Creek. (A second WMA in the County, Kittewan, is closed to public access.)
- Access to the James River is provided at the County’s public boat ramp and handicapped-accessible fishing pier at **Lawrence Lewis, Jr. Park**. Located at Wilcox Wharf, the 26-acre park has a nature trail, river overlooks, and an eagle observatory. (Boat ramp access is also available at Rivers Rest Marina for a fee.)
- The **Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery** is owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Although its primary function is to support efforts to restore declining fish populations and freshwater mussel species to coastal watersheds, the 400-acre property also serves as a public recreational facility, offering opportunities for fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. There is also a 1.7-mile network of hiking trails on the site.

Another potential resource for nature-based tourism in the County is the Virginia Commonwealth University Inger and Walter Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences, known as the **VCU Rice Center**. Located between Route 5 and the James River, the VCU Rice Center is an important resource for faculty and students studying the ecology of large rivers. The property includes a 70-acre wetland restoration site where many bird species can be found. In addition to serving as a research facility, the VCU Rice Center also provides environmental outreach education to K-12 educators and their students.

Currently, public access to the VCU Rice Center is limited to an open house held once a month. However, the Rice Center – along with the James River Association and the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary – could play an important role in the development of interpretive materials (e.g., brochures, signage) as part of a nature-based tourism initiative to educate visitors and enhance their experience. Faculty and students at the Rice Center could also present programs on their research activities to the general public, whether on- or off-site.

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<sup>12</sup> The Nature Conservancy. *Lower Cape May Meadows Ecological Restoration: Analysis of Economic and Social Benefits*. June 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Randolph L. Cantrell, “Nebraska’s Sandhill Crane Migration: Opportunities for Additional Economic Activity.” *Cornhusker Economics*, Paper 573, July 18, 2012.

In some respects, the County is well-prepared to implement a birding tourism initiative because many locations for birding have already been identified. For example, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, one of the first such trails in the country, features eight Charles City County locations on the Plantation Loop of its Coastal Trail. Other sites have been identified by the National Audubon Society. Charles City County is surveyed during the annual Christmas Bird Count, a long-running citizen-science initiative, and members of two local bird clubs, Richmond Audubon and the Williamsburg Bird Club, submit reports on local bird sightings to eBird, an online program developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to collect information on bird abundance and distribution.

Portions of Charles City County are in the **Lower James River Important Birding Area**, or IBA. An IBA is a site that has been selected for its outstanding habitat value and the critical role it plays in hosting birds for breeding, migrating, or over-wintering. The Lower James River IBA contains most of the tidal fresh reach of the James River, associated emergent and forested wetlands, and the surrounding rural landscape that includes extensive farmland and mixed forest.

*Bald eagle populations continue to rise, making the James River home to the largest number of bald eagles in the state.*

- *State of the James, 2013*  
James River Association

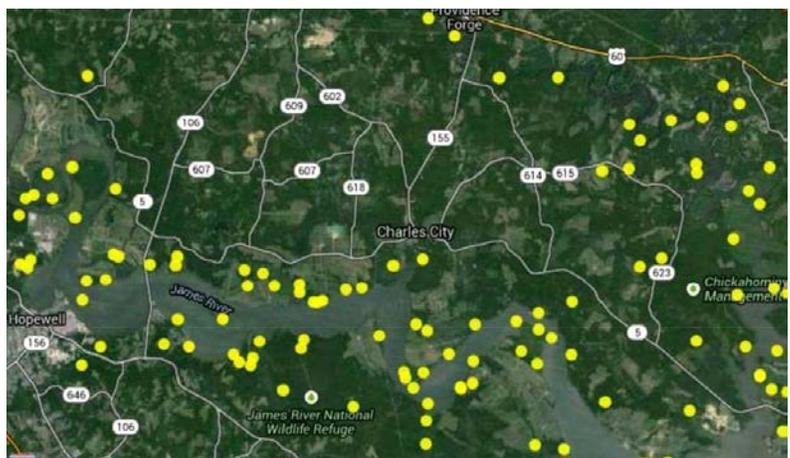
According to the National Audubon Society, which administers the IBA program in the U.S., the Lower James River “supports the densest piscivorous [fish-eating] bird community in Virginia. The area supports large and growing populations of breeding Bald Eagles, migrant Bald eagles, breeding Ospreys and breeding Great Blue Herons. The area is one of the most significant Bald Eagle areas along the Atlantic coast and supports one of the largest concentrations of migrant Bald Eagles in eastern North America. The IBA also contains extensive forested wetlands

that support significant populations of Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireos, and other species.” Some of these bird species, including the Prothonotary Warbler, are the focus of research activities at the VCU Rice Center and Center for Conservation Biology.

