POLICY AND GOALS

This section presents the following policies, goals, and plans of the County:

- Board of Supervisor's Priorities
- B.E.S.T Values of Stafford County Employees
- Principles of High Performance Financial Management
- Utilities Fiscal Policy
- Budget Guidelines, Basis of Accounting, and Basis of Budgeting

BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S PRIORITIES

The Board has identified its top priorities for the community:

- Fiscal responsibility and reducing the tax burden
- Education
- Public Safety
- Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Service Excellence

Stafford County

Vision

A community with an abundant and meaningful past, building a thoughtful, sustainable future.

Mission

To become the best local government in Virginia.

B.E.S.T. Values

Balance

Empowerment

Service

Teamwork

Guiding Beliefs

We value our community, people, resources and quality of life.

Balance

We take pride in what we do and strike a balance among life's activities.

We inspire, challenge, and encourage each other to achieve professional and personal growth and development.

Empowerment

We work together and we take the initiative to provide creative solutions.

We communicate well and employ diverse talents to pursue common goals in ordinary and extraordinary times.

Service

We provide personal and individual attention to our customers which is driven by respect, knowledge, commitment, and compassion.

We go above and beyond our job duties because it's the right thing to do.

Teamwork

We work best as a team.

We trust, care for, and respect each other.

We reach across organizations to collaborate for success.

Stafford County Belongs To All Of Us

COUNTY PLANNING PROCESSES

	TYPE OF PROCESS	DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS	BUDGET IMPACTS
Operating Budget Forecast	Five year operating plan to facilitate financial planning	Budget staff works with departments to determine key assumptions to project major revenue sources & expenditures.	Provides for budget stability, planning & direction for future resource allocation decision-making.
Capital Improvements Program	Ten year plan that includes project listing by plan year	County Administrator submits plan for Board of Supervisors approval by resolution with possible amendments.	Provides predictable funding level from year to year to allow adequate planning for debt service requirements & operating costs of new facilities & infrastructure improvements.
Economic Development Strategy	Five year plan to improve economic development in Stafford County	Economic Development director's plans are developed with review & coordination by the County Administrator's Office.	Allows for reallocation of resources to predetermined strategic goals & objectives.
Parks and Recreation	Fifteen year Facilities Plan for parks and open space recommends improvements to the County's present park and recreation facilities and undeveloped park lands	Department identifies projects based on needs and funding. Working together with the Parks and Recreation Commission prioritizes projects for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors in the form of 5 year CIP.	Long term planning for parks and facilities that integrate with the 5-year CIP allowing for adequate planning for debt service requirements and operating expenditures.
Building Maintenance	Five year plan by facility & maintenance activity or project	Property Management Department prioritizes other Departments requests for projects along with known maintenance requirements.	Provides for a stable annual level of expenditures to insure the continued maintenance of county facilities.
Grounds Maintenance	Three year plan to address County grounds	Schedules identified ground improvements maintenance projects according to priorities & funding level.	Provides for a stable annual level of expenditures to ensure the continued maintenance of county grounds.
Strategic Technology Plan	Five year information systems plan	Major initiatives are established with departments, constitutional offices & schools.	Projects are submitted in the CIP & approved in the fiscal year budget in the years in which they impact.
Comprehensive Water & Wastewater Master Plan	Twenty year plan to define the County's anticipated water & wastewater needs	Department of Utilities develops a Comprehensive Water & Wastewater Master Plan that supports development of the County in accordance with its adopted Land Use Plan.	Identifies future costs for water & wastewater infrastructure & establishes current per gallon prices to be charged to developers in accordance with the County's Pro-Rata Policy.
Comprehensive Plan	Long range plan designed to manage & direct growth	Provides focal point for growth management policies, which attempt to achieve balanced development, phased in conjunction with the provision of adequate public facilities & infrastructure.	Provides a foundation for reviewing proposed changes in the use of property and serves as the basis for amendments to the County's development related ordinances.
Transportation Plan	Long-range plan to maintain & improve the County's transportation system	Planning develops the Transportation Plan based on build- out of the Land Use Plan. The Plan identifies transportation policies, programs & facilities necessary to meet local & regional transportation demands.	Long range planning for highway infrastructure needs.
Regional Stormwater Management Plan	A long-range plan designed to improve stormwater run-off quality and quantity through use of regional ponds	The County has developed a plan of Regional Ponds designed to serve multiple developments. This plan will reduce the use of on-site storm water management facilities located at each project. Stafford County will maintain the ponds.	The construction of the ponds is funded through proffers and prorated share payments made by each user of the pond. Construction or maintenance may be funded in total by a storm water utility, if established by the Board of Supervisors.
Telecommunications Plan	A component of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure adequate provisions of a telecommunications infrastructure within the County that promotes public safety and economic development	The Planning Commission reviews the plan due to the proliferation of tower sites in the County. The Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan Committee reviews the Plan with input from the telecommunications industry.	Ensures adequate infrastructure for communications needs.

1.0 Introduction

Stafford County is a dynamic community. It includes a mix of suburban neighborhoods and rural enclaves. Retail centers and office and industrial parks provide shopping and employment opportunities throughout the County. The County is strategically located at a crossroads of major transportation routes which carries both positive and negative impacts to the quality of life. The built environment of Stafford County is relatively new. Since the construction of Interstate 95 in the 1960's through the County, population has doubled every 20 years.

The result of Stafford's burgeoning growth has been prosperity for some, but with prosperity comes a valid concern. Increasing traffic, the effects of development on the County's natural and cultural resources, the effects on the overall environment, as well as housing affordability and the ability to provide adequate public services are all increasing concerns for residents of Stafford County.

As the community continues to grow, the need for planning is ever greater. This document serves as a guide for future development of Stafford County over the next 20 years.

The Plan tells us where we are today and through goals and objectives, policies, and implementation tools, guides the physical development of the county--the location, type, and intensity of future land use. The plan includes goals, objectives and policies for sustainability; fiscal responsibility; the environment; health, safety and welfare; housing; transportation; economic development; education; and heritage resources.

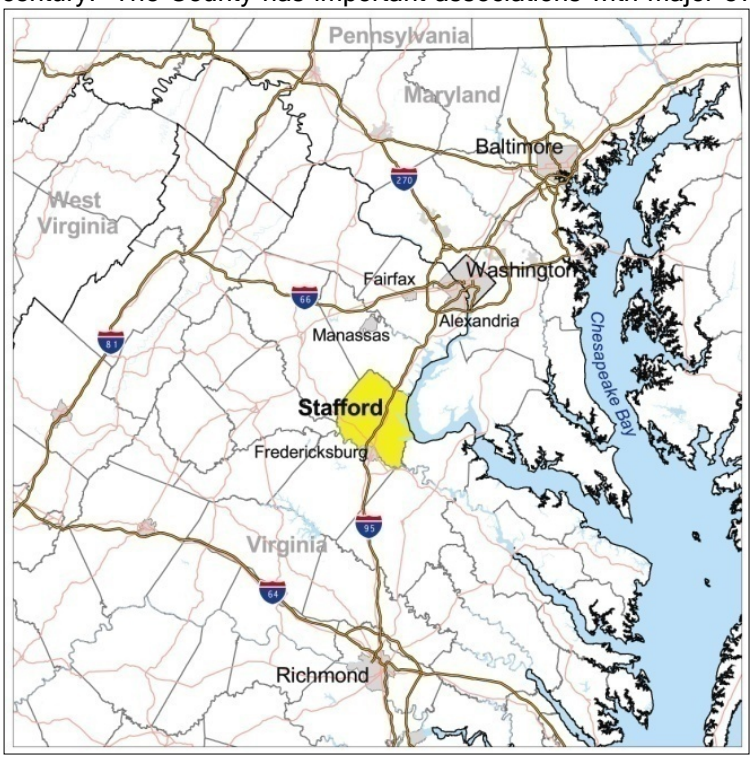
The Stafford County Comprehensive Plan emphasizes maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for existing and future residents of the County.

View of Crow's Nest from Accokeek Creek

1.1 Background

Stafford County is located approximately 40 miles south of Washington, D.C., and sixty miles north of Richmond, Virginia. The County covers 277 square miles of generally level to rolling land, with elevations ranging from sea level to 425 feet. The County is bordered by Prince William County on the north, Fauquier County and Culpeper County on the west, Spotsylvania County and the City of Fredericksburg below the Rappahannock River to the south, and the Potomac River and King George County on the east.

Established in 1664, Stafford County has a rich history from pre-colonial days to the industrialization of the nineteenth century. The County has important associations with major events and people in our nation's history. This history is documented by the County's bountiful archaeological and architectural remains. Stafford remained mostly a rural community until the construction of Interstate 95 during the late 1960s. Since that time, the County has experienced a growth rate that, for a period of time, ranked it among the fastest growing jurisdictions in the nation.



Stafford County in Regional Context

The County's proximity to major industrial and commercial markets, combined with its high percentage of vacant land, is attractive for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Since Stafford County is located within commuting distance of major employment centers to the north and south, it continues to be an attractive location for new development. While the rate of growth has slowed in recent years, residential and commercial development is still occurring to meet the demand for housing and services in this ever growing region.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide the physical development of Stafford County. The Comprehensive Plan:

- Documents local characteristics and trends regarding resident population composition, land use, the natural environment, economic development and service provision;
- Provides a benchmark for evaluating the compatibility of individual development proposals with the long range development objectives of the community;
- Identifies future service needs;
- Serves as a comprehensive source of information that can be used to secure state and federal funding and market the area to potential developers;
- Promotes open space conservation designed to preserve the rural heritage of the community and enhance the overall quality of life;
- Attracts appropriate development to the County through the identification of community goals and objectives for the next 20 years;
- Lays the foundation for future cooperative efforts between the County and its neighbors.

An important function of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for assessing development proposals that come before the County. The Comprehensive Plan is a lens through which development proposals should be evaluated. Each proposal should answer the question: Will this development further the vision of the future as articulated in the Comprehensive Plan? If the proposal is not consistent with the Plan, either the proposal should be rejected or revised to accurately reflect the vision of the future.

1.3 Format of the Plan

After this Introduction, the plan begins with Goals and Objectives, Policies, and Implementation Tools. Following those are the main Land Use and Public Facility Needs, and lastly, the existing conditions and public input that support the Plan. The interrelationships between these elements of the Plan are further explained:

Goals and Objectives – identify a desired future condition for various elements of growth such as land use or transportation. Goals and Objectives are the lens through which the future of Stafford is imagined.

Policies – provide guidance to the County leaders as they make decisions. The policies serve as the filter through which the future of the built environment is directed and through which new development proposals and new directions are evaluated.

Implementation Tools – identify the specific actions that should be taken by the County to follow specified policies. An Implementation Matrix is included to prioritize tasks and identify responsible agencies.

Land Use Policies and Map – are included with this document to provide a recommended foundation for future land use decisions.

Transportation Plan – is included to identify funded transportation improvements, planned network improvements for the next 20 years and anticipated road improvements that may exceed the 20 year planning horizon based on build-out of the planned land uses.

Public Facility Projections – are estimated based on the anticipated growth over the next 20 years. These facilities include schools, fire and rescue stations, parks, libraries, and government facilities.

Background Data – is provided that identifies the existing conditions and public input provided in developing this Plan. This Background Data provides a basis for the future direction envisioned in this Plan.

1.4 Relationship to other Plan Elements

The Comprehensive Plan is the main document that guides land use policy in the County. It provides the framework for public policy and land use decisions.

Plan elements provide more detailed strategies regarding specific components of land use planning, consistent with the guidance provided in the Comprehensive Plan. These Plan elements are appended to the Comprehensive Plan by reference, and upon review by the Planning Commission and adoption by the Board of Supervisors, are a part of the Comprehensive Plan. These documents may have different planning horizons, or have a purview significant enough that they require a stand-alone plan. Together, these plans are the components of the Comprehensive Plan.

STAFFORD COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PLAN ELEMENTS

- Environmental Plans:
  - Master Environmental Plan
  - Regional Stormwater Management/ Reservoir Protection Plan
  - Shoreline Area Management Plan
  - Groundwater Resource Protection Plan
  - Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan
  - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Plan
- Land Use:
  - Land Use Plan and Map
  - Economic Development Strategic Plan
  - Traditional Neighborhood Development Plan
  - Special Area Plans
    - U.S. Route 1 Corridor
    - Falmouth Area Plan
    - Redevelopment Area Plans (to be adopted)
    - Urban Development Area Concept Plans (to be adopted)
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure:
  - Master Water and Sewer Plan
  - Water Supply Study
  - Multi-modal Transportation Plan
  - Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities Plan
  - Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan
  - Public Safety Plan
  - Capital Improvement Program
  - Telecommunications Plan
  - Cultural Resources Management Plan

1.5 Legal Basis for the Plan

The Code of Virginia requires each jurisdiction to adopt a Comprehensive Plan for its physical development. The Plan shall be prepared by the Planning Commission and adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The purpose of the Plan is to guide and accomplish a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The Code of Virginia includes specific expectations of a locality's Comprehensive Plan. It identifies what shall be required and may be included:

> "The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the General or approximate location, character, or extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation

improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed as the use may be.

As part of the Comprehensive Plan, each locality shall develop a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that may include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The plan should recognize and differentiate among a hierarchy of roads such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. The Virginia Department of Transportation shall, upon request, provide localities with technical assistance in preparing such transportation plan.

The plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. It may include, but need not be limited to:

1. The designation of areas for various types of public and private development and use, such as different kinds of residential, including age-restricted, housing; business; industrial; agricultural; mineral resources; conservation; active and passive recreation; public service; flood plain and drainage; and other areas;

2. The designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas, and the like;

3. The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment;

4. The designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable ground water protection measures;

5. A capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps, and agricultural and forestall district maps, where applicable;

6. The location of existing or proposed recycling centers;

7. The location of military bases, military installations, and military airports and their adjacent safety areas; and

8. The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more.

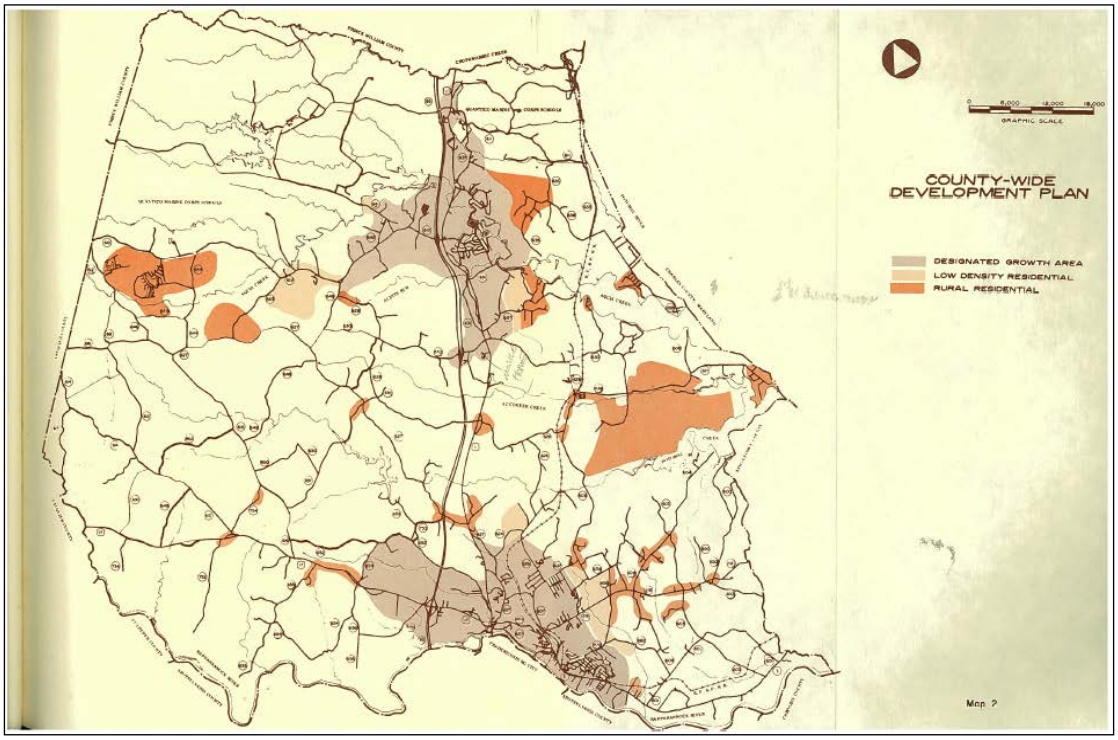
The plan shall include: the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality, while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.

The plan shall include: a map that shall show road improvements and transportation improvements, including the cost estimates of such road and transportation improvements as available from the Virginia Department of Transportation, taking into account the current and future needs of residents in the locality, while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated." (Va Code 15.2-2223)

1.6 History of the Comprehensive Plan in Stafford County

During the 1960's and early 1970's, Stafford County's in-house planning function was primarily regulatory, involving administration of the subdivision and zoning ordinances. Comprehensive planning efforts were, for the most part, made possible through the assistance of State and regional agencies. The Governor's Office, Division of Industrial Development and Planning, assisted the Stafford County Planning Commission in compiling eight reports studying the County's existing natural resources, land uses, public facilities, and trends in population, employment, income, and industry and trade. These reports culminated in the *Future Land Use Plan (Report No. 9)* and the *Major Streets and Highways Plan (Report No. 10).* These plans, including maps and descriptive matter (the preceding eight reports), were adopted by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on July 8, 1964, as Stafford County's first master plan.

Comprehensive planning efforts continued into the early 1970's primarily through the assistance of the Rappahannock Area Development Commission (RADCO), now referred to as George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC). In 1973, increases in staff permitted a greater focus on long-range planning issues. Further impetus to bolster comprehensive planning efforts resulted from growth pressures during the 1970's, as well as changes in planning legislation made by the 1975 Virginia General Assembly. The 1975 General Assembly amended the law to require all Virginia local governments to adopt comprehensive plans by July 1, 1980. As a result of these combined factors, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors adopted a new comprehensive plan, the *Comprehensive Development Plan*, on April 17, 1975. This Plan was amended in June 1979, and July 1980. In February 1986, the Central Stafford U.S. Route 1 Corridor Development Plan was added.



The Comprehensive Development Plan - 1979

In May 1986, the County began the process of developing a new Land Use Plan which would represent the first in a series of component documents that now comprise the Stafford County Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Plan was to direct residential, commercial, and industrial growth in suitable areas. This process was initiated with the development of extensive environmental, land use, and historic inventories, which would be used as a foundation in determining appropriate land uses. The location of major transportation routes, existing public utilities, and existing public facilities was also considered. The intention was to identify areas for growth that limited impacts on environmental and historic resources and took advantage of major existing roads and public

utilities, while ensuring that new development was able to utilize existing park, school, library, and fire/rescue facilities effectively.

These efforts culminated in the adoption of a new County Land Use Plan as the first component of the County's Comprehensive Plan, in July 1988. This Land Use Plan provided a basis for the development of numerous Comprehensive Plan components and planning documents. These plans identify the various needs for the County relative to parks, schools, utilities, public safety, and transportation, while also identifying a course for development of plans to protect sensitive environmental resources. The Land Use Plan was now being used to determine the needs of the County in several important areas. Water and sewer lines were sized to accommodate future land uses in the Plan, road improvements were directly related to the Plan, as were the potential needs of the County for parks, schools, fire/rescue, libraries, and other services. The Land Use Plan was revised several times since its adoption, most recently in 1996 and 2003.

The many different elements of the Comprehensive Plan have been adopted at different times and have not been re-evaluated and updated on a synchronized schedule. Several documents have not been updated since their initial adoption, while others have been updated on a more regular basis.

The effort to prepare this update of the Comprehensive Plan began in April 2006. This document serves the purpose of creating a unifying document whereby other elements will be referenced and subsequently adopted or amended.

1.7 Preparation of the Plan

The Plan represents the collaborative effort of County officials and citizens and of a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. It is a collection of policies prepared to guide the County over the next 20 years. This section outlines the tasks completed in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Steering Committee Meetings

In 2006 and 2007, a series of meetings were held with an ad-hoc Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Committee consisted of appointed and elected local officials, citizens and developers. The Committee met periodically with a hired consultant to discuss and direct the preparation of the Plan. The Committee reviewed extensive documentation and mapping resources, provided contacts and helped determine representatives to participate in a series of focus group sessions. There was a visioning session held with the Committee to develop initial goals and objectives and to help define the future of Stafford County. Visioning sessions held with the Steering Committee, staff, and Planning Commission are summarized in the final chapter of this plan document.

In 2008 and in 2010, two separate sub-committees of the Planning Commission met to complete the draft of the Comprehensive Plan. Revisions to the draft were considered and made with the input and guidance provided by members of the governing Board of Supervisors. Revisions also took into account other changes in the operating environment and state legislation that took place earlier in the planning process.

Inventory

A data collection process was completed for the Plan. The information contained in the Plan was supplemented by data from various governmental and private agencies to help ensure the accuracy of the document. With the help of the various agencies, information was obtained regarding local laws and ordinances, land use, the environment, population, community services, housing, municipal services and economic development. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was provided by Stafford County to create maps and illustrate land uses, environmental conditions, and the location of community services and transportation corridors.

Focus Group Sessions & Interviews
A series of telephone interviews was conducted to obtain additional information. Many public and private sector individuals and organizations contributed data and assisted in efforts to update previous Plan elements.

Focus Group sessions were held with stakeholders on: Economic Development and Housing; Environment Parks and Nature; and Transportation and Community Services. Visioning sessions were also conducted with the Planning Commission and staff and department directors. The focus group sessions are summarized in the final chapter of this Plan document.

Public Meetings/Hearings
Interactive public meetings were conducted. The public was invited to hear about the proposed Plan and provide comments. The public meetings were held during late spring and fall of 2006 and early in 2007. These sessions helped provide the County's outside consultant and the Steering Committee with valuable feedback regarding the Plan and the future of Stafford County. These sessions are summarized in the final chapter of this Plan document.

Community Survey
A random survey was distributed to both homeowners and renters in the County. The survey was designed to determine the opinions of residents on a variety of topics, including community image, recreation, transportation, housing and community services. The survey is summarized in the final chapter of this Plan document.

Implementation
Goals, policies and actions were developed for Stafford County to guide decisions over the next 20 years. The goals, policies and actions were developed based in large part upon the visioning sessions, the results of the community survey, and public and other community input. These goals, objectives and policies are intended to lead to the overall improvement of Stafford County and a better quality of life for all County residents.

Revisions to the Plan
The Plan should be evaluated on an on-going basis to ensure it meets current and changing expectations. This introduces flexibility through time to evaluate changes that are unanticipated by the Plan. When the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors identify a need to amend the Comprehensive Plan, such amendments should be based on a general County need, not specific development proposals.

The entire Comprehensive Plan should be revisited and updated every five years. These revisions should reflect changes in the economic, demographic and other aspects of the community and should incorporate changing goals, objectives and policies. The five-year review is the time to accommodate changes in philosophy or direction.

1.8 Use of the Plan

This Plan will serve as a resource for those who seek general information as to how the County envisions change over the next 20 years. Crafting the Comprehensive Plan indicates a commitment to a vision for the future. As the County's primary planning document, it is of interest to elected officials, County staff, as well as the public.

Elected Officials will use the Plan to learn about their constituency's vision of the community's future as they consider development proposals and adopt local codes and ordinances to support the desired goals.
Planning Commissioners can measure the desirability of proposed developments by their conformity with the Plan; use the Plan to identify areas in which to initiate changes to subdivision and zoning ordinances; and guide its recommendations regarding transportation planning and capital improvements.
County employees will use the Plan when evaluating development proposals and prioritizing work efforts.
The Public will use the Plan as a reference when making residential location choices, determining where to locate a business, and evaluating the effectiveness of local government.

2.0 The Foundation for the Future

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide the physical development of our County. The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that lays out a vision of the future with specific recommendations, a recommended Future Land Use Plan and recommendations for changes to zoning and land use regulations to implement the Future Land Use Plan. It is a guide to land use decision-making in Stafford.

2.2 Goals, Objectives and Policies

The goals, objectives and policies provide a framework to guide that physical development and change in Stafford County. They set a standard for the County and its residents to meet and provide a benchmark for evaluating the progress of the implementation of the Plan.

The goals are the general aims of Stafford County. The objectives are more specific, providing mid-range strategies to accomplish the goal. Policies are operational actions, usually for the purpose of relatively short-term implementation.

Sustainability

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A sprawling growth pattern of low-density development, which disperses residents over a wide area, consumes resources at a rate greater than can be replenished.

The location of roads and infrastructure shapes future development patterns. Builders and developers look for land with good access and the availability of public facilities. In particular, water and sewer extensions are major growth-inducing factors. Road improvements, construction of public facilities and water and sewer service can be used to direct growth into designated growth areas.

Goal 1. Manage growth and development in a sustainable manner.

Objective 1.1. Make development, land use, transportation, utility and other public facility decisions consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.1. Review of all development proposals should include an analysis on consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Proposals that are inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan should be denied.

Policy 1.1.2. Stafford County should encourage development proposals that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, land use and other regulations, and discourage development proposals that are inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.3. Future development proposals should incorporate some, but not necessarily all of the following characteristics:

- Maintains or improves the quality of life in Stafford County
- Is sustainable or enhances sustainability
- Serves a range of transportation needs
- Protects natural, cultural and historic resources
- Considers aesthetic values
- Provides adequate provision of public facilities necessitated by the development
- Incorporates energy conservation measures
- Contributes to a pleasing community character
- Minimizes land use conflicts
- Promotes economic development.

Policy 1.1.4. Plans that are incorporated as elements in this Plan by reference should be updated to be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of this Plan.

Policy 1.1.5. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan should be made to serve the general public interest. Amendments should be based on a general need in response to the current context of development patterns and community vision, and not based solely on a specific development proposal.

Policy 1.1.6. The Erosion and Sediment Control, Stormwater Management, Water, Sewer and Sewage Disposal, Wetlands, Subdivision and Zoning and any other relevant chapters of the Code of Stafford County should be updated to be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.7. This Plan should be implemented with respect to and in consideration of private property rights.

Objective 1.2. Direct growth into the Urban Services Area.

Policy 1.2.1. Establish a clear Urban Services Area boundary in a location that is suitable to accommodate residential and commercial development characterized by the presence of public facilities, utilities, and government services.

Policy 1.2.2. The County will establish measures to encourage new development within the Urban Services Area in order to reduce the growth pressure in the rural parts of the County.

Policy 1.2.3. Any expansion of the Urban Services Area boundaries must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and then approved by the Board of Supervisors before any extension of or connection to public water and sewer will be allowed for any area outside the existing Urban Services Area. The following specific criteria should be met when reviewing proposed Urban Services Area boundary expansions:

- The lands that are proposed to be included in the USA must have been zoned commercial or industrial as of the original date of adoption of this Plan.
- For mixed use projects with a residential component, demonstration of the need for expansion of the Urban Services Area, specifically that forecasted demand for residential units exceeds the availability of forecasted residential units.
- Demonstration of no availability of suitable alternative locations within the Urban Services Area.
- Demonstration that the new boundary is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Demonstration that the proposed extension would not lead to extension of water and/or sewer to other lands outside the Urban Services Area.
- Demonstration that the boundary change and associated land use will have minimal impact on land and land uses outside of the new boundary, and that the change will have minimal impact on public facilities or transportation.
- Demonstration of the availability of adequate services.
- Consideration of input from area residents and property owners.
- Demonstration that extensions to sewer lines will minimize the potential impact of failing septic drainfields on the watershed.

