

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

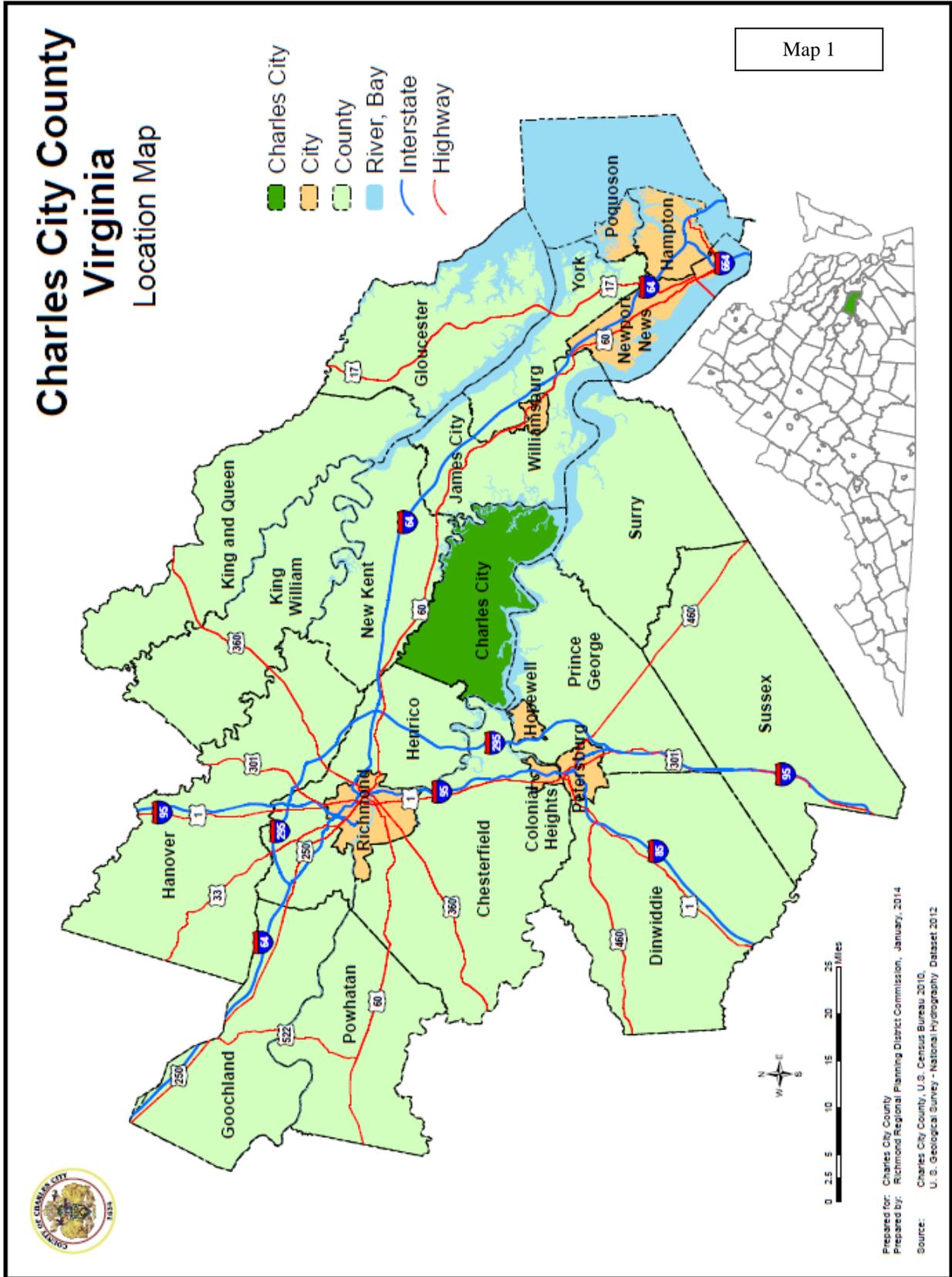
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OVERVIEW

Charles City County is a quiet, rural community located between the fast-growing urban areas of Richmond and Williamsburg (See **Map 1**). Stands of pine and hardwood trees greet visitors at every entrance to the county. Small residential communities are nestled within the county's predominant land use of forests. Stately plantations and other historic sites remind visitor and resident alike of the long history of the county. Many of the county's natural and historic resources are nationally recognized.

