AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

IMPLEMENTATION

DRAFTED: 7.1.25

The County has prepared the Comprehensive Plan update with expectations for a bright future. The goals, objectives, and actions contained in the Plan provide the roadmap for achieving the County's vision. Programs of the County, activities of its residents and businesses all contribute to the Plan's success. With successful Plan implementation, residents in 20 years will continue to experience and enjoy the county's rural heritage, scenic beauty, and natural and historic resources and live, work, and play in attractive and vibrant communities resulting from a strong economy and an excellent educational system.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The Comprehensive Plan is implemented by private property owners and businesses through voluntary actions and regulations and by the County through the implementation of the Board of Supervisors' policies and budgets. Each topic chapter outlines strategies using various tools currently available to Virginia counties.

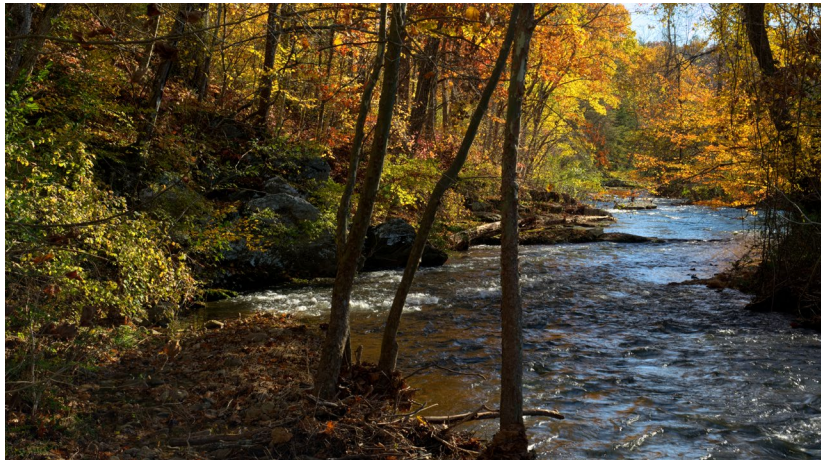
VOLUNTARY MEASURES

Community members play a key role in implementation by making conscious choices about where they live, which businesses they support, and how they manage their land. Everyday habits—like recycling, conserving water, carpooling, and reducing energy use—affect the environment. Such habits are increasingly important as our community works together to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Supporting local businesses strengthens Albemarle's economy, while placing rural land in conservation easements ensures its preservation for future generations.

Developers also contribute by following County policies, engaging in review processes, and voluntarily offering proffers to address development impacts and align development proposals with the Plan's goals. Additionally, non-profit organizations and agencies that partner with the County help advance shared objectives, such as affordable housing initiatives, by combining funding and resources.



High quality public education is an important aspect of an attractive and vibrant community. Photo: Agnor-Hurt Elementary



Clean and abundant water is a natural resource that requires protection and conservation by our local community.



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REGULATORY MEASURES

While voluntary efforts support the Comprehensive Plan, some goals require regulatory measures. Many, like State and local building codes and floodplain protections, have existed for decades. Others are adopted if deemed appropriate by the Board of Supervisors.

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning regulations, first adopted in Albemarle County in 1969, help ensure land uses are properly located, residential density aligns with infrastructure capacity, and development protects public health, safety, and welfare. These rules govern land use, building heights, setbacks, and overall site layout and design.

Overlay Districts further guide development. Current Districts include the Airport, Entrance Corridor, Form Based Code, and Flood Hazard Overlay Districts. Historic and Mountain Protection districts have been discussed in the past.

Over the past 40 or so years, the initial Zoning Ordinance has been modified without a structural update. Best planning practice includes updating the Zoning Ordinance to reflect Comprehensive Plan guidance. To implement this alignment, the County has initiated the Zoning Modernization project, to be completed following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision Ordinance

The Subdivision Ordinance defines development parameters and results in parcels for construction. Albemarle County adopted its first subdivision ordinance in 1949. Subdividing—splitting land into multiple parcels—is regulated to align development with the Comprehensive Plan. In Development Areas, streets and blocks are designed to support anticipated uses, while zoning dictates lot size. Subdivision regulations shape parcel layout, utility access, drainage, and sidewalks. In Rural Areas, regulations ensure property access, sewage disposal, adequate water supply, and stormwater management.