Policy 1.2.4. As required by Section 15.2-2223.1 of the State Code, the County shall designate Urban Development Areas in locations appropriate to accommodate higher density development, located in proximity to adequate transportation facilities, and within the current Urban Services Area. The Urban Development Areas shall be sufficient to accommodate projected residential and commercial growth for a period of 10 years.

Policy 1.2.5. The County shall establish a mixed-use district and design standards for development in the Urban Development Areas. This district shall have a residential density of at least four dwelling units per acre, and shall have a minimum commercial floor area ratio of 0.40. The design standards shall incorporate principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development.

Policy 1.2.6. The County shall encourage within the Urban Development Areas pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and town centers composed of a variety of housing types and densities, incorporating shopping and work place opportunities, and public facilities.

Policy 1.2.7. Dense, compact mixed-use developments should meet the following criteria:

- Be within the current Urban Services Area;
- Is most appropriate for infill or redevelopment;
- Have a sufficient density and scale to support a mix of uses, walkability, and public transit;
- Be designed, located, and programmed to offer alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips, by enabling safe and effective pedestrian and bicycle access to multiple uses and activities and by being accessible to public transportation;
- Be sensitive to existing environmental features and protect natural resources;
- Incorporate sustainable design features;
- Include a mix of housing types for all income levels; and
- Offset its impacts to County services.

Policy 1.2.8. To the extent possible, feasible and consistent with other goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the County may adopt financial and other incentives to direct development into the Urban Development Areas.

Policy 1.2.9. Residential density "bonuses" in the Urban Services Area, and within Urban Development Areas, should be tied to reductions in residential density outside the Urban Services Area.

Policy 1.2.10. New development projects for residential neighborhoods and commercial sites located within the Urban Services Area should be connected to the public water supply and the public sewer system.

Policy 1.2.11. At least 80 percent of the future cumulative residential growth should be located inside the Urban Services Area. The progress toward this policy should be evaluated on an annual basis through the tracking of building permit activity.

Objective 1.3. The County will promote infill development and redevelopment within the Urban Services Area, including Urban Development Areas. This includes development on vacant, bypassed and underutilized land within built up areas of existing communities where infrastructure is already in place, and redevelopment of sites in these areas.

Policy 1.3.1. Redevelopment and infill development should be of an appropriate building scale and compatible character with surrounding uses.

Policy 1.3.2. The County will work with the private sector in efforts to revitalize commercial, office and industrial areas and corridors.

Policy 1.3.3. In-fill and redevelopment efforts will focus on Boswell's Corner, the Courthouse Area, Falmouth, and the Southern Gateway Area, as shown as Redevelopment Areas on the Land Use Plan map. Southern Gateway and Falmouth are envisioned to merge into one area as the final product evolves. Special Area plans should be adopted as elements of this Comprehensive Plan for these areas for the purpose of establishing future land use patterns, types, and intensities, and circulation and building design.

Policy 1.3.4. The County shall, where appropriate, consider alternatives to conventional zoning regulations to support a development pattern consistent with the goals and objectives of the Redevelopment Areas and allow infill development that minimizes impact on adjacent uses. Examples include performance and incentive zoning, sometimes referred to as form based codes.

Objective 1.4. Discourage growth in the Rural areas outside the Urban Services Area.

Policy 1.4.1. Areas outside of the Urban Services Area will be characterized by large lot residential subdivisions, agricultural activities, and open land. These rural areas will have limited public services, utilities and facilities.

Policy 1.4.2. Water and/or sewer should not be extended beyond the current boundaries of the Urban Services Area for residential projects, with the following exception:

- Allow for the extension of public sewer utilities outside of the Urban Services Area only where there has been documented risk to public health and where application of the current pump and haul policy would be financially excessive to County Utility rate payers.

Policy 1.4.3. Private connections for houses, buildings or property to public sewer lines located outside the Urban Services Area should be allowed only when the property to be served abuts a street, alley or right-of-way in which there is located an existing public sewer line, and the building drain is located within 300 feet of the public sewer.

Policy 1.4.4. Private connections for houses, buildings or property to public water lines located outside the Urban Services Area should be allowed only when the property to be served abuts a street, alley or right-of-way in which there is located an existing public water line, and the house or building is located within 300 hundred feet of the public water line.

Policy 1.4.5. Road improvements should be focused on the Urban Development Areas, and to a lesser extent on the Urban Services Area to support the areas of targeted growth. Safety and general welfare of the public should be the primary consideration for road improvements outside the Urban Services Area.

Policy 1.4.6. The subdivision and zoning ordinances should be updated to incorporate the highest standards allowable under Virginia statutes for building and developing in agricultural areas.

Policy 1.4.7. The County should educate residents and developers that public facilities and access to public services may be limited outside the Urban Services Area.

Objective 1.5. The County may from time to time establish water and sewer service areas in locations outside of the designated Urban Services Area where a documented need exists for the protection of public health, safety, and welfare relative to existing uses and developments, and not to promote new development.

Policy 1.5.1. Allow for the extension of public water and sewer utilities to established rural residential neighborhoods and crossroads that may not be contiguous with the main Urban Services Area and where the sizes of lots preclude the construction of new systems and aging private systems are no longer sustainable.

Policy 1.5.2. Designate limited water and sewer utility service areas in the vicinity of Lake Arrowhead, Hidden Lake, and the Roseville neighborhoods, and the Hartwood Elementary School area as defined within this Plan. The mapping should be amended if the need arises in additional areas.

Policy 1.5.3. Funding for the utility lines to serve the areas referenced in Policy 1.5.2 shall be achieved by obtaining grants, establishing service districts, or by other means, and not at the expense of the utility rate payers.

Policy 1.5.4. Public water and sewer lines may need to be located outside of the Urban Services Area or Water and Sewer Service Areas to reach the designated service areas. This policy does not support the rezoning of land along these lines that would increase the intensity of development outside of the designated service areas nor does this policy support the extension of utility lines to serve by-right residential subdivisions or commercial development.

Objective 1.6. Preserve rural and agricultural areas of Stafford County and establish mechanisms for ensuring their continued protection from development.

Policy 1.6.1. The County should establish a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program. The program should focus development into the Urban Services Area. Properties located outside of the Urban Services Area shall be designated by amendment to the Comprehensive Plan as sending areas for development rights. Areas within the Urban Services Area shall be designated by amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to be eligible to receive development rights. Incentives may be used to encourage the transfer of development rights from sending to receiving areas. The transfer of development rights into the Urban Services Area should not negatively impact public services levels.

Policy 1.6.2. The County should continue support of the Purchase of Development Rights program.

Policy 1.6.3. The County should encourage private landowner dedication of conservation easements.

Policy 1.6.4. Calculations to establish the number of development rights for a parcel should exclude areas located on slopes of 25% or greater, hydric soils, and 4 % of the gross tract size for right of way dedication.

Policy 1.6.5 The County supports the preservation of rural character through the clustering of residential development. Cluster development would permit smaller lot sizes in exchange for preservation of open space, farmland, sensitive resources, and forested areas.

Objective 1.7. Phase growth to coincide with the establishment of necessary public infrastructure and services.

Policy 1.7.1. Implementation of Urban Development Areas should be phased based on the availability of public services and adequate infrastructure, projected population growth and projected residential and commercial growth.

Policy 1.7.2. New development proposals for projects within the Urban Services Area boundary and for the Urban Development Areas that are dependent upon the future changes should be rejected until the projected changes have been implemented.

Objective 1.8. Integrate land use and transportation decisions.

Policy 1.8.1. The County shall apply the requirements of Virginia Administrative Code Chapter 527, the traffic impact analysis regulations, to all projects potentially eligible under the statute to properly understand the impacts that land use changes may have on the transportation network. Land use proposals that have a negative impact on the transportation network should fully mitigate impacts to achieve adequate levels of service.

Policy 1.8.2. The County will prioritize road, pedestrian and transit improvement within the Urban Service Areas to include consideration of Levels of Service as well as Transportation Bond Projects.

Policy 1.8.3. Prior to constructing new roads or adding capacity to roads outside the Urban Services Area, the County should conduct an impact assessment of the potential for increased development as a result of the road project.

Policy 1.8.4. The County should maintain its Traffic Model to gauge the effect of growth, development, road improvements and changing transportation patterns on the transportation network.

Fiscal Responsibility

Residential development, although sometimes necessary to accommodate population growth, on average does not pay for itself. As of calendar year 2008, on average, each new "by-right" single family dwelling in Stafford County (developed without cash proffers to mitigate the cost of public services) creates capital infrastructure costs of an estimated $92,002. Infrastructure includes roads, schools, parks, and other public facilities. The dollar amount is based on a linear projection, assuming that as population increases all future facilities would be developed to achieve a desired service level without consideration for deficiencies or excess capacity. The number may vary based on inflation and construction costs. This does not include operating costs, such as maintenance cost and personnel salaries.

In contrast, depending on how it is maintained, open space is budget neutral or "gives back" more in revenues than it uses in public services, and commercial development generates more revenues than the cost of public services that it consumes.

The explosion of residential development in Stafford County during the first half of the last decade has led to escalating property taxes, changes in levels of public services and increasing County debt. The imbalance of residential to commercial development that occurred during that time was not financially sustainable.

Goal 2. Ensure that growth and development is managed in a fiscally responsible manner.

Objective 2.1. Adopt a land use plan and establish a growth management system that will accommodate the projected year 2030 population of 218,772.

Policy 2.1.1. To the extent possible, the future land use map should limit potential residential growth to the amount of dwelling units needed to accommodate forecasted population growth.

Policy 2.1.2. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, including the Land Use Map, should not create additional excess residential capacity.

Policy 2.1.3. The County will maintain and update population and housing data and future projections that will be used to:

- Evaluate development proposals;
- Provide adequate housing opportunities for all residents;
- Assure that adequate levels of service are met;
- Deliver adequate public services;
- Generate employment opportunities to meet the needs of a growing population;
- Ensure adequate transportation planning; and
- Measure growth trends against the Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 2.2. Stafford County should use Level of Service Standards to assist in identifying which existing lands, facilities or services should be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be.

Policy 2.2.1. At a minimum, the Level of Service standards should address roadway systems, transit, libraries, storm water quantity and quality, parks and recreation, solid waste collection and disposal, public safety, schools, water, sanitary sewer and administration.

Policy 2.2.2. The Comprehensive Plan should incorporate Levels of Service Standards for which the inputs are now known.

Policy 2.2.3. The County should identify missing information to establish some Levels of Service Standards, and implement a plan to obtain this information. The Board of Supervisors should initiate an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate additional Levels of Service Standards as needed.

Objective 2.3. The Board of Supervisors should use the Public Facilities Plan, as included in Chapter 5 of this document, as a needs assessment for the annual Capital Improvements Plan.

Policy 2.3.1. The Public Facilities Plan should assess existing and future public facility needs, forecasting when and where expanded and new public facilities will be needed to most efficiently and conveniently serve County residents.

Policy 2.3.2. The Public Facilities Plan should be implemented to apply the Levels of Service Standards for public facilities and services.

Objective 2.4. Identify the public costs of residential growth and development, and its potential impact on the County's budget and property taxes.

Policy 2.4.1. The County should adopt a Financial Impact Model as an element of the Comprehensive Plan and prepare and present an annual update to the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 2.4.2. The Financial Impact Model should incorporate the Levels of Service Standards, and model for a period of twenty years the projected revenues and expenses for the County based on projected population growth, and projected residential and commercial development.

Policy 2.4.3. The Comprehensive Plan should estimate the incremental capital costs of new residential units.

Objective 2.5. Ensure that impact statements are complete and incorporated into the development review process.

Policy 2.5.1. Where not specified by state statute, the County should establish standards for impact statements.

Policy 2.5.2. Development proposals or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that do not include required and complete impact statements should be rejected.

Objective 2.6. Use infrastructure as a tool to guide development into locations where the land is most cost effectively served.

Policy 2.6.1. Future public facilities should be encouraged to be located within the Urban Services Area (USA). Exceptions may be made when the only way to meet Level of Service Standards or location criteria contained in the Public Facilities Plan is to locate the facility outside the USA or when land is dedicated to the County and the development of the site and any required infrastructure would not be cost prohibitive.

Policy 2.6.2. Priority should be given to meeting capital improvement, road and other infrastructure needs within the Urban Development Area, and to a lesser extent the remainder of the USA.

Objective 2.7. To the maximum extent possible, the County should collect funds from land development projects to pay for the costs of growth and development.

Policy 2.7.1. The County should maintain an up-to-date assessment of the capital costs of residential and non-residential development.

Policy 2.7.2. The County should collect transportation impact fees pursuant to Virginia Code Sec. 15.2-2317 et seq.

Policy 2.7.3. The County should collect proffers on rezoning applications to the extent possible to meet capital improvement needs.

Policy 2.7.4. For land development located within a dam break inundation zone, the County should establish a system for collecting fifty percent of the costs for necessary upgrades to impounding structures, pursuant to Sec. 15.2-2243.1.

Policy 2.7.5. The County should regularly update and/or recalculate transportation impact fees and/or proffer guidelines to reflect current costs.

Environment

Our decision to occupy and alter Stafford County's landscape has resulted in increased volumes and concentrations of specific pollutants in the air, in surface and ground waters, and in the soil. These pollutants can harm both the natural and the human environment.