Significant portions of the Lower James River IBA are protected by local, state, and federal agencies, including the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, the VCU Rice Center, the 4,200-acre **James River National Wildlife Refuge** in Prince George County, and the 1,300-acre **Presquile National Wildlife Refuge** in Henrico County. Conservation issues affecting birds and wildlife along the river lend themselves to interpretive programming by the James River Association, which currently offers year-round eagle and wildlife “eco-tours” in the area. The refuges have occasional events as well.

The plantations in Charles City County also provide habitat and opportunities for birding. Berkeley Plantation, Fort Pocahontas / Sherwood Forest, North Bend Plantation, Piney Grove at Southall’s Plantation, and Westover Plantation are all designated stops on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail. However, they are considered private property, may charge a fee, and in contrast to the conservation areas, have restrictions on public access. In addition, although the plantations are advertised on the County’s

Concentrated Bald Eagle nests along the lower James River. *Source: Virginia Bald Eagle Nest Locator, Center for Conservation Biology.*



website, they are featured for their value as historic sites – not as places to go birding or enjoy nature. Notably, however, Shirley Plantation has a migratory bird walk on its events schedule. This and other events at the plantations should be publicized on the Visit Charles City County website.

Birding Locations in Charles City County & Vicinity		
Site	On VA Birding Trail?	Comments
Berkeley Plantation	Y	Fee charged; open daily
Chickahominy WMA	Y	Open daily.
Fort Pocahontas / Sherwood Forest Plantation	Y	Fee charged; grounds open daily (house by appointment)
Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery	Y	Open daily.
Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park	Y	Fee charged; open daily.
North Bend Plantation	Y	Private property with restricted access. Visitors should park in guest lot and sign in; open daily.
Piney Grove at Southall's Plantation	Y	Fee charged; open daily.
Shirley Plantation	N	Fee charged; open daily. Has scheduled occasional bird walks.
VCU Rice Center	N	Open to the public on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month, 1-4 PM.
Westover Plantation	Y	Fee charged; park in designated area.
Chickahominy Riverfront Park	Y	James City County. Open daily.
Chippokes Plantation State Park	Y	Surry County. Fee charged; open daily.
Deep Bottom Park	Y	Henrico County. Open daily.
Hog Island WMA	Y	Surry County. Open daily.
James River NWR	N	Prince George County. Access only during refuge-sponsored events and by pre-arranged permit.
Presquile NWR	N	Henrico County. Access only during refuge-sponsored events and by pre-arranged permit.
Vandell Preserve at Cumberland Marsh	N	Nature Conservancy property in New Kent County. Open daily.

### Strategies to Support/Enhance Nature-Based Tourism in Charles City County

- **Establish a separate birding page on the Visit Charles City County website.** Although birding is mentioned in a few places on the website, it would be easier to find on a separate page that includes information on birding hotspots (with hours of operation, fees charged, etc.), an interactive map, a checklist, birding ethics, and links to local bird clubs and other resources. Consider embedding BirdTrax, a Google gadget that allows users to browse local bird sightings.
- **Compile a checklist of birds found in Charles City County.** A bird checklist provides information on the bird species that breed in or regularly visit a particular area. Checklists vary in style and format; some are merely a list of species, while others contain detail on the seasonality and relative abundance of each species. In any case, an accurate checklist can be very useful in helping birders decide where and when to visit. One may already be available from Richmond Audubon or the Williamsburg Bird Club. Checklists should be available at the Visitor Center and online (in PDF).
- **Offer guided bird and nature walks, wildflower identification workshops, and similar activities.** Some of these activities are already being offered, albeit on a limited basis. Others could be scheduled in conjunction with local bird clubs or environmental organizations. Consideration should be given to wildlife watching opportunities by boat, canoe, or kayak along the James River and Chickahominy Water Trails; the James River Association has an attractive and colorful brochure for the latter, with information on the ecological communities of the Chickahominy. Activities should be advertised on a countywide events calendar and promoted through social media.