Water Protection Ordinance + Erosion & Sediment Control Regulations

Albemarle County complies with State regulations related to stormwater runoff and erosion and sediment control. Runoff control and stormwater management are intended to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and County water resources. More information on water protection is provided in the Environmental Stewardship Chapter of this Plan.

CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF COUNTY POLICIES

Consistent application of County policies is important to the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan. Use of the Comprehensive Plan in decision-making provides the Board of Supervisors with strong legal backing while reinforcing messaging to residents and future developers that the vision for the County is not a lofty thought, but an expected reality. Consistent application of County policies is critical to achieving the County Vision; these policy elements are highlighted below.

Infrastructure & Public Service Delivery: Development Areas

The County's Growth Management Policy includes a commitment to fund and provide public infrastructure and services, such as public water, sewer, and streets in the Development Areas. This commitment also extends to service delivery. The provision of fire rescue, police protection, school bus service, and other governmental services and functions are delivered most efficiently within the denser Development Areas.

While the provision of public services and infrastructure will continue to vary between the geographically larger Rural Area and the Development Areas, there are many recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan related to providing more equitable services in the Rural Area. This includes partnerships with community organizations and public agencies, such as the Blue Ridge Health District. The focus on services in the Rural Area is essential health and safety services, such as fire rescue and police protection. Throughout the AC44 engagement process, there was significant community interest in building upon existing successful rural community organizations, businesses, and community centers, such as Yancey Community Center.



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Albemarle County Service Authority Jurisdictional Area

The primary growth management tool in Albemarle County is public water and sewer provision. The County remains committed to supplying public water and sewer services within Development Areas while restricting expansion of those services beyond the Development Areas boundary. Delineation of boundaries and application of this service area, the "jurisdictional area", is significant in directing growth to Development Areas. Strict adherence to public water and sewer extension policies strengthens Comprehensive Plan implementation through efficient use of infrastructure and optimal land use patterns. See the Community Facilities and Services chapter for additional information.