Although Stafford County does not have to contend directly with the more serious forms of pollution associated with heavy industry, discharges from factories in other parts of the region and country and pass through traffic on Interstate 95 have indirectly created a negative effect on air and water quality in the County. Within the County, the conversion of land to urban uses and our dependence on the automobile have resulted in increased amounts of pollution.

- The County has not attained federal air quality standards for ozone.
- While Stafford County has attained federal carbon monoxide standards, high CO concentrations occur in "hot spots" near points of traffic congestion.
- Some streams and lakes in Stafford County, and the Potomac River, are characterized by poor water quality.
- Removal of natural vegetation along stream banks and shorelines has increased stream bank erosion. Land use and development activities have altered stream flows, and transported pathogens and pollutants into streams, wetlands and lakes.
- The County continues to lose open space, much of which is significant for protecting environmental resources. It is desirable to conserve a portion of the County's land in a condition that is as close to a predevelopment state as is practical.
- Development impacts have led to increased light and noise pollution.

Although faced with many threats, Stafford is rich in diverse, natural resources. These resources present opportunities for education, recreation, eco-tourism and buffers to the impacts of development. Chief among these resources is the Crow's Nest peninsula. Located approximately seven miles east of the County Courthouse, Crow's Nest encompasses 3,884 acres of contiguous forestland. It is bounded by Brooke Road (Rt 608) on the West, Accokeek Creek to the North, and Potomac Creek to the South. The confluence of these creeks and the Potomac River is at the eastern tip of the peninsula. In addition to natural assets, there are significant cultural and historical resources on the Peninsula.

Protection of the Crow's Nest peninsula as a public natural area park will provide public access for low-impact educational and recreational activities; provide additional public water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed; preserve important historical and archeological sites; and increase protected natural/open space. Suitable uses for the public park include fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental and historical education, hiking, and limited deer hunting dependent upon needs for deer population maintenance and control.

Goal 3. Stafford County encourages its citizens and businesses to preserve and protect Stafford's natural and environmental resources through voluntary efforts.

Objective 3.1. Ensure that environmental protection efforts meet federal and state mandates with minimal impacts on the County.

Policy 3.1.1. Stafford County recognizes that certain environmental requirements are mandated by federal and state regulations, including, but not limited to, the state Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, Wetlands Code, the federal Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and National Flood Insurance Program. When trying to meet the objectives of state and federal mandates and a menu of options are provided to meet objectives, emphasis should be placed on incentive based measures.

Policy 3.1.2. Stafford County should encourage and support community education programs to educate the public, its citizens and businesses about green programs, federal and state environmental mandates and requirements.

Policy 3.1.3. - Development proposals that are projected to cause a substantial increase in auto related air pollutants should provide a transportation management strategy which minimizes dependence on single occupant automobiles. This shall apply to residential and non-residential development proposals that meet the requirements to submit a traffic impact analysis in accordance with VDOT criteria. The types of strategies employed may include, but not be limited to:

- Provision of an interconnected street network within a development and to adjoining property to potentially shorten trip lengths
- Incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities into the design of the development
- Promotion of ride sharing programs by employment centers
- Design commercial projects to limit vehicle trips within the shopping complex
- In mixed use developments, focus residential uses within ¼ mile of shopping and employment opportunities, with the design, configuration, and mix of uses emphasizing a pedestrian oriented environment.
- Enhancement of telecommunications infrastructure to promote work from home opportunities
- Provision of shuttle buses to transportation nodes.

Objective 3.2. Preserve and improve air quality.

Policy 3.2.1. Establish land use patterns and transportation facilities that encourage the use of public transportation and reduce trip lengths to reduce emissions of nitrous oxide, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons from automobiles.

Policy 3.2.2. Implement transportation strategies that reduce auto travel and improve traffic flow, thereby reducing auto emissions.

Policy 3.2.3. Encourage the application of state of the art technology toward the reduction of emissions from stationary sources of air pollution.

Objective 3.3. Prevent and reduce pollution of surface and groundwater resources. Protect and restore the ecological integrity of streams in Stafford County.

Policy 3.3.1. Continue to study and evaluate the need for the establishment of a Stormwater Utility.

Policy 3.3.2. Maintain a best management practices (BMP) program for Stafford County, ensure that new development and redevelopment complies with the County's best management practice (BMP) requirements, and monitor the performance of BMPs. Update BMP requirements as newer, more effective strategies become available.

Policy 3.3.3. Preserve the integrity and the scenic and recreational value of stream valleys when locating and designing storm water detention and BMP facilities. In general, such facilities should not be provided within stream valleys unless they are designed to provide regional benefits or unless the stream has been significantly degraded.

Policy 3.3.4. When facilities within the stream are appropriate, encourage the construction of facilities that minimize clearing and grading, such as embankment-only ponds, or facilities that are otherwise designed to maximize pollutant removal while protecting, enhancing, and/or restoring ecological integrity.

Policy 3.3.5. Update erosion and sediment regulations and enforcement procedures as new technology becomes available. Minimization and phasing of clearing and grading are the preferred means of limiting erosion during construction.

Policy 3.3.6. Where practical and feasible from a design and cost standpoint, retrofit older stormwater management facilities to perform water quality functions to better protect downstream areas from degradation.

Policy 3.3.7. Protect water resources by maintaining high standards for discharges from point sources.

Policy 3.3.8. Establish a program to monitor Stafford County's surface and groundwater resources.

Policy 3.3.9. Encourage land use activities to protect surface and groundwater resources.

Policy 3.3.10. For new development and redevelopment, apply better site design and low impact development (LID) techniques, and pursue commitments to reduce stormwater runoff volumes and peak flows, to increase groundwater recharge, and to increase preservation of undisturbed areas.

Policy 3.3.11. Encourage watershed management planning and consider any watershed management plans that are adopted or endorsed by the Board of Supervisors as a factor in making land use decisions.

Policy 3.3.12. Optimize stormwater management and water quality controls and practices for redevelopment consistent with revitalization goals.

Policy 3.3.13. Natural wetlands should not be used as silt ponds, or serve as the receiving area for stormwater.

Objective 3.4. Protect the Potomac Estuary, the Rappahannock, and the Chesapeake Bay from the avoidable impacts of land use activities in Stafford County.

Policy 3.4.1. Ensure that new development and redevelopment complies with the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, as applied to Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 3.4.2. Evaluate the need to strengthen the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance by amending the Ordinance to include, but not be limited to, additional protection of streams as allowed under the State statute. Implement all recommendations contained in the *Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Plan* element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 3.4.3. Where tidal shoreline erosion control measures are needed, consider recommendations contained in the "Shoreline Protection Policies" in the *Chesapeake Bay Plan* element of the Comprehensive Plan dated November 2001.

Policy 3.4.4. Boating and other tidal shoreline access structures should be sited, designed, and constructed in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impacts. Where County approval of tidal shoreline access structures is needed, the following guidelines should be consulted and considered in the decision-making process: the Chesapeake Bay Program's document entitled "Chesapeake Bay Area Public Access Technical Assistance Report;" and the following guidelines issued by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission; "Shoreline Development BMPs," "Wetlands Guidelines," and "Subaqueous Guidelines."

Policy 3.4.5. Support efforts to mitigate or compensate for losses of wetlands impacted by shoreline structures and development.

Objective 3.5. Conserve and restore tree cover on developed and developing sites.

Policy 3.5.1. Establish tree cover requirements and implement through tree preservation rather than tree planting where existing tree cover exists.

Policy 3.5.2. Protect or restore the maximum amount of tree cover on developed and developing sites consistent with planned land use and good silvicultural practices.

Policy 3.5.3. Use open space/conservation easements as appropriate to preserve woodlands, monarch trees, and/or rare or otherwise significant stands of trees, as identified by the County.

Objective 3.6. Establish mechanisms to protect scenic and/or sensitive environmental resources in perpetuity.

Policy 3.6.1. Create open space and conservation easement policies.

Policy 3.6.2. Create an Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) system to identify, protect and restore areas that have a desirable or scarce habitat; provide “connectedness” for wildlife movement; desirable aesthetic features; and/or pollution reduction capacities, prioritizing stream valleys.

Policy 3.6.3. Encourage incentives for private placement of land in open space and conservation easements, and within a protected EQC.

Policy 3.6.4. Preserve and protect the natural beauty of Stafford County’s topography, including its view sheds, waterways and signature rolling hills and valleys.

Objective 3.7. Encourage parks and natural areas to include low-impact recreational and educational uses.

Policy 3.7.1. Incorporate plans for natural areas and parks for low-impact uses into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Policy 3.7.2. Permanently protect the Crow’s Nest peninsula in the areas designated on the Land Use Map.

Policy 3.7.3. Incorporate requirements and standards for open and green spaces and natural areas into land use districts.

Objective 3.8. Minimize light emissions to those necessary and consistent with general safety.

Policy 3.8.1. The County should establish the use of lighting plans to reduce glare, eliminate over-illumination and reduce sky glow, and follow Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Policy 3.8.2. Light sources for parking lots and signage should use the minimum intensity necessary to accomplish the light's purpose.

Policy 3.8.3. Full cutoff fixtures should be used in exterior lighting for development and redevelopment projects.

Policy 3.8.4. Lighting plans should incorporate the latest technology in lighting that provides effective illumination and enhanced energy efficiency whenever possible.

Objective 3.9. Integrate environmental planning and implementation efforts into a single Master Environmental Plan.

Health, Safety and Welfare

Maintaining and improving the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the County improves the overall livability of a community. In ensuring that Stafford is a great place to live, work, learn, and play, the County must be mindful of the challenges involved in maintaining a high quality of life and in response establish policies to address these issues.

Unlike some parts of the United States, Stafford County has not experienced widespread destruction due to natural disasters. However the County is not free from being impacted by natural events and manmade hazards.

The geologic conditions in Stafford create a variety of challenges. There are hazards to property in some areas of the County posed by wet or unstable soils. Marine clay soils found in the eastern part of the County and shrink-swell clay soils found primarily in the western area can cause foundation failures, cracked and shifting walls, and in extreme cases, catastrophic slope failure. Asbestos bearing soils may pose a health risk to construction workers requiring special precautions during excavation.

Increasing urbanization often creates an imbalance between developing important natural resources and protecting quality of life and overall community values. The location of mineral resources, such as sand and gravel, and crushed stone, depends upon geological reserves. As residents locate nearer to these areas, extraction of these resources may threaten their safety and well-being.

Stafford must be mindful of its ability to sustain basic needs during short term natural events, as well as in the long term. In the short term, emergency preparedness will allow residents to better deal with disruptions to food, water, power, and fuel supplies, as seen during past hurricane or major snow events. In the long term, the County shall be mindful of its water resources, to ensure land use practices do not impact surface and groundwater reserves.

The County offers a superb network of parks, abundant recreation opportunities, and unique natural areas. As the County continues to grow, a challenge will be to maintain adequate recreational opportunities and open space. Parks, recreational facilities and open space are designed to improve the health of the residents of Stafford County by providing for their need for exercise and relaxation, but they also help to protect the County's natural resources and environment. Because of its dramatic growth, Stafford County must be particularly mindful of the need to set aside land for future parks and open space as well as provide adequate facilities for the active and passive recreational requirements of its current and future population.

Goal 4. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of Stafford County residents.

Objective 4.1. Through land use policies, maintain and enhance the capacity of Stafford County to meet the basic needs of citizens during times of crisis and in the face of diminishing resources.

Policy 4.1.1. Establish mechanisms to encourage continued active agricultural uses, and to re-establish active agricultural uses outside the Urban Services Area.

Policy 4.1.2. Encourage the local production and purchase of food and fiber through establishment and support of viable farmers markets and agri-tourism events, establishment of standards for community gardens in major residential developments, and promotion of individual garden plots.

Policy 4.1.3. In order to ensure an adequate supply of energy resources, promote conservation measures such as property tax credits for use of alternative energy sources or use of high efficiency appliances or building practices.

Objective 4.2. Protect drinking water resources.

Policy 4.2.1. Encourage that development and redevelopment sites that may have been subject to contamination by toxic substances or other hazardous materials be remediated to the extent they will not present unacceptable health or environmental risks for the specific uses proposed for such sites.

Policy 4.2.2. Implement a groundwater management ordinance in accordance with the Groundwater Management Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 4.2.3. Ensure the quality of drinking water reservoirs is maintained through a pre-treatment monitoring program. If water quality degradation is detected, then appropriate mitigation measures should be implemented.

Policy 4.2.4. Establish reservoir overlay district standards for the long term protection of the County's public water supplies.

Policy 4.2.5. Ensure development proposals that include the use and storage of hazardous materials comply with all state and federal regulations.

Policy 4.2.6. Support education about methods to minimize the application of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides to lawns and landscaped areas through, among other tools, the development, implementation and monitoring of integrated pest, vegetation and nutrient management plans.

Objective 4.3. Minimize development on erodible, hydric, and other soils deemed unsuitable for development.

Policy 4.3.1. Discourage development on erodible and hydric soils, and cluster development away from steep slopes and potential problem areas.

Policy 4.3.2. Require new development on problem soils such as shrink swell and low pH (acidic) soils to provide appropriate engineering measures to minimize geotechnical hazards.

Objective 4.4. Minimize the potential impacts of flood hazards, storm surges, and high water levels.

Policy 4.4.1. Create awareness of Stafford County waters that may be susceptible to a rise in tidal water levels and storm surge and assess the potential impacts.

Policy 4.4.2. Discourage development of new buildings and structures within dam inundation zones.

Policy 4.4.3. The Comprehensive Plan should include a map identifying all parcels wholly or partly within dam break inundation zones.

Objective 4.5. Support the expansion of electric and pipeline utilities in a manner that minimizes the exposure of County residents to potential pipeline ruptures and visual impacts and environmental hazards associated with electrical transmission and distribution facilities.