- **Make existing recreational sites in the County more inviting** for nature tourists by creating interpretive signage or displays on local birds, wildflowers, etc. Where possible, add perennial gardens and native plants to attract birds and butterflies.
- **Organize a Bald Eagle Festival** as an annual event to celebrate and raise awareness of a bird species that breeds locally and highlight what Charles City County has to offer. Start with a small event that can grow over time. Approach local businesses, environmental organizations, and other groups for support. Invite the involvement of local bird clubs, wildlife rehabilitators, environmental educators, the James River Association, DGIF and FWS, the Chickahominy Tribe, etc. Potential activities include live “birds of prey” programs, exhibits, presentations, guided field trips, storytelling, and children’s crafts. Use the Courthouse area as the focal point, though some activities may take place off-site. Solicit vendors to sell refreshments and “nature-friendly” merchandise (e.g., apparel, gifts, photos, bird feeders, etc.). The festival should be marketed in local and regional media and online. As the event grows, it should also be advertised in national birding magazines, which reach a large audience. Currently, three annual birding and wildlife festivals are produced in Virginia with local partners: the Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival in Cape Charles (October), the Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival in Chesapeake (April), and the Winter Wildlife Festival in Virginia Beach (February). These festivals provide opportunities for birding and wildlife viewing while promoting conservation awareness and education.
- **Create informational kiosks** at sites along the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, and/or at selected stops on the Virginia Capital Trail. The VCU Rice Center has expressed interest in developing an informational kiosk at its entrance near the bike trail. Kiosks can be used not only to present tourist information and maps at all hours of the day, but also to display information about natural and cultural resources and items of interest along the route.
- **Encourage guide services** to offer birding, boating, hunting, and fishing trips. Contact information for local guides could be listed on the County website.



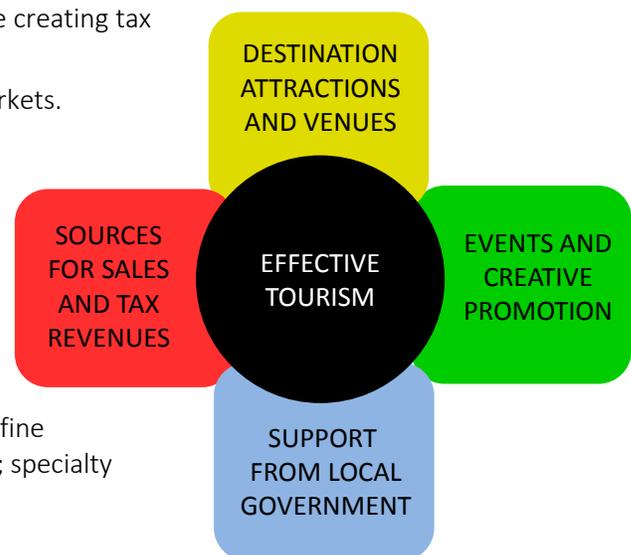
### Overall Strategy to Diversify and Expand Tourism

Maximizing the impact of tourism on the local economy while creating tax revenues requires a strategy with the following elements:

1. Attractions and activities that cater to certain target markets.

These may include opportunities:

- **For Learning and Doing** (about history, culture, or nature; building crafts or furniture; etc.)
- **For Outdoor Recreation** (e.g., cycling, nature walks, water activities)
- **For Adventure** (e.g., test skills through a challenge such as long distance biking)
- **For Getaways** (a weekend or multi-day trip to enjoy fine foods and beverages; unique B&Bs or other lodging; specialty shopping; concerts and plays; house tours; etc.)



2. Revenue streams from local businesses that contribute to the local tax base, including:
  - Property, sales, food and beverage, and bed taxes.
  - Entrance/parking fees for special events.
3. Creative ways of promoting the County to prospective visitors that include:
  - Special events throughout the year that draw people to the County, generate revenues, and build awareness of what the community has to offer.
  - A web site not only to promote the community but also to market goods produced by local craftspeople and packaged food processors.
  - Packages related to specific destinations, lodging, food and retail.
4. The support of Charles City County through the following efforts:
  - Facilitating meetings of the Charles City County Tourism Task Force to address issues and challenges and take advantage of opportunities.
  - Providing/maintaining the infrastructure necessary to support tourism, including utilities in selected locations, roads and parking, park improvements, adequate signage/wayfinding information, etc.

## Action Plan Details to Implement the Strategy

### ■ Task 1 – Provide the Attractions, Activities, and Venues Required to Sustain Local Tourism and Support a Viable Revenue Stream

This task incorporates elements 1 and 2 above.

- **1.1 Expand Destination Venues, Retail Stores, and Restaurants in the Courthouse Area.** Expanding the number of businesses and adding an amphitheater in the Courthouse Area will not only provide additional venues for cyclists and other visitors, it will also enhance tax revenues. This activity is further described in Action Initiative #1 in the first part of section 5.1.
- **1.2 Enhance/Expand Agritourism.** This includes the Upper Shirley viticulture project (vineyard + winery) and additional opportunities for agritourism. This activity is further described in section 5.3.

### ■ Task 2 – Develop Creative Ways of Promoting Tourism in the County

This task incorporates element 3 above.

