



SECTION 1

The Planning Process

Planning is the process through which a community defines its future character and quality of life. The planning process is the means by which the community anticipates change and outlines goals, objectives, and strategies to manage the ever-changing community. All future decisions regarding land use, transportation, and community facilities are based on the policies outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Without coordination, land development can get ahead of a locality's ability to meet the demand for services, such as schools, fire, rescue, and police services. This plan is Hanover's statement of goals, objectives, and plans for its future. The Plan consists of an inventory and analysis of past trends and development, an analysis of existing conditions, a statement of goals and objectives, and future plans.

A Comprehensive Plan for Hanover County, Virginia, was adopted in 1972 "with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of territory ... in accordance with the present and future probable needs and resources." The Comprehensive Plan has been updated at least every five years since 1982. Significant changes in conditions have altered the assumptions and forecasts used in developing the original Plan, and subsequent amendments have been necessary to keep the Plan in concert with current policy.

From background studies, plans are developed to identify and coordinate future public facilities and accommodate private land use decisions. The Plan elements include:

- Land Use
- Public Utilities
- Transportation
- Public Works
- Community Facilities
- Historic Resources
- Economic Development
- Housing

The Hanover County Planning staff provides advice and expertise to the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and other boards, agencies, and citizens. Advice consists of professional and technical information and recommendations on both general and specific decisions.

The Board of Supervisors is the ultimate decision-making body, and it is the Board that adopts the Comprehensive Plan, ordinances, and policies necessary to carry out the plan, and future zoning decisions. The Code of Virginia requires that "At least once every five years the Comprehensive Plan shall be reviewed by the local Planning Commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan." It has been Hanover County's practice to undergo a detailed plan review every five years. Furthermore, as circumstances dictate, the plan, or sections thereof, may be reviewed between comprehensive plan reviews.

The Planning Commission assists in the formulation of the Comprehensive Plan and with advising the Board of Supervisors on matters related to the Plan. The Planning Commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors and serves in an advisory role to the Board on all planning matters except subdivisions. All public hearings on planning matters in Hanover are held at night to encourage public participation. In order to carry out its responsibilities, the Commission must maintain knowledge of the facts and inter-relationships of a broad range of subjects and must be able to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of various possible courses of action which may be available in a given situation.

Rapidly changing conditions and the evolving sophistication of the County government and its land use control activities create the need for increased training opportunities for Commission members. Many opportunities exist for Commissioners to maintain a current knowledge base. Organizations such as the Virginia Citizens Planning Association (VCPA) and the American Planning Association (APA) are a valuable resource for commissioners to gain insight into evolving planning trends and practices.

As the economic future of Hanover County is linked to the Richmond Metropolitan Region, it should be noted that the County does coordinate its planning responsibilities with the entire Richmond Region. Hanover County is an active participant on both the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is the body primarily responsible for coordinating transportation planning throughout the region.

To implement the policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of Supervisors has adopted several ordinances; however, plan implementation rests primarily with the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. These documents are reviewed upon adoption of the plan by the Board of Supervisors to ensure the Plan's overall policies are reflected in the

two ordinances. Enforcement of the ordinances is often a coordinated effort among the community development departments, including Planning, Public Works, Public Utilities, and Building Inspections.

Another significant document to assist in implementing the Plan's policies is the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The CIP outlines those public facilities and improvements that are needed to provide the citizens of Hanover County the necessary and expected services. The CIP sets forth projected funding priorities over the next five years. The CIP is reviewed by the Planning Commission annually and adopted by the Board of Supervisors with the annual operating budget.

Community Participation

Community participation is an essential element for successful planning. Hanover County's diversity – agriculture, suburban residential, history, business, rural character – gives forth multifaceted points-of-view making it rare that consensus will be achieved among all stakeholders. Ongoing ideas for improved communication among residents, business owners, County staff, decision makers and property owners that further encourage public participation should be considered and undertaken. The goal is to ensure a level of dialogue among all stakeholders that is informed, mutually respectful, and responsive.

Hanover County has successfully engaged citizens by participating in the planning process through its Citizens' Planning Academy, Hanover Youth Perspective (HYP) and Hanover Older Perspective (HOP). The first Citizens' Planning Academy was held during the fall of 1996 and has been held each year thereafter. The Academy provides citizens the opportunity to become familiar with the legal foundations of planning, as well as the planning process employed by Hanover County. A number of Academy graduates have been selected by the Board of Supervisors to serve on various advisory boards and committees. Citizens are also encouraged to attend informal community meetings related to zoning and comprehensive plan amendment proposals. HYP and HOP were developed in 2003 to further promote diverse citizen participation by focusing on two demographic groups defined by age: the youth (18 years of age and under) and senior citizens (60 years of age and over). HYP and HOP are advisory bodies for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and other County boards, commissions, agencies and departments and offer their perspective on relevant planning proposals.