Policy 4.5.1. The Comprehensive Plan should include a map designating major gas and petroleum pipelines, and electrical transmission and distribution facilities.

Policy 4.5.2. Public Service Corporations should have their easements and facilities well marked and they should provide regular public education on the location and hazards associated with major gas and petroleum pipelines, and electrical transmission and distribution facilities.

Policy 4.5.3. The County should identify critical surface and ground water resource areas in the vicinity of pipelines, and the pipeline operators should share with the County contingency plans for emergency response in case of an accident.

Policy 4.5.4. Electric utility and telecommunication providers should design their systems to minimize electromagnetic field impacts on nearby residential uses, schools, and businesses.

Policy 4.5.5. Above ground transmission lines, sub-stations, and switching stations should be sited and designed in a manner to minimize visual and environmental impacts on adjacent land uses. Within the Urban Services Area, the County encourages the underground placement of all electric transmission lines when new lines are installed or existing lines relocated. Above ground transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more, and associated facilities such as sub-stations and switching stations should provide adequate screening and buffering.

Policy 4.5.6. The County discourages future residential development from locating in the vicinity of existing and future electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more, and associated facilities such as substations and switching stations without adequate screening and buffering.

Objective 4.6. Minimize potential impacts of mineral extraction on nearby properties.

Policy 4.6.1. To meet future demands, allow mineral extraction activities, including, but not limited to, sand, gravel, stone, and rock, to occur only in areas of known geological reserves, as determined by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, Division of Mineral Resources.

Policy 4.6.2. Encourage existing mining/ extraction operations to fully utilize adjoining areas that have suitable mineral resources by relocation of existing operations at the appropriate time, rather than relocate to other sites within the County.

Policy 4.6.3. Require proposals for mineral extraction to obtain a Conditional Use Permit to mitigate impacts to nearby properties.

Policy 4.6.4. Require berms and/or other screening measures to minimize visual intrusions.

Policy 4.6.5. Restrict operating hours to preclude disturbances from vehicles and equipment.

Policy 4.6.6. Encourage existing mining/extraction operations to provide for appropriate re-use of mined areas, after mining and reclamation procedures have been completed. Appropriate re-use may include dedication of portions of the reclaimed site for public infrastructure needs such as parkland and/or reservoirs.

Objective 4.7. Create a diversity of recreational opportunities for Stafford residents of all ages.

Policy 4.7.1. The County will evaluate its future need for public parks, recreational facilities and passive open space on an on-going basis and identify areas for acquisition to fill this need in order to conform to the County's Level of Service Standard incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 4.7.2. Where practical, expansion of existing parks should be considered when a future need is identified. Development proposals should consider donation of land to adjacent parks if a need exists and the need is reasonably related to the development proposal.

Policy 4.7.3. Criteria for parks and recreation will be guided by the Virginia Outdoors Plan and National Recreation and Parks Association standards.

Policy 4.7.4. A Parks and Recreation Master Facilities Plan should be updated and incorporated as an element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 4.8. Minimize the noise impacts, vibration impacts, and potential safety hazards generated by the use of live fire ranges and aircraft overflight and aviation impacts in general at Quantico Marine Corps Base (MCB).

Policy 4.8.1. Amend the existing Military Facility Impact Overlay District boundary map to include the following areas as depicted in the Quantico MCB 2006 Range Compatibility Use Zone (RCUZ) Study:

- All land within a five mile radius of Quantico MCB demolition areas.
- All land designated under Range Safety Zone C.

Policy 4.8.2. Amend the Military Facility Impact Overlay District ordinance to encourage the following residential densities within the District in areas outside of the County's Urban Services Area:

- Within the five mile radius area, reduce density to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres.
- Within the remaining Range Safety Zone C, reduce or maintain a density at 1 dwelling unit per 3 acres.

These densities should be accomplished through means such as conservation easements, Purchase of Development Rights, Transfer of Development Rights, and continuation and establishment of agricultural uses and coordination with the Base on their encroachment control plans.

Policy 4.8.3. Amend the Military Facility Impact Overlay District ordinance to include Noise Level Reduction (NLR) requirements in building codes for structures within the District.

Policy 4.8.4. Require written noise disclosure, as permitted by law, for potential purchasers and lessees within the Military Facility Impact Overlay District of military operation impacts through means that include, but are not limited to, the requirement of a note on subdivision plats or exploring the possibility of revisions to the County's Noise Ordinance.

Policy 4.8.5. Amend the zoning ordinance to establish a maximum height restriction of 450 feet above mean sea level for towers, structures, buildings or objects in areas within the Quantico MCB Range Safety Zone C depicted in the Quantico MCB 2006 RCUZ Study.

Policy 4.8.6. Evaluate the need to adopt regulations that promote compatible land uses in areas outside the Military Facility Impact Overlay District, but within sufficient proximity to Quantico MCB to experience noise and/or vibration impacts.

Policy 4.8.7. Designate the boundaries of an Airport Impact Overlay Zone for the approach to the Quantico MCB air facility. The primary approach to the landing strip at Quantico, known as Turner Field, is a north south orientation located over the eastern portion of the County, including areas such as Crow's Nest and the Widewater peninsula. It is illustrated in Figure 5.14 of this document.

Policy 4.8.8. Notify the Commander and Community Plans and Liaison Officer of Quantico MCB and the Civilian-Military Community Relations Council, of any proposed extension of water or sewer service outside the Urban Services Area on lands within five miles of the boundary of Quantico MCB.

Policy 4.8.9. Work cooperatively with Quantico MCB to limit land uses to those compatible with military training activities within the Military Facility Impact Overlay Noise Zones and Range Safety Zones as recommended in the August 2006 Range Compatible Use Zone Study and included in Chapter 3 of this document.

Objective 4.9. Minimize the noise impacts and potential safety hazards generated by general aviation at public and private airfields in the County.

Policy 4.9.1. The County should develop land use compatibility standards for new development to conform to within the aircraft approach patterns of airports and landing strips.

Housing

Home ownership expands individual opportunities to accumulate wealth, enables a family to exert greater control over their living environment, creates incentives for households to better maintain their homes, and may benefit children of homeowners. Homeownership also benefits local neighborhoods because owner-occupiers have a financial stake in the quality of the local community.

Stafford County's housing stock has increased exponentially through 2007 and the rate of growth dropped sharply in 2008 in line with national trends. According to the 2000 Census, the median year that all homes were built is 1987. That figure will change, as more than 10,000 residential units were added between 2000 and 2007, an increase of 34%. Although there were approximately 1,500 new residential units per year through 2007, the number of new building permits dropped to 419 in 2008. Although median home values increased at a similar rate, from $156,400 in 2000 to $360,000 in 2007, the value dropped to $272,950 in 2008. Stafford must determine a direction for future residential development that is more affordable should housing values rebound and rise sharply.

In Stafford County, past increases in housing costs had the effect of limiting opportunities for affordable home ownership. Affordable housing is safe, decent housing where costs (mortgage or rent plus utilities) do not exceed 30 % of gross household income. This should apply across the spectrum of income levels. The mid-range income level, known as "workforce housing" applies to households that earn between 50% and 120% of the median household income, or between $44,768 and $107,443, based on a median income of $89,536 in 2008.

The lower end of this level includes the community's sheriff deputies, firemen, school teachers, nurses and retail associates who often are priced out of the market. The drop in housing value that began in 2007 and continued into 2010 had the positive effect of increasing the availability of affordable workforce housing. An Affordable Housing Study that was presented to the Steering Committee is included in the Appendix.

In November, 2008, Stafford County endorsed the efforts of the George Washington Regional Commission's (GWRC) Affordable Housing Task Force to address regional affordable housing. The County agreed to work in cooperation with GWRC and four regional localities to ascertain the degree of need for affordable housing; work with the community non-profit organizations and the private sector to help find affordable housing solutions; evaluate the local and regional need for affordable housing in local and regional comprehensive plans; consider development of a regional housing plan; and consider programs and other options regarding affordable housing. In 2009, the County participated in the task force's "Foreclosure Sale by Region" program which facilitated acquisition, rehabilitation, and resale of foreclosed properties at an affordable price.

Goal 5. Promote affordable and quality housing.

Objective 5.1. Identify need for and potential solutions to creating new and maintaining existing affordable housing.

Policy 5.1.1. Establish an Affordable Housing Taskforce with community stakeholders.

Policy 5.1.2. Incorporate criteria in the County's monetary proffer guidelines that offer credit for providing affordable housing.

Policy 5.1.3. When new development proposals would displace aging and affordable housing stock, the means to relocate the residents to other affordable housing should be considered, including, but not limited to:

- Assisting with relocation search and costs.
- Including affordable dwelling units within the development.
- Payment into an affordable housing fund.

Objective 5.2. Identify opportunities for private/public partnerships to increase the stock of affordable housing where sustainable home ownership can be achieved that will not create a burden on the County. The types of units may include townhomes, multi-family units, and reasonably sized detached homes.

Policy 5.2.1. Create land-use incentives for private development of affordable housing.

Policy 5.2.2. Identify publicly owned properties that could be redeveloped as public housing for public employees.

Objective 5.3. Promote housing opportunities for all income ranges and ages, including housing for elderly, disabled and low-income residents, workforce housing, and executive housing.

Policy 5.3.1. Community areas should include a mix of housing types and have access to local services, infrastructure, community facilities and employment opportunities.

Policy 5.3.2. Affordable housing will be encouraged, but not limited to, Urban Development Areas, as designated on the Land Use Plan Map.

Policy 5.3.3. Development and redevelopment proposals should promote housing choices for those who own or rent, and where residents have the opportunity of a livable home at an affordable price that promotes opportunity and a better quality of life in a secure and attractive environment.

Policy 5.3.4. Housing should include universal design features.

Policy 5.3.5. Pedestrian facilities in communities should be appropriately designed and well lit for safe accessibility.

Policy 5.3.6. The County should promote the conservation of stable neighborhoods, revitalization of older neighborhoods, and maintenance of quality housing and property values.

Transportation

Adequate transportation systems promote a high quality of life by ensuring the ability of residents, workers, students, shoppers, tourists and others to move freely between home, work, school, recreation, commerce and other venues.

The growth in Stafford County and the surrounding region has contributed to roadway congestion and resulted in a need for transportation solutions that will meet current and future demand for better, safer and less congested roads.

Goal 6. Create an intermodal system of transportation which implements the Land Use Plan by providing a safe, efficient and affordable means for our people and products to move safely in and through Stafford County.

Objective 6.1. Maintain a safe road system.

Policy 6.1.1. Road safety improvements should be prioritized over capacity improvements.

Policy 6.1.2. Prioritize secondary road funds for small, spot safety improvements that can be completed within a year and lead to immediate benefits.

Policy 6.1.3. Road improvements should improve safety by incorporating features that ensure protection from unhealthful levels of transportation related noise.

Policy 6.1.4. Utilize inter-parcel connections and reverse frontage streets to minimize vehicle conflict points onto busy streets.

Objective 6.2. Provide and maintain a multi-modal public transit system.

Policy 6.2.1. The County should establish incentives for development proposals to include support for alternative modes of transportation including bus, rail, commuter parking, and car/van pooling.

Policy 6.2.2. Encourage the future expansion and development of an efficient transit system inside the Urban Services Area and Urban Development Areas to serve higher density employment, retail and residential areas and sectors of the population with limited mobility. Where practical, transit systems should provide access from residential areas to commuter rail stations and park and ride lots.

Policy 6.2.3. Promote the development of high occupancy lanes on Interstate 95.

Policy 6.2.4. Promote regional rideshare and para-transit programs.

Policy 6.2.5. Continue to support the development of the Stafford Regional Airport to serve economic development interests.

Objective 6.3. Create a system of sidewalks, bike paths and trails to provide non-motorized transportation alternatives.

Policy 6.3.1. Development proposals should establish sidewalks and greenways to connect local neighborhoods with activity centers such as shopping, employment, and schools and with one another.

Policy 6.3.2. Support development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect to local, regional and statewide trail and park systems.

Policy 6.3.3. The Comprehensive Plan should designate inter- and intra-County bike networks.

Policy 6.3.4. The County will support public and private organizations in their efforts to develop and fund inter- and intra-County bike route networks.

Policy 6.3.5. The County should explore the creation of bicycle and pedestrian trails in pipeline, electrical and other easements, particularly when the use of easements for non-motorized movement will create connectivity between open space areas and neighborhoods.

Policy 6.3.6. Encourage development to construct pedestrian access points where public streets do not connect.

Policy 6.3.7. Support the implementation of trails and sidewalks along road improvements and new roads.

Objective 6.4. Create more efficient patterns of traffic flow and circulation.

Policy 6.4.1. New residential subdivisions should provide more than one point of ingress/egress and should conform to the VDOT secondary street acceptance regulations.

Policy 6.4.2. New residential subdivisions should provide inter-subdivision connectivity based on the number of units in the subdivision. Connections should be designed to minimize the effects of cut-through traffic by the use of measures such as constructing spine roads that utilize reverse frontage, multiple means of access through neighborhoods and street alignments that provide indirect travel routes between neighborhoods.

Policy 6.4.3. Circulation systems within commercial developments should be adequate to handle peak loads internally and at traffic lights, and provide inter-parcel connectivity.

Policy 6.4.4. Continue the use of Highway Corridor Overlay Districts and promote the use of access management principles along main thoroughfares.

Policy 6.4.5. Promote alternative routes to relieve congested corridors.

Objective 6.5. Retain and enhance the visual landscape along major transportation corridors to acknowledge the unique culture and historical development patterns.

Policy 6.5.1. Future improvements to roadway corridors should be done in a manner that provides transportation functionality while not detracting from or significantly altering the cultural landscape of the roadside viewshed.

Policy 6.5.2. The County should develop guidelines to ensure that future development of roadside landscapes is consistent with cultural and historic development patterns.