#### □ **2.1 Marketing and Promotion**

- **Develop a tourism “ambassadors” program** to encourage cross-promotion and word-of-mouth marketing within the County. Encourage the exchange of marketing materials, and train business owners and residents to serve as ambassadors for the local tourism industry. This would provide visitors with easy access to information on and referrals to local attractions and events even when the Visitor Center is closed.
- **Capitalize on free publicity to leverage limited marketing resources.** Articles that appear in travel publications and on popular blogs are often more influential than paid advertising. A successful media relations effort that involves cultivating relationships with writers and editors and providing newsworthy content can yield coverage in publications that reach prospective visitors. The Virginia Capital Trail has already generated a lot of publicity. Capitalize on it by including quotes or excerpts from articles on the Visit Charles City County website and in social media. Providing a link to the full article can also be effective.
- **Seek out third-party recommendations.** Although the websites of chambers of commerce and visitor bureaus continue to play a critical role in tourism marketing, external perceptions are increasingly

shaped by user-generated content. Reviews and recommendations on TripAdvisor and Facebook are highly influential in the travel marketplace; businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry ignore these sites at their own peril. Not all inns and restaurants in Charles City County have been reviewed on TripAdvisor, but those that have are mostly perceived very favorably. A more complete guide to the attractions in the County is needed, however.

#### **2015 VTC Marketing Leverage Program**

Charles City County recently learned that its funding application to the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Marketing Leverage Program was approved for the full requested amount of \$30,250. The VTC grants are designed to help local and regional tourism entities attract more visitors by leveraging local marketing dollars. Charles City County was one of 51 local tourism initiatives awarded matching funds this round, and the award amount was among the largest in Virginia. Grants were also awarded to Scenic Virginia to market a new website showcasing the Route 5 corridor and to the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation.

The VTC funding will be used by the Charles City County Tourism Task Force to oversee the creation of a comprehensive, tablet-friendly tourism website and a new logo; pay for membership in the Petersburg Area Regional Tourism organization, which will feature Charles City County on its webpage and in printed materials; and conduct an initial research and data collection program. The grant will cover many of the marketing and promotion activities listed under Task 2.1 above, with the new website scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015.

- ***Provide links from the Visit Charles City County website to other sites*** that contain additional information on the area. For example, the James River Association has excellent PDF maps of the James River and Chickahominy Water Trails for paddlers and wildlife enthusiasts.
- ***Develop and maintain a coordinated, countywide calendar of events online.*** This calendar should incorporate activities and events offered by multiple organizations and attractions, including Shirley Plantation and Berkeley Plantation, which have (and would continue to have) their own events calendars posted online. The idea of a coordinated calendar is to show the potential visitor that there are multiple things to do in Charles City County and thus “worth the trip.”
- ***Embed an interactive map on the Visit Charles City County website.*** This map would allow users to view the locations of attractions by category (e.g., historic, natural) as well as lodging, public rest rooms, and other amenities on a single customized map for printing or viewing on a smart phone. The routes of the various tourism trails in the County, some of which overlap, could also be shown, without requiring users to visit multiple sites. Unlike static maps, interactive maps can be easily modified or updated.
- ***Utilize social media as a tool to promote tourism opportunities in Charles City County.*** An active Facebook page would help to raise awareness of the County’s attractions, activities, and businesses. It is the perfect medium for posting photos, events, and news to be shared with a wide audience; it can also be used for running special contests and promotions. Information should be cross-posted and linked with Facebook pages maintained by individual establishments in the County, the Center for Local History, Virginia Capital Trail, and others. County staff or a designated volunteer(s) with social media skills should be trained to employ best practices for regular weekly or bi-weekly postings, at a minimum. Other social media outlets could be considered once a strong and active Facebook presence is established.
- ***Continue to work with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation on coordinated marketing of the bike trail.*** With the completion of the trail later this year, it is imperative for Charles City County to work in

partnership with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF) and adjacent communities on marketing and promotion. The website of the VCTF contains an interactive map that shows the route of the bike trail, as well as points of interest, including trail access points, parking, rest rooms, restaurants, lodging, bike shops, attractions, etc. The Visit Charles City County website should at a minimum provide a link to this map to make it easy for visitors to find. A version optimized for mobile devices such as cell phones and tablets is in the works.