LEGISLATIVE DECISIONS

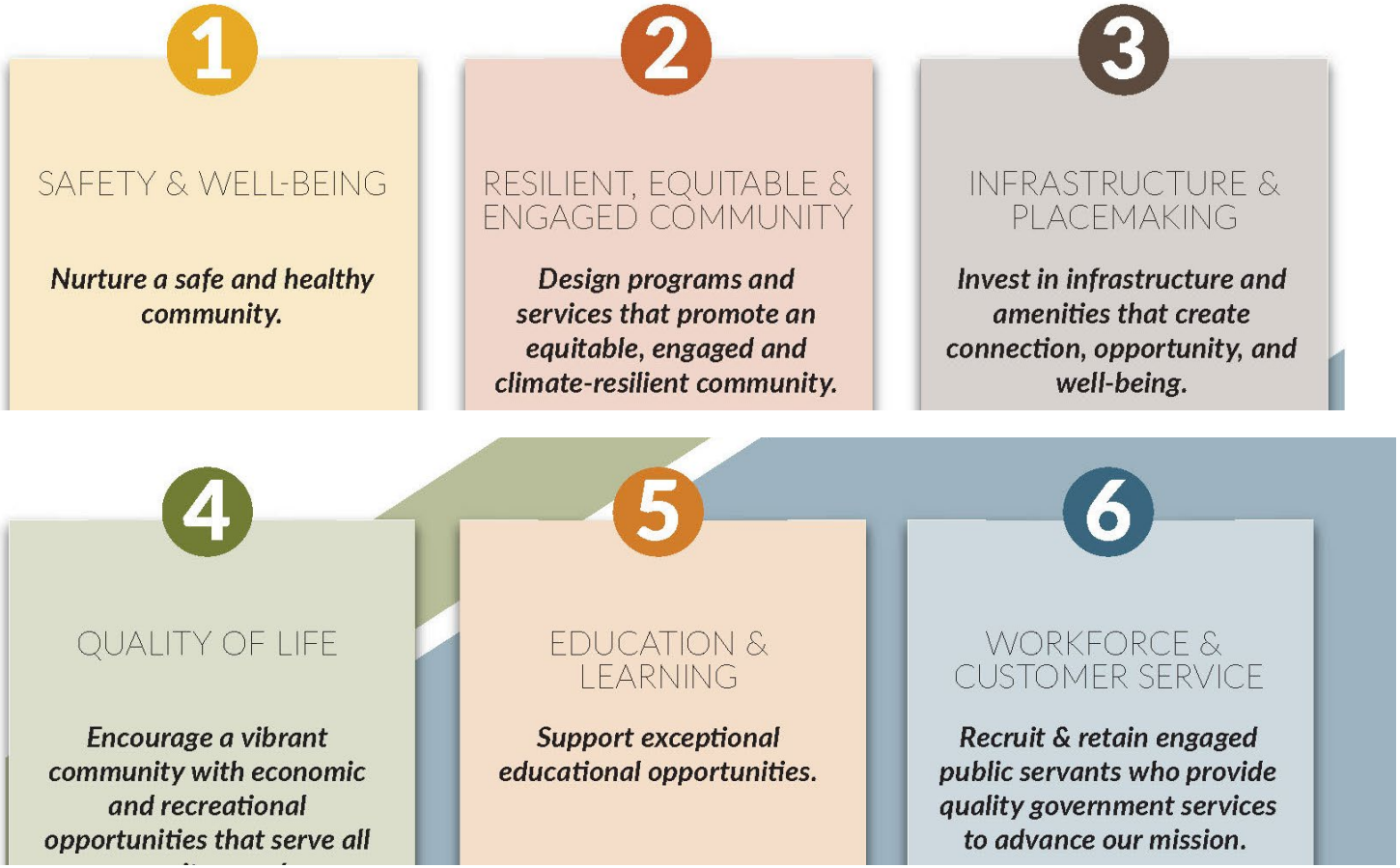
Legislative decisions, like rezoning and special use permit approvals, are guided by AC44, including the Future Land Use Map, and are to be consistent with County plans included as Appendices. These decisions and the adoption of new regulations such as the modified Zoning Ordinance are effective tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. With this Plan, a new Development Areas report will provide an at-a-glance look at development utilizing a numerical scoring system to help measure how submitted proposals meet the goals of this Plan. (See Part II – Growth Management Framework) Approving project applications consistent with the Comprehensive Plan sends a strong message to potential applicants that requests in keeping with Board policies in the Comprehensive Plan will likely be approved.

ALIGNMENT WITH ALBEMARLE'S STRATEGIC PLAN

The Board's Strategic Plan takes a five-year view of work to be accomplished in the County. Once the Strategic Plan is adopted, County staff provides clarity on projects and initiatives that align with these objectives and proposes work plans to deliver progress on these goals. The Board's current plan runs through Fiscal Year 28 and directs work on the six goals listed below. Periodically the Board of Supervisors revises the County's Strategic Plan's goals and objectives to align with changing County priorities taking into consideration the Comprehensive Plan's recommended short-term actions.

PARTNERSHIPS

The work of the County is collaborative and supported by the vast array of established and new partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations and agencies addressing areas of mutual interest. Some of the County's current relationships include the City of Charlottesville, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Charlottesville Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District and Commission, the Blue Ridge Health District, and the University of Virginia.