Policy 6.5.3. Design transportation facilities to avoid encroachment upon historic resources where possible.

Policy 6.5.4. Ensure that roadside signage and lighting is sensitive to the existing development pattern while including necessary safety and traffic control.

Objective 6.6. Provide transportation facilities that promote economic development.

Policy 6.6.1. Plan for sufficient access and adequate transportation facilities to serve existing and future business and industry.

Policy 6.6.2. Support the expansion of funding programs that facilitate the development of business and industry.

Policy 6.6.3. Consider alternative means of financing for existing and future economic centers such as public and private partnerships, community development authorities and service districts.

Objective 6.7. Plan future transportation facilities that can be implemented from a physical, fiscal, and community standpoint.

Policy 6.7.1. Plan and develop transportation facilities to minimize destruction of environmental assets such as wetlands, floodplains, unique forest areas and wildlife habitats, prime agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive soils.

Policy 6.7.2. Plan future transportation facilities that are financially feasible through identified funding sources such as federal and state allocations, transportation service districts. transportation impact fees and grant opportunities.

Policy 6.7.3. Design transportation facilities such that communities are not physically divided or otherwise adversely impacted and that are supported by the citizens and business community.

Policy 6.7.4. Construct utilities such that they are located outside of the ultimate right-of-way design to prevent costly relocations when roadways are widened.

Policy 6.7.5. Coordinate construction of transportation facilities with federal, state, regional and local agencies to minimize undesirable community impacts.

Policy 6.7.6. Ensure that development provides necessary transportation improvements in a timely manner.

Policy 6.7.7. Transportation facility improvements to be constructed with development projects should be designed to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) C for impacted intersections and/or road segments. Where achieving a LOS C is not practical given existing transportation deficiencies, improvements should be designed to not further degrade the LOS.

Economic Development

The main thrust of economic development is to attract new businesses and industries to the area, diversify the economic base, work cooperatively with Quantico Marine Corps Base during its workforce and infrastructure expansion resulting from BRAC, and promote job creation and sustainable agriculture for County residents while supporting the retention and growth of existing businesses and industries in the County.

Economic growth in Stafford County will have two distinct benefits: it will diversify and expand the tax base and it will provide jobs closer to home for Stafford residents. In 2000, 71 percent of Stafford workers commuted out of the County for work. By 2008, this number improved to approximately 58 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Continuing to provide more jobs closer to home would have a collateral benefit of taking pressure off the overstressed regional transportation network.

Goal 7. Support the economic vitality of Stafford County through land use policies.

Objective 7.1. Establish targets for commercial and business growth for development and re-development.

Policy 7.1.1. Minimum floor area ratios should be established and maximum floor area ratio requirements should be relaxed for commercial development within mixed use redevelopment and Urban Development Areas. Encourage an appropriate mix of uses, with a minimum of 25% land and/or building area designated for commercial or business use, depending on the land use.

Objective 7.2. Ensure that land use policies are consistent with attracting and retaining high quality employment options for Stafford residents.

Policy 7.2.1. A rezoning to a commercial or industrial use on land adjacent to the Urban Services Area will support approval of an expansion of the Urban Services Area boundary to extend water and/or sewer to the commercial or industrial zoned property.

Policy 7.2.2. Encourage development of new and expansion of existing technological research and design businesses by promoting and maintaining the County's Technology Zone.

Policy 7.2.3. The County will encourage the development of accessible, convenient and attractive commercial and industrial locations within the Urban Services Area.

Policy 7.2.4. Retail and other commercial nodes in mixed use areas and office and industrial parks will serve local residential communities and be accessible to transportation including roads, rail and air.

Policy 7.2.5. For the purpose of attracting and retaining businesses that offer highly skilled and well paying jobs, the County will continue to market and promote its many assets including a highly educated workforce, excellent school system, abundant interstate access, a state of the art regional airport, a variety of shopping, lodging, dining and recreation opportunities, and its many heritage tourism assets.

Objective 7.3. Promote alternative rural economic development (i.e., agri-tourism, eco-tourism, home-based businesses, and telecommuting.).

Policy 7.3.1. Land use policies should establish incentives for rural economic development and facilitate the development of these economic opportunities.

Policy 7.3.2. The County will capitalize on its location and wealth of cultural, historical and natural resources.

Education

Stafford County prides itself on having a superb public school system. The citizens of Stafford County expect and support a quality educational system. As the 6th fastest growing locality in the state since 2000, Stafford County is challenged to construct and maintain adequate facilities for all students while continuing the quality educational programs Stafford residents expect.

Our students score above the state and national averages on standardized tests and earn awards at the regional, state and national levels. More than 84% of our graduates plan to continue their education at college or trade/technical schools.

Goal 8. Support Stafford County as a community for superior education.

Objective 8.1. Land use policies and the Comprehensive Plan should support education in Stafford County.

Policy 8.1.1. Education facilities, including technical skill training centers should be incorporated into the Levels of Service Standards.

Policy 8.1.2. Future schools should be located within the Urban Services Area (USA). Exceptions may be made when the only way to meet Level of Service Standards or location criteria contained in the Public Facilities Plan is to locate the facility outside the USA or when land is dedicated to the County and the development of the site and any required infrastructure would not be cost prohibitive or detrimental to its growth management policies.

Policy 8.1.3. When considering new school locations, the safety and well being of the students should be a priority, with consideration of the following factors:

- Locate in close proximity to existing and planned residential areas to promote walking zones and/or minimize the length of bus trips.
- Locate schools within neighborhoods, avoiding sites along major roads.
- Locate schools away from major electric transmission lines.

Policy 8.1.4. With the limited availability of large tracts of land within the Urban Services Area, the County should focus on maximizing the use of usable available land to meet educational needs.

- Consider relaxing of minimum size standards for school sites.
- Ensure school sites are suitable for development with gentle topography, good soils, and limited sensitive resources.
- Ensure that estimates of public infrastructure costs are included in location decisions.

Heritage Resources

Stafford County is rich in heritage resources, which are central to the community's identity and culture. Protection and preservation of our heritage resources are fundamental to sustaining Stafford County's uniqueness, sense of place, and economic sustainability.

Heritage resources are those buildings, sites, structures, objects, or districts, including their physical settings, that exemplify the cultural, architectural, economic, social, and political heritage of the County and its communities. Such sites or buildings are 1) listed on, or are eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register; 2) contributing resources within a historic district listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register; 3) resources located within a Stafford County Historic Resource Overlay District; or 4) resources listed on, or eligible for listing on, the Stafford County Cultural Resource Inventory, as determined by the Stafford County Historical Commission Architectural Review Board, or Historic Preservation Planner.

Goal 9. Promote Stafford County's heritage and maintain a sense of place by identifying, protecting, preserving, and interpreting Stafford County's historic and cultural resources.

Objective 9.1. Establish County land use policies that protect and preserve Stafford County historical and cultural resources.

Policy 9.1.1. The Stafford County Cultural Resource Management Plan should be updated and implemented as a part of the Stafford County Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 9.1.2. Stafford County should maintain its Cultural Resources Inventory. The inventory should be updated as new resources are discovered.

Policy 9.1.3. Applications for reclassification, conditional use permit, preliminary subdivision or site plan, major site plan, or grading plan should determine the possible presence, extent, and significance of heritage resources and prepare follow-up archeological and/or historic structures reports. A historic preservation ordinance should be adopted that creates development plan review procedures based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation and/or Virginia Department of Historic Resources "Guidelines for Conducting Cultural Resource Survey in Virginia".

Policy 9.1.4. Certificate of Appropriateness applications should be submitted to the Stafford County Architectural Review Board to review proposed exterior alteration, relocation, or demolition of heritage resources located within Stafford County Historic Resource Overlay Districts.

Policy 9.1.5. Development and redevelopment, including the construction of buildings, site improvements, or land clearing and grading, should be completed in such a way that protects and enhances, rather than harms, heritage resources and cultural landscapes.

Policy 9.1.6. The Cemetery Ordinance should be updated to protect all Stafford County cemeteries. The ordinance should include procedures for identifying, preserving, interpreting, and maintaining all cemeteries.

Policy 9.1.7. Stafford County should encourage the use of federal, state and local programs to ensure long term preservation of heritage resources, such as the Stafford County Historic Tax Abatement Program.

Policy 9.1.8. The design guidelines for the Stafford County Historic Resource Overlay Districts and Historic Overlay Corridors should be updated to protect heritage resources and their viewsheds.

Objective 9.2. The County should establish and maintain a long term stewardship program to care for all County-owned historical and cultural resources.

Policy 9.2.1. Long term management and stewardship plans should be written for all County-owned heritage resources with the assistance and recommendations from the Stafford County Architectural Review Board, Historical Commission, and designated Planning staff.

Policy 9.2.2. Comprehensive architectural and archaeological studies should be conducted on all County-owned heritage resources to determine historic integrity, significance, and best treatment plan for each resource.

Policy 9.2.3. Easements or other protective measures should be placed on all County-owned heritage resources, as determined by the results of architectural and/or archaeological studies.

2.3 Implementation

At the first Planning Commission meeting ninety (90) days after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Department of Planning and Zoning shall present to the Planning Commission a draft Implementation Plan for the Comprehensive Plan Goals, Policies and Objectives.

The Implementation Plan shall contain concrete actionable steps, identify responsible parties, identify available and needed resources and completion dates. The actionable steps shall be prioritized in order of importance for implementing the Plan. The highest priority shall be given to aligning elements of the Comprehensive Plan and ordinances to comply with the goals, objectives and policies of this document. Priorities shall be identified as short term, mid term and long term actions. Short term actions shall be items that can be accomplished within one year of plan adoption. Mid term items can be accomplished within two to five years. Long term actions may take five to ten years to complete.

The Implementation Plan shall be adopted as an amendment of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, staff and Board of Supervisors shall review the Implementation Plan periodically to determine its applicability in the current context of community desires and needs.

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PRINCIPLES OF HIGH PERFORMANCE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Last Revision: Resolution R13-102, 3/19/2013

The Stafford County Board of Supervisors hereby establishes its Principles of High Performance Financial Management to prudently manage the people's resources through:

- Accountable and transparent allocation of resources.
- Planned strategic use of financial resources to ensure sustainability.
- Maintaining and upgrading the County's bond ratings.
- Balanced tax burden from residential and commercial sources.

DEBT LIMITATIONS

- General obligation debt shall not exceed 3.5% of the assessed valuation of taxable real property, and shall not exceed 3% by July 1, 2015.
- General fund debt service expenditures (County and Schools) shall not exceed 11% of the general government and schools operating budgets and shall not exceed 10% by July 1, 2015.
- Debt ratios do not include debt to be repaid from identified revenue sources outside the General Fund. In the case of special service districts, the Board of Supervisors intends to set tax rates to cover any debt to be funded with the revenue.
- Capital lease debt service shall not exceed 1% of the general government budget. Capital lease debt may only be used if all the following four criteria are met:
    1. Capital lease purchase is eligible under state law for such financing;
    2. Useful life of the purchase equals or exceeds the term of the debt;
    3. Total purchase exceeds $100,000; and
    4. Sufficient funds are available to service the capital lease debt.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) AND BONDED DEBT SERVICE AFFORDABILITY GUIDELINES

- A five-year CIP allocating capital improvement funds between the Schools and General Government will be adopted annually.
- Debt-funded CIP projects for County and Schools will be no less than $500,000 each and will have a useful life that meets or exceeds the life of any debt issuance.
- Capital Improvement projects for County and Schools are items for which the purchase, construction, renovation, non-recurring replacement, expansion, or the acquisition represents a public betterment and adds to the total physical worth of Stafford. Projects include, but are not limited to, expenditures for land, new structures, major repairs and renovations; maintenance of existing structures; and expenditures for machinery, equipment and vehicles. Each project should have a total cost of $500,000 or more. Scope of project includes all professional services (land acquisition, legal, planning, design) and construction costs.

Each year's maximum available debt service will be established by increasing the prior year's actual debt service by the percentage of general fund revenue changes averaged over the last 5 years.

UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE

- The County shall maintain an unassigned fund balance that is not less than 12% of annual general fund revenues, not including transfers, reserves and grants. Use of the unassigned fund balance below this amount will be restricted to only significant unexpected declines in revenues or unanticipated emergency expenditures. Following any use of unassigned fund balance, the County will replenish the unassigned fund balance within three fiscal years.

- A reserve for healthcare costs equal to the estimated IBNR (incurred but not reported) plus 10% of annual claims will be maintained by school and county funds.

- Any amount in excess of the minimum unassigned fund balance will be assigned to these reserves, according to the following hierarchy and formulas:

    1. Revenue Stabilization Reserve (RSR): minimum of ½ of 1% of General Fund revenues.
        - The trigger for drawing on the reserve is a 2% revenue shortfall within a single fiscal year. The reserve can be used as a first stop for major unanticipated emergencies and catastrophes.
        - The reserve will not be used to offset a tax rate change.
        - The reserve will be used in combination with spending cuts.
        - The reserve will be restored to the minimum level within 5 years.
        - Withdrawal amounts may not exceed one-half of the RSR balance in any one fiscal year.
        - RSR funds should only be directed to one-time expenditures to the extent possible.
    2. Capital Projects Reserve of $1,500,000 will be used to reduce reliance on debt, to provide cash flow for capital projects, and to pay down high interest debt when advantageous.
    3. Stafford Opportunity Fund Reserve: $500,000
    4. Any health care savings, after all expenditure and reserve needs have been met, will be set aside for a contribution to OPEB.
    5. Any remaining monies available after the reserve minimums are fully funded will go to the Capital Projects Reserve.

- Rollback Tax Revenue in excess of $80,000 will be dedicated to the County's Purchase of Development Rights program.