## □ 2.2 Product Development

- **Create activity packages suitable for small tour groups.** Formerly known as Elderhostel, tour group operator Road Scholar offers several tours with itineraries that include Charles City County: Coastal Virginia by Bicycle (in May and October); Historic Garden Week: Homes and Gardens of Virginia (April); Virginia, Mother of Presidents: Seven Historic Sites (April); and the James River Plantations and Their Culture (April, May, August, and October). These tours will bring visitors to the area for field trips to Berkeley and Shirley Plantations and Sherwood Forest and lunches at the Courthouse Grill. The completion of the Virginia Capital Trail in September is expected to attract other tour group operators. Carolina Tailwinds, a North Carolina-based bike tour operator, already leads trips to Williamsburg and Jamestown. Tour group companies have the potential to bring even more business to the County. The County should work with these and operators that lead tours in Virginia to develop activity packages that could be targeted to travelers interested in history and culture, cycling, agritourism, nature-based recreation, etc.
- **Create and market themed itineraries.** The state’s tourism website, *Virginia Is For Lovers*, has a group tour planning toolkit where visitors can select a theme and a geographic area, and browse through a series of suggested itineraries. There are no itineraries listed for Charles City County, however. Potential travel themes include James River history and culture, cycling the Virginia Capital Trail, African-American heritage, and birding between two rivers. The Visit Charles City County website features several travel itineraries, but they should be posted on the state’s website as well.
- **Enhance heritage tourism opportunities through activities that bring together the County’s three cultures.** Charles City County has an enormous opportunity to create interesting and exciting new visitor experiences by promoting its rich cultural heritage. One avenue that should be pursued is *culinary* heritage tourism, a new trend that capitalizes on interest in local foods and authentic destinations. According to the publication *Cultural Heritage Tourism: A “Delicious” Way to Explore*: “Heritage travelers expect to be able to immerse themselves in the culture of the community. They want to experience and interact not only with vintage architecture but also with community activities; with the lives of people through stories, photos, and artifacts; and especially with food.”<sup>14</sup> The food traditions of the colonial, African-American, and Native American cultures in the County – e.g., special foods and beverages, flavorings, customs, ceremonies – can attract visitors who recognize regional cuisine as a significant part of “experiencing” the community. Strategies for promoting the County’s

Many travelers (particularly the Boomers) are looking for authentic experiences that are unique and memorable, that go beyond merely *seeing* a destination; they want to connect with or even immerse themselves in local culture. This has given rise to *experiential tourism*, a type of travel that 1) allows visitors to create memories through direct, hands-on experiences, and 2) provides opportunities to learn, to participate, to create, to produce, and/or to experience people, places, and stories.

<sup>14</sup> Collaborative for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Appalachia. *Cultural Heritage Tourism: A “Delicious” Way to Explore*, 2011, p. 7.

food heritage are virtually unlimited, ranging from public events and food tastings to storytelling and educational programs, but the planning process should engage members of the community to ensure that the experiences offered are truly authentic.

### □ **2.3 Expand Event Activity**

- **Expand the frequency of special events in the County.** This plan recommends specific events focused on agriculture, birding, and cycling, but there are likely other opportunities as well. Whether they are “one-off” events at a single location or activities held at multiple venues, special events can, with proper promotion, lure new visitors and attract media attention. It should be noted that events are not necessarily defined as fairs and festivals; they can also be interesting new experiences and activities: making a craft, garden tours, concerts, wine tastings, lectures, cooking demonstrations, tournaments, etc.
- **Consider contests and raffles.** Holding a contest is a fun way to generate interest in a special event and build publicity. A wildlife photography contest, for instance, could be held in connection with the Bald Eagle Festival. Raffles of merchandise, or a dinner at a local restaurant, are also popular.
- **Foster collaborations for greater visibility.** Partner with multiple attractions and local and regional organizations to produce events that may extend beyond County lines. The larger the event, the more likely it will garner publicity within the region. Having a diversity of partners can also be beneficial from a marketing perspective.

## ■ **Task 3 – County Support for Tourism**

This task incorporates element 4 above.

### □ **3.1 Signage/Wayfinding**

Signs perform a critical role in the success of businesses, attractions, and local economies in their capacity as identification, advertising, and wayfinding devices. Attractive signage can also contribute to a community’s identity and sense of place.

- **Establish a tourism-oriented signage program** to provide directional information, identify attractions and points of interest, and enhance the overall visitor experience. Directional signs not only guide out-of-towner drivers to their destinations; they also direct the casual visitor to explore places off the beaten path. Given the County’s rural character, signs are needed to show travelers where (and within how many miles) they can find amenities such as convenience stores, public rest rooms, and restaurants. Informational kiosks should also be installed for pedestrians and cyclists
- **Consider the development of interpretive panels** at informational kiosks along the bike trail and in other select locations. Interpretive signs help to educate the public about locations of historic or cultural significance, natural resources, and other aspects of the community. A plus is that they can be viewed at any time and reach a diverse audience. Many communities are now creating self-guided tours that allow visitors to access audio recordings, photos, and other content on their cell phones by scanning a QR code attached to a sign or provided in a brochure.