Even with all of the positive attributes of the county, it, like all Counties, faces its share of challenges. Thankfully, the county and its leaders understand the current and future challenges facing the county, and know that proactive planning is necessary to address those challenges and ensure that the county continues to be a great place to live and work. These challenges are highlighted throughout the plan in appropriate sections that pertain to economic characteristics and demographics, utilities and infrastructure, and existing and future land use maps, along with strategies to assist in addressing the identified challenges and issues.

In order to better prepare for the future and its opportunities and challenges, Charles City County, with assistance from the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, has prepared this Comprehensive Land Use Plan.



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PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE PLAN

As the 21st Century progresses, change is taking place in and around the county. This change will bring both opportunities and challenges. Institutions and individuals that anticipate and plan for change will fare better than those who merely react. It is necessary for the county to continue to develop land-use and economic development strategies that address housing, employment and shopping needs of residents, while also ensuring that the county largely retains its existing rural character.

The purpose of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to serve as a guiding document that assists in implementing identified strategies. The plan contains a series of goals, objectives, and strategies describing how and where the county wants to grow. The plan serves as a guide, allowing public and private land owners to coordinate future development decisions within a shared concept of what the county wants to be. The future is never certain, however. As conditions change, the Plan will need to be reviewed and updated.

State law requires that this review take place at least every five years. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia establishes the requirements for local comprehensive plans including necessary elements to be addressed, process for adoption, public involvement and review cycle.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

Three terms can be used to describe the scope of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan: general, long-range and comprehensive. The plan is general in that it contains goals, objectives, and strategies that can be used to guide future development decisions. The plan does not indicate when or how individual parcels of land should develop. Such details are addressed in specific ordinances and policy documents such as the zoning and subdivision ordinances, capital improvement plans and so forth.

The plan is long-range in that it deals with anticipated development over the next 20 years. Looking that far into the future is difficult, especially in a rural county located adjacent to rapidly growing urban areas. A long-range view is necessary, however, if the county is to attempt to guide development toward appropriate locations and protect rural, historical, forestal, agricultural, and environmentally sensitive lands—like Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas.

Finally, the plan is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geographic area of the county and all types of land uses. The Plan examines the natural and man-made environment. Recommendations cover agricultural, forestal, residential, commercial, industrial, and public and semi-public uses.

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ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The county's Land Use Plan is organized into three major categories. Chapters 1-7 include an inventory and analysis of factors that have influenced past land use trends and trends that will influence development in the future. These factors include historic and archaeological resources; population, housing and economic analysis; natural resources; existing land use inventory; community facilities; utilities and the transportation network. These chapters contain regional and local development trends, and assess the county's assets and constraints.

Chapters 8 and 9 comprise the part of the plan that looks ahead to the future. They set forth future development goals and objectives. A series of strategies and policies that can assist in reaching these development goals and objectives are included as well as a discussion of desirable growth strategies.

Chapter 10 outlines a future land use implementation program that will aid in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. Specific additions or modifications to the county's development regulations are discussed. Also discussed are other planning efforts necessary to meet the future needs of the county. A future land use is presented as a means to visualize how the county could develop if these objectives and strategies are followed.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The county began updating the existing 2009 Comprehensive Land Use Plan in early 2013. In order to update the 2009 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the county solicited data input from numerous federal, state, and local organizations. These organizations were asked to provide information about any changes in the plan's basic data such as changes in population characteristics, natural resource features, historic resources, and community facilities. Other organizations that provided input include the U.S. Census, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Virginia Department of Taxation, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, the Charles City County Health Department, the Charles City County Department of Social Services, DCR's Division of Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Employment Commission, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Richmond Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization.

During the 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan update process, the Planning Commission and Staff presented a draft to the public and conducted three public informational meetings to receive valuable citizen input and comments. This feedback was carefully considered by both the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, as they worked to create and adopt the given 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. On August 26, 2014, the 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan was formally adopted by the County's Board of Supervisors immediately following an advertised joint-public hearing with the Planning Commission.

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