- Stafford County does not intend to establish a trend of using Fund Balance to finance current operations. As a nonrecurring source of revenue, any balance not needed for liquidity or financial cushion as noted above will be spent solely for nonrecurring uses. After the yearly audit and confirmation of fund balances by the County's external auditor, and in consideration of current financial conditions, the Board of Supervisors will consider reappropriation of Schools' unspent prior year funds.

GENERAL FUND BUDGET GUIDELINES

- Stafford will prepare and approve an annual budget with multi-year projections. The County will annually adopt and execute a budget for such funds as may be required by law or by sound financial practices and generally accepted accounting principles. The budget shall control the levy of taxes and the expenditure of money for all County purposes during the ensuing fiscal year. The County budget shall be balanced within all available operating revenues, including fund balance, and adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

- Each year as part of the budget process, five year projections of revenues and expenditures will be prepared.

- Stafford County does not intend to issue tax or revenue anticipation notes to fund operations. The County intends to manage cash to prevent borrowing to meet cash flow needs.
- The school's share of the general government revenues will be 100% of meals tax revenues and an appropriate amount to ensure a globally competitive school system. The school operating transfer will be the difference between the school's share of general government revenues and school-related bonded and lease debt service.
- When the Schools desire an amendment to the adopted budget or appropriation, the School Board shall pass a resolution for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.
- An amount equivalent to 1% of general government expenditures will be set aside for pay-as-you-go capital projects, with a goal of 3% by July 1, 2017._ An amount equal to 1% of the school's operating budget will also be set aside for pay-as-you-go capital projects by July 1, 2015~~.~~ , with a goal of 2% by July 1, 2017. Cash capital will be used for only small capital projects and infrastructure needs.
- An amount equivalent to ½% of general government expenses will be set aside for the operating budget contingency reserve.

FINANCE, AUDIT & BUDGET COMMITTEE

- The Chairman of the Board of Supervisors will appoint a Finance, Audit & Budget Committee each year.

BUDGET REVIEWS

On a monthly basis, staff will provide written budget reports to the Board of Supervisors. Additionally, staff will provide quarterly budget and finance presentations at meetings of the Board of Supervisors.

TAX TRIGGER PROVISION

- General revenue increases that exceed revenue forecasts, and are not accompanied by additional costs in the annual budget process, provide a trigger to reduce the real estate tax rate.

PERIODIC POLICY REVIEW

The Board of Supervisors will review this policy no less than once every two years.

FUND BALANCE REPORTING

The new standard for fund balance reporting establishes criteria for classifying fund balances into specifically defined categories. There are now five (5) classifications versus the three (3) previously used in our financial statements.

Old Classification	New GASB 54 Classification
Reserved	Nonspendable
	Restricted
Designated	Committed
	Assigned
Undesignated	Unassigned

- Non-spendable – for items that would not be converted to cash, like inventories and prepaid items (cash has already been used).
- Restricted – amounts that can be spent for specific purposes, dictated by external entities or legislation, like debt service covenants, and grants.
- Committed – for specific purposes determined by formal action of governing body, such as transportation projects or our Capital, Stafford Opportunity, and Revenue Stabilization reserves. The commitments for the specific purpose must be made prior to the end of the fiscal year. The actual amount may be determined subsequently (prior to financial statement issuance). Action by governing body is needed to "undo" the commitment.
- Assigned – management's intentions/specific purposes, such as set asides we have for CSA, permit center, or future expenditures.
- Unassigned – residual, spendable amounts in the General Fund – there should not be any unassigned funds in Special Revenue and Capital Projects Funds, as all funds should relate to the purpose of the fund.

Encumbrances have been a designation of fund balance. Under the new standard encumbrances will be included in the total amounts reported as restricted, committed or assigned fund balance. The Notes to the Financial Statements will disclose the allocation by major fund and in aggregate for non-major funds.

Fund Balance Classification Policies and Procedures:

The new standard requires disclosure of the government's decision making authority and order of spending with regard to unrestricted fund balance. The following table describes the disclosures by fund balance classification.

Committed Fund Balance	Highest level of decision making authority.
	Formal action required to establish (and modify or rescind) a fund balance commitment.
Assigned Fund Balance	Official authorized to assign amounts to a specific purpose.
	Policy establishing that authorization.
Spending Policy	When an expenditure can be funded by either restricted or unrestricted fund balance, restricted funds are used first, followed by unrestricted funds. This parallels our policy of spending other funding sources first.
	Order of use of unrestricted fund balance is committed – assigned – unassigned.

BUDGET PROCEDURES/CALENDAR

MONTH	PROCEDURE
October	Work Session • Preliminary prior year balances • 1st quarter review of fiscal year • Preliminary budget overview to include: o Revenue projection with no increase in equalized tax o Expenditures with no new initiatives other than required o Information on new revenues and expenditures o Budget calendar BOS/School Board Joint work session
November	Feedback/Consensus/Guidance from the Board Board priorities/Performance standards Proposed CIP work session
December	Public Hearing and adoption of CIP Audit Report
January	Work Session • Final prior year balances • Mid-year review • Revenue trends for upcoming budget • Feedback from Board
February	Receive School Budget
March, 1st meeting	County Administrator presents Proposed Budget
March, 2nd meeting	Budget work session
April, 1st meeting	Budget work session
April, 2nd meeting	Budget work session & public hearing
April, 3rd meeting	Adopt budget

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UTILITIES FISCAL POLICY

In June, 2010, the Board re-established their commitment to the sustainability of the Utilities Department with the adoption of a new Utilities Fiscal Policy. The intent in establishing the policy is to provide an accounting and planning tool for the Board of Supervisors, the Utilities Commission, and County staff that is easy to administer, understandable and properly allocates costs.

Utilities Fiscal Policy

OBJECTIVES

Three primary objectives drive the establishment of this fiscal policy:

1. The desire to maintain strong operations and maintenance programs and complete the priority capital projects, as developed and adopted each year, in order to deliver high-quality water and wastewater services

2. The desire to maintain a strong financial condition aimed at preserving and enhancing our current bond ratings to minimize capital project financing costs

3. The desire to maintain reasonable and well-justified levels of rates and fees, in accordance with this fiscal policy

ACCOUNTING FOR FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

1. The Utilities Fund is subdivided into two categories: a Capacity Expansion Fund and an Operating Fund.

2. Sources and uses of funds are tracked by category and used in the monitoring of rate and fee adequacy.

   a. CAPACITY EXPANSION FUND

   The County seeks to fund Capacity Expansion with the following financing sources, in accordance with the Rates section of the fiscal policy:

   - Availability and Pro Rata fees
   - Bond proceeds
   - Interest on investments allocated to this category

   Revenues from these financing sources are used to pay for:

   - Projects required by system expansion or changes in regulations or technology
   - Water and sewer extension projects
   - Debt service on bonds issued for such construction

   b. OPERATING FUND

   The County seeks to fund Operations with user fees, in accordance with the Rates section of the fiscal policy. Operating funds are used to pay annual operating and maintenance expenses provide for long-term repair, renewal and rehabilitation of capital assets.

3. The Department of Utilities is committed to establishing and maintaining an asset management program to include proactive maintenance and long-term funding of its capital reinvestment projects.

UTILITIES FISCAL POLICY (Continued)

RATES

1. The Utilities financial position will be analyzed at least annually to evaluate the need for changes in rates and fees; so that, should increases be needed, they can be made in a manner that minimizes the volatility of any rate changes and their resulting impact on customers. The rate structure will be based on the following principles, in order of priority:

    a. Meeting debt service coverage and cash reserve requirements contained in bond covenants and this fiscal policy

    b. Maintaining a competitive market position, primarily with Stafford County's 'peer group' of municipalities

    c. Attempting to have growth pay for associated growth in water and sewer infrastructure based on the accounting of funds described above

2. The Department of Utilities will be run in a business-like manner. Rates and fees will be set to ensure that all of the costs of operating and maintaining the water and sewer utilities are recovered, including capital repair & replacement, so that the future of the enterprise is secure.

3. Rates and fees will be set to ensure the integrity of the utility system and protect our bond ratings with an eye toward achieving the lowest rates over time. To accomplish these objectives, water and sewer user fees will, at a minimum, be increased annually by an amount equal to 75% of the most recent annual increase in the *Consumer Price Index - All Urban Consumers* (CPI-U) for the Washington-Baltimore area.

4. Stafford County recognizes the difference between residential and non-residential users and will break these groups into two classes and set rates accordingly.

    a. Residential users typically increase outside water usage during the summer months. This additional water usage is primarily discretionary and creates an added burden on the system. It is appropriate that the rate structure for these users be set accordingly.

        i. An average non-peak water usage value will be calculated for each customer.

        ii. An inclining block rate structure will be used to bill for water usage, both to offset increased costs for the water treatment and distribution systems and to encourage water conservation.

        iii. Since outside water usage does not create additional wastewater treatment needs, charges for wastewater collection and treatment will be capped based on average usage.

    b. Non-Residential customers typically exhibit consistent year-round water usage and tend to have a natural incentive to conserve water as part of overall cost containment. This steady, predictable usage places a smaller burden on the utility, largely due to economies of scale.

UTILITIES FISCAL POLICY (Continued)

i. The non-residential rate structure will consist of a flat rate block.

ii. Non-residential customers will not be subject to a wastewater cap.

iii. The non-residential class will include multi-family residences served by a single water meter, public and semi-public facilities, industrial and commercial accounts and mobile home parks.

5. The rate ordinance will include emergency rates which will be in effect for periods of drought or water distribution system interruptions, as may be declared by the Board of Supervisors.

CASH RESERVES

1. The County recognizes the importance of maintaining a cash balance sufficient to meet its needs, both predictable and unforeseen. To that end, "reserve funds" will be established with predetermined minimum balances to ensure the financial health of the enterprise.

2. An Operating Reserve will be established and maintained in a total amount equivalent to not less than 150 days annual operating and maintenance expenses to ensure against short-term revenue shortfalls and unanticipated operating and/or maintenance expenses. This Operating Reserve shall include:

   - An amount equal to 5% of the projected costs of Repair, Renewal and Rehabilitation of the County's capital assets over the next 20 years. This "3R" portion of the Reserve will be used to pay for unexpected major repairs as well as planned replacement or rehabilitation of fixed assets. This minimum amount satisfies the Repair and Replacement Reserve requirement of the Master Indenture and may be calculated in a different manner from time to time as allowed in the bond covenants.

   - A Reserve for Customer Deposits, calculated in accordance with "generally accepted accounting principles".

3. The Department of Utilities will regularly evaluate cash needs and provide a current status of the reserve funds each year to the Board of Supervisors, the Utilities Commission and County Administration staff.

4. A cash flow projection will be prepared annually and provided to the Treasurer to aid in the investment of funds to achieve maximum returns.

5. All funding alternatives, including borrowing between categories, will be considered in order to meet financing needs and to achieve the most cost-efficient operation of the Utilities Fund.

6. The Department of Utilities will ask the Board of Supervisors to adopt a Reimbursement Resolution as part of the annual budget process.

UTILITIES FISCAL POLICY (Continued)

DEBT SERVICE COVERAGE

The Department of Utilities will establish rates and fees for services provided by the system to ensure that, in each fiscal year, Net Revenues (Gross Revenues less Operating Expenses) are greater than or equal to the following:

- 150% of Senior Debt Service
- 125% of Subordinate Debt Service
- 100% of Total Debt Service, after excluding 100% of non-recurring revenues such as availability fees, pro rata fees, connection fees and reserves (this ratio will be met no later than FY 2018).

FORECASTING AND MONITORING

To help meet the fiscal policy objectives, formal forecasting and monitoring processes will be used. These processes are intended to (1) give the County adequate lead time to phase in smaller annual rate increases for large capital projects and avoid much larger rate increases later; (2) only incur financing costs when needed by accurately planning for capital spending and financing needs; (3) obtain formal endorsement by the Board of Supervisors of the long-term financial needs and sources of financing; and (4) strengthen the Department of Utilities' bond ratings. These processes shall include the following:

1. Annual adoption of a 10-Year Financial Plan. Future financial needs of the Utilities Fund will be projected over a ten-year period using information from all available sources; including, but not limited to, historical and projected financial data, projected growth rates, the County's Comprehensive Plan and the Department of Utilities Water and Sewer Master Plan. This forecasting model will be maintained in an electronic spreadsheet, updated annually, and presented to the Stafford County Board of Supervisors annually as part of the Budget process.

2. Maintenance of a 3-year cash expenditure forecast by quarter with subsequent updating on at least a quarterly basis.

3. Maintenance of annual capital and operating spending plans.

BUDGET GUIDELINES, BASIS OF ACCOUNTING, AND BASIS OF BUDGETING

BUDGET GUIDANCE

In Virginia counties, the governing body's fiscal control is exercised through two distinct processes: budgeting and appropriations.

- Budgeting is a planning process required by law that enables the Board of Supervisors to examine demands for County funds, to anticipate revenue needs, and to make decisions about the priority of programs and level of services to be provided. In other words, the County's budget is a work plan expressed in terms of dollars and cents, and as such, is an important tool of fiscal management. The budget is a document that summarizes all public service programs provided by the government. It is the annual plan for coordinating revenues and expenditures. The budget brings together all County government operations in summary form.

- The appropriations process, on the other hand, is the mechanism by which funds are made available for spending on those programs and operations that the governing body has decided to support.

The Nature of the Budget

The Code of Virginia states that a County budget shall be developed for "informative and fiscal planning purposes only." It is prepared, developed and considered by the Board of Supervisors as a plan for County operations, maintenance, capital outlay, and debt service during a particular fiscal year. The annual budget must contain a complete itemization of all estimated expenditures and revenues and must be approved by the governing body prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.