### □ **3.2 Consider Implementing a Tourism Zone to Stimulate Additional Investment**

Under Virginia law (§ 58.1-3851), a county or city may establish, by ordinance, a tourism zone where incentives may be offered to eligible tourism businesses. Among the counties that have established such zones are Spotsylvania and James City. To qualify for incentives in James City County, the business must

make a capital investment of \$350,000 or more in a tourism-related project; both new and existing businesses are eligible. Incentives offered in James City County include a reduction of selected development fees, Economic Development Authority grants based on the investment value of the project, and expedited plan review. The Spotsylvania County Tourism Zone offers tax rebates and targeted industry status, which allows businesses within the defined zone to participate in the County's fast track development review and permitting program.

Businesses in a defined tourism zone are also eligible for gap financing available through the state's Tourism Development Financing Program. Charles City County should consider establishing its own Tourism Zone to leverage private investment and increase revenue from tourism. The amount of capital investment required could be \$125,000 for existing businesses and \$200,000 for new businesses.

### **Implementation Approach, Ownership and Schedule**

The details below provide an approach to implementing each of the tasks along with task ownership and a schedule for implementation. It should be emphasized that the County may have a role in each task but success will be based on the participation of private businesses and support from the community at large.

#### ■ Task 1 – Provide the Attractions, Activities, and Venues Required to Sustain Local Tourism and Support a Viable Revenue Stream

The Courthouse Area project is covered under Action Initiative #1; however, the Charles City County Tourism Task Force should be part of that initiative.

#### ■ Task 2 – Develop Creative Ways of Promoting Tourism in the County

##### Approach

Utilize the existing Charles City County Tourism Task Force and expand membership (particularly for agritourism) as needed. Development of the new VTC-funded website, which will allow users to create itineraries, will be first priority. The County Economic Development office should present the ideas and concepts outlined above and work with the Task Force to identify and prioritize other activities they would like to pursue.

##### Ownership

Ultimately, the Tourism Task Force will take the lead on this task.

##### Schedule

VTC-funded website creation in 2015.

#### ■ Task 3 – County Support for Tourism

Utilize the County Public Works Director and work with the Tourism Task Force to determine needed signage and wayfinding information needed along key corridors and at specific destinations. Identify ways to make signs reflect the historic/natural look and feel of the county. County staff with consultant support will be responsible for determining whether to create a Tourism Zone in the Courthouse Area.

## 5.6 Enabling/Supporting Functions for Economic Development

In addition to the four key economic development initiatives presented above, there are some general functions that should be in place to support each of these initiatives. These include support for small business development and expansion, and enhanced career and entrepreneurship awareness for youth and adults.

### ■ Function 1 – Support for Small Start-Up and Emerging Businesses

Ultimately, the continued viability of the County economy will be based primarily on its ability to cultivate the development and expansion of small businesses. The majority of new jobs typically come from small- and mid-size businesses, especially in rural communities. There are a variety of resources and approaches that can be used to support business development at both the start-up and the expansion stages as listed below.

#### Resources for Small Business Development and Expansion

- **Resource Guide for Small Business, Virginia, 2015** – Recommend that the County include a link on its website to this: [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/resourceguide\\_3155.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/resourceguide_3155.pdf)
- **Crater Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** at Longwood University in Petersburg offers education, one-on-one business counseling, and economic research to new and existing businesses; see <http://sbdc-longwood.com>. Services include:
  - Business planning assistance
  - Financial analysis
  - Market research
  - Marketing plan development
  - Classes in basic payroll and bookkeeping
  - Educational workshops
- **Richmond SCORE** – offers free and confidential business mentoring and low-cost workshops both for both start-up entrepreneurs and existing small business owners; see <http://richmond.score.org>
- **Crater Development Company** (business loan affiliate of the Crater Planning District Commission) offers small business financing using SBA 504 Loan Program; see [http://www.craterpdc.org/economic\\_development\\_tourism/cdc.htm](http://www.craterpdc.org/economic_development_tourism/cdc.htm)
- **Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID)** – *discretionary grants for businesses that add value to Virginia grown agriculture and forestry products only*
  - Applications must be made by the County in coordination with a business beneficiary
  - The beneficiary must be a new or existing business making new private investments and/or creating new jobs in a Virginia locality for the purposes of adding value or further processing Virginia grown agricultural or forestry products
  - A minimum of 30% of the agricultural or forestry products to which the facility is adding value must be grown or produced in Virginia (higher percentages are viewed more favorably)
  - AFID grant funds cannot exceed \$250,000 or 25% of qualified capital expenditures, whichever is less
  - The applicant must provide a dollar-for-dollar matching financial commitment (cash or qualified in-kind)
  - A performance agreement is executed between the applicant and the company to ensure fulfillment of promised job creation, capital investment and purchase of Virginia grown agricultural or forestry products