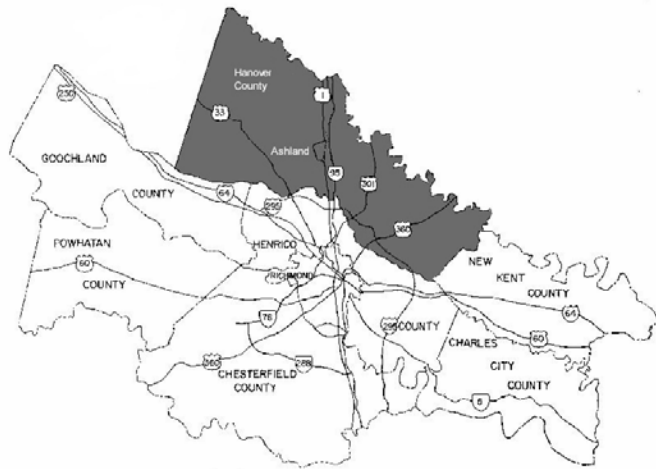
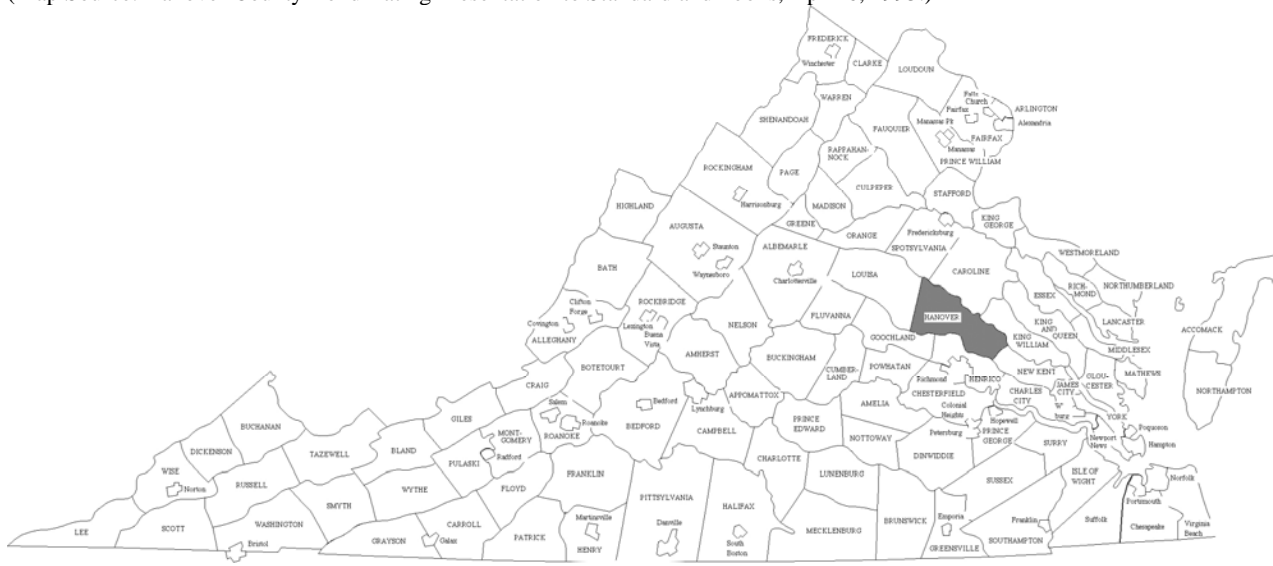
Enhanced opportunities for community-wide involvement

Traditional methods and emerging technologies can be forged into an innovative means of diversifying communication and encouraging participation. Increased community dialogue could be encouraged through the following:

- Continue incorporating public involvement and educational opportunities, as experienced with the Citizens' Planning Academy.
- Continue incorporating public involvement for a broad cross-section of community demographics, as experienced with Hanover Youth Perspective (HYP) and Hanover Older Perspective (HOP), and create methods to reach minority populations.
- Encourage developers, realtors, business owners and others to share information and be responsive to constructive citizen comments.
- Provide opportunities for input through the use of technology such as the internet for public comment, dialogues, questionnaires and surveys.
- Use simulations to visualize concepts and to encourage innovative public comments.
- Provide multiple locations/times/communication avenues for public involvement, to accommodate a wide diversity of lifestyles, work schedules, and time available for input.
- Routinely provide information and seek input at meetings held by citizen and neighborhood boards and organizations.

Figure 1 GEOGRAPHY/DEMOGRAPHICS

(Map Source: Hanover County Bond Rating Presentation to Standard and Poor's, April 6, 1993.)



Hanover County Demographics

Population (7/1/06) -99,174 (Hanover County)Per Capita Personal Income (2004) - \$36,455 (Bureau of Economic Analysis)Median Age - 37.4 years (2000 Census)
 School Enrollment (Sept. 2005) - 18,623 (School Board)Unemployment Rate -2.7% (2005-VEC)