The provision of funds in the budget does not create an obligation on the part of the Board to appropriate those sums during the year. Appropriations by official action of the Board of Supervisors are necessary before budgeted funds are available for expenditure. No amount may be budgeted unless the Board of Supervisors possesses legal authority to expend the funds, whether or not the appropriation is actually made. Thus, the Board of Supervisors may not adopt a budget that creates a deficit. The County budget must be balanced within all available operating revenues, including fund balance. The County's budget is considered balanced if projected revenues meet or exceed planned expenditures.

As a fiscal plan for County government, the budget serves several purposes. Through its budget, the Board of Supervisors not only indicates in a fairly precise way what it plans to do in providing services and facilities for the County in any given year, but it also provides a framework for the annual review of County policies and programs. In adopting a budget and making its appropriations, the Board is able to direct that all programs be coordinated in the total effort to supply local government services within the County.

At budget time and in the budget, the Board of Supervisors has an opportunity to indicate whether it intends to provide services and facilities at the current year level; whether these services should be increased, decreased or discontinued; and whether newly proposed programs should be adopted as proposed, modified or rejected. At budget time, the Board is also afforded an opportunity to obtain a long-range view of the County's needs, making systematic plans for those needs to be met in the current year's budget, and initiating plans for those needs to be met in subsequent years. Local governments, therefore, have a responsibility to develop an understandable budget.

Constraints on Budgetary Process

The Board of Supervisors may exercise only those powers either delegated to it by the General Assembly or reasonably implied from such delegation. State laws limit the Board's discretionary control over County spending, and the Board may not spend County funds for activities that are not directly authorized or reasonably implied by those laws. As a consequence, statutory authority must support each expenditure planned in the budget.

Certain expenditures are required by law and need to be anticipated in the County budget:

First, the Board must provide the County's share of the salaries of two of its elected officers: the Commissioner of the Revenue and the Treasurer. These officials, plus the Commonwealth's Attorney and Sheriff, perform state, as well as County functions. Specific salaries for the four positions are established in the annual appropriations act and are based primarily on a County's population and the duties of the office. The state pays 100 percent of the salaries, expenses and other allowances of the Commonwealth Attorney's (as fixed and determined by the State Compensation Board) and all of those costs of Sheriff's Offices that are approved and budgeted by the State Compensation Board. However, the state and the County each pay a portion of the salaries and expenses of the Treasurer and the Commissioner of the Revenue. In some instances specified by the Code, the salaries and expenses of these two offices are paid entirely by the Commonwealth. Counties budget and pay the full salaries of the constitutional officers and then receive periodic reimbursements from the state for their share.

Second, the Board of Supervisors has little discretion in making payments to service the debt of the County. The Board is required by law to make payments of interest and principal when they have matured and have become due. The Board is also required to make payments to meet the County's contractual obligations.

Third, counties are required to participate in supporting several programs mandated by state laws. For example, the 1971 Constitution and implementing statutes require the Board of Supervisors to provide funds to support public schools, to participate in the costs of certain social service programs, to provide for the enforcement of the statewide building code, and to share in operating costs of the state and local public health programs.

The Budgetary Process

Under all alternative forms of government and in virtually all traditionally organized counties with a County Administrator, the Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for preparing a County's budget and submitting it to the Board of Supervisors. In counties without a Chief Administrative Officer, responsibility for preparation of the budget rests with the Board. The common practice in these counties is for the Board to employ the County Clerk, Treasurer or some other qualified person inside or outside of the County government to prepare the budget. More and more counties have recognized the need for a County Chief Administrative Officer, who is responsible to the Board of Supervisors. The preparation of the annual budget is one of the most valuable demonstrations of such a need. A County Chief Administrator has a more detailed day-to-day knowledge of the County's current programs and future needs than a temporary employee, auditor or County officer experienced in only one area or function of County government.

The division superintendent prepares the school budget with the approval of the School Board after conducting a public hearing on the budget. The School Board submits it to the Board of Supervisors. In all cases, the Board of Supervisors makes the final local determination of the amounts to be expended, subject to the constraints discussed above.

Budget Estimates

All Virginia counties operate on a fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30. Budgeting for the ensuing fiscal year usually begins early in January when the Board of Supervisors issues a call for estimates of funds needed during the fiscal year to operate each department, board, office or agency of the County. In counties with large budgets, it is not unusual for estimate forms and instructions to be distributed as early as July of the current fiscal year. Planning for the ensuing fiscal year begins as soon as the current

budget goes into effect. In these counties, budget orientation meetings and work sessions with department heads are held during late summer or fall.

Final Budget Consideration

Once the budget estimates for an ensuing fiscal year have been received from all departments, offices, agencies, and the County Administrator or other officer responsible for the budget has coordinated, reviewed and entered his or her recommendations for each estimate, the more formalized consideration of the annual budget is undertaken. At this point, the Board of Supervisors examines each source of revenue, the estimated amount of revenue each source is expected to produce, each expenditure estimate, and the County Administrator's recommendations for financing and maintaining the County's operation, programs, and projects. Decisions determining the amount to be included in the final draft of the budget are made by a series of votes by the Board members in public meetings. The power of the Board of Supervisors to grant or withhold funds is an important means by which it can determine general County policies and the level of services to be offered.

State law requires that the Board of Supervisors must approve the proposed expenditures in the budget and set the tax rates sufficient to fund them at the same time. Thus, once a final draft of the annual budget, including both revenue and expenditures, has been agreed upon by the Board, a brief synopsis of the budget must be prepared and advertised in a newspaper having general circulation in the County. If there is no newspaper of such general circulation in the County, then the Board of Supervisors may provide for notice by written or printed handbills posted at such places as it may direct. Along with the publication of a synopsis of the budget, notice must be provided of one or more public hearings scheduled before the Board of Supervisors. The hearing may be recessed or adjourned from day to day and entries are to be made in the Board's minute book of the notice and hearings. Every citizen of the County must be given the opportunity to be heard if he or she so desires.

Requirements for Public Hearings

Law with varying legal criteria applicable to the circumstances under which the County's budget is being considered prescribes the nature and timing of the public hearings. These requirements are as follows:

Budgets, Budget Amendments

- A brief synopsis of budget, except public school budget, which shall be for informative and fiscal planning purposes only, shall be published once; and notice given of one or more public hearings at least 7 days prior to date set for hearing.
- Hearing must be held at least 7 days prior to the approval of the budget.
- Amendments may be made to budget to adjust aggregate amount to be appropriated; however, any amendment which exceeds one percent (1%) of the expenditures shown must be advertised once at least 7 days prior to the meeting date.
- Notice shall state the intent to amend budget and include a brief synopsis of proposed budget amendment.

Tax Rate

- When any annual assessment, biennial assessment or general reassessment of real property would result in an increase of one percent or more in the total real property tax levied, notice must be given at least 30 days before the date of the hearing by the publication of a notice in at least one newspaper of general circulation and a prominent public location at which notices are regularly posted in the County Administration building and shall follow below format:
    - Notice shall be at least the size of 1/8 page of a standard size or tabloid size newspaper;
    - Headline in the advertisement shall be in a type no smaller than 18-point; shall read "NOTICE OF PROPOSED REAL PROPERTY TAX INCREASE"; and

  - Notice shall not be placed in that portion reserved for legal notices and classified advertisements.
- This public hearing shall not be held at the same time as the annual budget hearing
- Notice shall contain the following information (in addition to information Board of Supervisors may elect to include):
  - Assessment increase;
  - Lowered rate necessary to offset increased assessment;
  - Effective rate increase;
  - Proposed total budget increase; and
  - Date, time, and place of public hearing.
- The proposed increase shall be published at least seven days before the increased levy is made.

Copies of the complete proposed budget should be available for public examination before the hearings. It is also a good practice to schedule hearings so that time is available to incorporate in the budget the recommendations of the public if found acceptable. Time is also necessary for the County's departments, offices and agencies to prepare for implementation of the adopted budget in County operations, programs and activities.

The School Budget

One decision that the Board of Supervisors must make about its annual budget is how it wishes to consider the school board's budget in relation to the general government budget. Two laws relating to local governments provide different deadlines for the adoption of the annual budget. The first requires that the general government budget be approved no later than July 1 each year. (The last public hearing would have to be adjourned seven days prior to July 1). The second law requires that the School Board budget be adopted by May 1 of each year. (The last public hearing on the School Board budget would have to be adjourned seven days prior to May 1). As noted above, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to provide each School Aid formula within 15 days following the final adjustment of the General Assembly. Should the State Superintendent fail to provide such an estimate with the 15-day limit, then the Board of Supervisors must approve the School Board's budget within 30 days of the receipt of the estimate.

The Board of Supervisors must decide whether it wishes to consider the general government budget in conjunction with the School Board budget and at one time to approve the whole (i.e., general government and School Board) budget, in which case one combined advertisement of notice and public hearing will suffice. Alternatively, the Board of Supervisors may consider the School Board budget separately and approve it by May 1 with the accompanying advertisement of notice and public hearing followed later by approval of the general government budget and a second separate advertisement of notice and public hearing. If attempts are made to approve both the School Board and the general government budgets by May 1, it may be necessary for the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator to receive the estimates of the general government department offices and agencies before the legal deadline of April 1. With either allowance, compliance is difficult.

Budget Adoption

When the required public hearings have been completed and the final figures agreed upon have been entered, the annual budget is considered completed and ready for adoption. The constitution requires that any resolution or ordinance imposing taxes of more than $500 can be adopted only by a majority of all members elected to the Board of Supervisors. The voting procedure to be followed in adopting the budget is that used in the adoption of any other ordinance that requires a recorded vote once the majority vote is obtained. The budget is considered adopted. It then becomes the official County plan of expenditures and revenues for the ensuing fiscal year and establishes the expenditure limits for all County, departments, offices and agencies during the same period.

STAFFORD COUNTY BUDGET GUIDELINES

Formulation of the County Administrator's Proposed Budget

The County Administrator proposes the incremental budget to the Board of Supervisors in March. The departments, boards, commissions, and agencies are participants in this process, which begins in the fall of the preceding year with the submission of a budget calendar to the Board of Supervisors by the Budget Office. That calendar establishes dates in the budget process, such as Board of Supervisors budget work sessions and public hearings that lead to final adoption of the budget. Budget requests are based on the Budget Preparation Manual instructions. Each request must clearly relate to the organization's program objectives. Due to resource constraints, departments are encouraged to develop proposals to trade or shift resources, rather than seek significant additional funds.

Board of Supervisor's Authorization and Appropriation

The Board can delete or change programs and/or dollar allocations in the County Administrator's proposed budget. The Board can only increase or decrease funding for the education budget, in total or at the state defined category level. The School Budget must be adopted by May 1st as prescribed by Section 22.1-93 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. Stafford's Budget must be adopted and all appropriations approved by July 1st.

Budget Implementation

Once the budget is adopted, it becomes the legal basis for the programs of each department during the fiscal year. No department or other agency of Stafford's government may spend in excess of approved and appropriated amounts. Financial and programmatic monitoring of departmental activities to ensure conformity with the adopted budget takes place throughout the year. Copies of the proposed and adopted budgets are available for review on the County's website at http://www.co.stafford.va.us/, in the County Administrator's Office, and in the Budget Office. Printed or electronic copies may be purchased from the Budget Office. (A charge is levied to defray costs).

County Administrator's Authorization

The County Administrator is authorized to transfer budgeted funds within the categories as appropriated. The Board of Supervisors must approve any revisions that alter Stafford's total budgeted expenditures.

Amendment of the Budget

As prescribed by Section 15.2-2507 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, the budget can be amended as required throughout the fiscal year. However, any such amendment which exceeds one percent of the total expenditures shown in the currently adopted budget must be accomplished by publishing a notice of a meeting and a public hearing once in a newspaper having general circulation in that locality at least seven days prior to the meeting date. The notice shall state the County's intent to amend the budget and include a brief synopsis of the proposed budget amendment. The governing body may adopt such amendment at the advertised meeting, after first providing a public hearing on the proposed budget amendments.

Audit

Stafford's financial records are audited each fiscal year by a firm of independent certified public accountants in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards; the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States; and *Specifications for Audits of Counties, Cities and Towns*, issued by the Auditor of Public Accounts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Those standards and specifications require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are

free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts, and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

Basis of Accounting

The accounting and financial reporting treatment applied to a fund is determined by its measurement focus.

Governmental funds utilize the *modified accrual basis of accounting* under which revenues and related assets are recorded when measurable and available to finance operations during the year. Accordingly, real and personal property taxes are recorded as revenues and receivables when billed, net of allowances for uncollectible amounts. Property taxes due before June 30, but not collected within 45 days after fiscal year end are reflected as deferred revenues. Sales taxes collected and held by the State at year-end on behalf of the County are recognized as revenue. The County considers all revenues reported in the governmental funds to be available if the revenues are collected within 75 days after year-end. Certain other intergovernmental revenues and sales and services, other than utility customer receivables, are not susceptible to accrual. Expenditure-driven grants are recognized as revenue when the qualifying expenditures have been incurred and all other grant requirements have been satisfied. Licenses, permits, fines, and rents are recorded as revenue when received. General purpose entitlement revenues are recognized in the period to which the entitlement applies.

The proprietary fund and the private purpose trust funds are accounted for on a flow of economic resources measurement focus. The statements of net assets, statements of activities, financial statements of the Proprietary and Fiduciary Funds are presented on the *accrual basis of accounting*. Under this method of accounting, revenues are recognized when earned and expenses are recorded when liabilities are incurred without regard to receipt or disbursement of cash.

Basis of Budgeting

For the most part, the County's budget follows the same basis of accounting used in preparing the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), which is prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP). Budgets for proprietary funds are adopted in accordance with GAAP with the exception that the budget recognizes the flow of funds. Payment of debt principal is included in the budget, but depreciation is not.