- **Virginia Community Business Launch Program** – pilot program announced by Governor Terry McAuliffe in December 2014.
  - Designed to assist communities in taking a systems approach to defining and pursuing an asset-based small business development strategy. The program starts with a community’s unique vision for its future and then uses a local business competition to find and foster the entrepreneurs that connect with that vision. CBL will provide the tools to effectively prepare multiple entrepreneurs to operate successful businesses in a downtown or neighborhood commercial district and allow them to compete for funding to start up their new endeavor. The state has allotted \$100 million per year for this program (at least during the current administration).
  - The cities of Staunton and Hopewell and Gloucester Courthouse in Gloucester County will each receive up to \$100,000 for small business development through CBL
  - For more details on the program: <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-business-launch-cbl.html>
- **Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA)** - The Commonwealth of Virginia's economic development and business financing arm; see <http://www.vabankers.org/VSBFA>.
- **Local Revolving Loan Fund** – Small businesses often have difficulty qualifying for traditional bank financing, or may need additional funding to leverage private sources. The Charles City County EDA could consider establishing a revolving loan fund to assist start-up, emerging, and expanding businesses based on formal guidelines. Typically, loans are made only to credit worthy borrowers, and a business plan is required to determine the likelihood that the venture to be funded will succeed. As loan payments are made, they become available for the next opportunity, thereby sustaining the fund indefinitely.
- **Virginia Enterprise Zone (VEZ)** – The County should continue to apply for Virginia Enterprise Zone (VEZ) designation for the Courthouse Area and Roxbury Industrial Park. The VEZ program is a partnership between state and local government that encourages job creation and private investment. Designation would make state and local incentives available to businesses and investors who create jobs and invest in real property within the VEZ.
- **Tourism Zone** – As previously noted, Charles City County could establish a Tourism Zone where incentives would be available to encourage capital investments by eligible tourism businesses.
- **Develop Model Business Plans** – Model business plans could be developed for small-scale farms, food processors, furniture manufacturers, restaurants, and craft-related businesses to help potential entrepreneurs. The models would then be used to demonstrate the key elements of a successful local business.

### Alternative Ownership Models for Courthouse Village Businesses

In the absence of qualified entrepreneurs or private business owners to operate the businesses proposed for the Courthouse Village, consideration should be given to developing alternative models of ownership. The table on the next page compares the traditional model of ownership with a cooperative and a community-owned store.

An example of a **community-owned store** can be found in the Adirondack village of Saranac Lake, NY (year-round population: 5,000). Following the closure of the local Ames department store, a group of village residents decided to raise money to open their own store. Shares in the business, priced at \$100 each, were marketed to local residents. It took five years to reach the fundraising goal of \$500,000, but the Saranac Lake Community Store finally opened in 2011. Other community-owned stores and restaurants have been established in Maine, Vermont, and Wyoming.

Another model to consider is a **pop-up store**. This is a retail business that opens quickly in a temporary location and is intended to operate for only a short amount of time, from a few days to as much as several weeks. Although some pop-up stores are seasonal, others are designed as a way to test the market before making the significant investment required for long-term operation. Some pop-up stores may in fact become full-time operations. Pop-up stores offer an attractive option for filling vacant space and generating limited economic activity until a long-term tenant comes along.

<b>COMPARISON OF RURAL STORE OWNERSHIP MODELS</b>		
<b>Model</b>	<b>Critical Elements</b>	<b>Potential Pitfalls</b>
<b>Independent Retailer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional model of ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to capital</li> <li>Reliable and sufficiently-sized customer base</li> <li>To overcome substantial challenges, need residents to commit to shopping locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct competition from stores in nearby larger communities</li> <li>Difficulty finding quality labor</li> <li>High utility costs</li> <li>Difficulty meeting minimum buying requirements from food wholesalers</li> <li>Lack of sales volume</li> <li>Lack of community support</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owned and managed by its members, although one usually does not need to be a member to shop there</li> <li>Members invest time, money, or both and have a say in decision-making</li> <li>Non-profit; excess revenue is usually reinvested in the business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality business plan with rigorous financial analysis</li> <li>Board leadership</li> <li>Strong operational management with clear business goals</li> <li>Member, community, and industry support</li> <li>“Reasonable” competition within 15 to 20 miles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct competition from stores in nearby larger communities</li> <li>Lack of membership support</li> <li>High turnover of leadership and management</li> <li>Lack of management expertise and basic business and financial knowledge</li> <li>Undercapitalization or too much debt</li> <li>Unrealistic expectations regarding role within the community</li> </ul>
<b>Community-Owned</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financed and owned solely by members of the community</li> <li>Can be tailored to meet unique local needs</li> <li>Typically formed as a corporation, capitalized through the sale of shares to local residents and operated by an elected board of directors</li> <li>For-profit, but keeps ownership in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality business plan with rigorous financial analysis</li> <li>Board leadership</li> <li>Financial backing and continued patronage of local residents</li> <li>Solid legal advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct competition from stores in nearby larger communities</li> <li>Difficulty finding quality labor</li> <li>It may take time to raise necessary the funds</li> </ul>

Source: E.M. Pemrick and Company, based on materials from the Center for Rural Affairs (Lyons, NE) and the Center for Engagement and Community Development, Kansas State University.

#### ■ Function 2 – Enhanced Career and Entrepreneurship Awareness

A key finding based on discussions with local industrial businesses is the need to improve work readiness and familiarize young people (especially high school students) with potential employment opportunities in and around Charles City County. Recommendations to improve the quality and quantity of labor for the manufacturing sector are described in section 5.3. More generally, however, students and adults alike need to be made aware of local career opportunities, as well as the possibility of starting their own business. Creating a more entrepreneurial culture would go a long way in supporting future economic development in the County.

### Classroom-Based Approaches

- **JA Be Entrepreneurial (Junior Achievement)** – a program for students in grades 9-12 (seven 45-minute sessions)
  - Introduces students to the essential elements of a practical business plan and then challenges them to start an entrepreneurial venture while still in high school
  - Materials are packaged in a self-contained kit, available online
  - Other Junior Achievement programs for high school students include **JA Career Success** (equips students with the knowledge required to get and keep a job) and **JA Company Program** (introduces students to the key elements involved in organizing and operating a business, while empowering them to solve problems and address local needs through the entrepreneurial spirit)
  - See <http://www.juniorachievement.org/web/ja-usa/ja-programs>
  - Junior Achievement of Central Virginia: <http://www.juniorachievement.org/web/ja-centralva/home>
- **School-based enterprise** – a business run by students within a school (e.g., a store)
  - Teachers serve as advisors, not CEOs
  - Can provide students with practical experience in entrepreneurship, accounting, budgeting, cash-flow management, marketing, inventory control, etc.; students apply skills in problem solving, communications, and interpersonal relations in the context of work
  - May be tied to classroom-based learning via Junior Achievement materials
- Other types of work-based learning programs include **internships**, **co-ops**, and **apprenticeships**, but as the study below notes, these activities are sometimes not as well-connected to classroom learning (and beneficial to the student) as they should be
- Background information on work-based learning experiences: [http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte\\_work-based\\_learning.pdf](http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_work-based_learning.pdf)
- **Other opportunities include:**
  - Guest speakers (from local employers) in the classroom
  - Career fairs
  - Workplace tours
  - Job shadowing

### Workforce Readiness Training for Youth

- **Pulaski Grow** – a non-profit aquaponic farm and youth training center in Draper, VA
  - Mission is to operate an aquaponic farm while supporting a hands-on, workforce readiness training program for youth ages 14-18
  - See <http://www.pulaskigrow.biz/about-pulaski-grow>
  - See article: [http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/pulaski\\_county/new-pulaski-county-non-profit-will-grow-local-youth/article\\_bc2c5c09-6d19-5e75-8820-04341b51e7a3.html](http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/pulaski_county/new-pulaski-county-non-profit-will-grow-local-youth/article_bc2c5c09-6d19-5e75-8820-04341b51e7a3.html)

### Enhance Utilities to Support Economic Growth

- **Sewer** system in the Roxbury area needs to be evaluated for incremental capacity to support additional growth and considerations made for pretreatment requirements for certain process discharges. In the Courthouse area, the method of treatment and capacity will need to be evaluated as development in this area expands.
- **Telecom** in the Roxbury and Courthouse areas of the County is critical is the process of being addressed by a grant and support from a Tier 1 service provider.

**Marketing**

Utilize multiple tools and media to build awareness of County for tourists visiting the County and for industrial firms potentially locating to the County. Provide signage to effectively direct visitors to selected destinations/venues throughout the County. There are details for marketing under Section 5.3 for industrial prospects and under Section 5.5 for tourists.