The County's Strategic Plan goals align with AC44 priorities

FUNDING

Many programs of the County require funding – for staff, for construction, and for maintenance. Revenues for County programs come from property taxes, other local taxes, permits and fees, fines, charges for services as well as funding from the State or federal government. The County's annual budget is drafted by the County Executive and then evaluated, revised and approved by the Board of Supervisors as informed in public hearings with the community. It provides information on expenditures for providing and maintaining services needed to run County programs. With diminishing financial support from the State and federal governments, more local revenue is needed to retain the high level of service desired by County residents.

Capital Improvements Program

Through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) the County determines the scheduling and prioritization of large-scale infrastructure construction or replacement projects. The first CIP was adopted in 1978. The CIP ties directly back to the Comprehensive Plan: the Comprehensive Plan provides the basis for CIP requests and review criteria for capital expenditures. This program is critical to the success of implementing the Plan. A capital project typically requires a minimum expenditure of $20,000 and has a minimum useful life of ten years. County departments and affiliated agencies initiate their capital project requests, which span a five-year period of the CIP. The CIP is guided by strategic and financial planning processes, including the adopted Comprehensive Plan which in turn informs the Board of Supervisor's adopted Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

State and Federal Funds

Although State and federal financial support for localities has declined over recent years, both still provide funding opportunities. Government agencies assist the County's work related to Comprehensive Plan goals through various grant programs. For example, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds programs for low-income households to access housing, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation supports stream restoration and urban parks, and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) funds transportation improvements. Continued reliance on these grants is crucial, though funding is expected to vary over time.

Bonds

Despite its triple AAA bond rating, the County has historically avoided long-term debt for infrastructure, aligning with its fiscally conservative approach. Many infrastructure improvements like affordable housing, transportation and park improvements have not kept up with the community's needs. Bonds are often used to supplement property tax revenue and funding commitments from developers for new development.



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IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The Comprehensive Plan recommends an extensive and interrelated series of actions to achieve the County's vision. Central to this effort are the "Big Moves" — strategic groupings of key initiatives organized by common themes that offer the greatest potential to advance the goals of AC44. They span across multiple policy areas and often involve collaboration across multiple county departments and external partners. They build upon existing policies, ongoing initiatives, and insights gathered through community engagement during the AC44 process. Finally, since they are part of a 20-year plan, they serve as long-term benchmarks

To determine the priority of actions within each Big Move, several factors should be considered: the sequence of implementation, projected timelines, available funding, and alignment with the goals and objectives of the County's Strategic Plan. Final prioritization will occur after the plan is adopted, in coordination with the Capital Improvement Program, annual budgeting, Strategic Plan updates, and departmental work plans. This integrated approach ensures that the County can effectively align its operations, investments, and delivery of essential services.

AC44 BIG MOVES:

1. **Align regulations to support AC44 implementation.**
2. **Increase affordable housing access and options.**
3. **Invest in compact and connected Development Areas with an emphasis on Activity Centers.**
4. **Support agriculture and forestry uses in the Rural Area.**
5. **Drive innovation and expand economic opportunity.**
6. **Mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change.**



AC44 Guiding Principles



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1. Align regulation to support AC44 Implementation.

Description: The County's zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and other development-related policies should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, support desired patterns of growth, and respond to evolving needs. Outdated, inconsistent, or overly complex regulations can create barriers to investment, lead to unpredictable outcomes, and undermine public confidence in the planning process. Modernizing these regulations will help align standards with current practices, clarify procedures, and improve coordination across departments.

Updates should focus on improving clarity, removing unnecessary complexity, and ensuring that regulations are easy to understand and use—for staff, applicants, decision-makers, and the broader community. This includes creating more user-friendly documents, consolidating or reorganizing content for better navigation, and incorporating visual aids and digital tools where appropriate. A more transparent and accessible regulatory framework will reduce delays, increase consistency in decision-making, and make it easier for all participants to engage in the development process.

Related Guiding Principle: **Welcoming and Equitable**

Related Chapters: RALU, DALU, ES, PR, TE, CFI, HSG, TRA

Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks and Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities and Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRA - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources

2. Increase affordable housing access and options.

Description: Ensure that people of all incomes, ages, and household types can find safe, stable, and affordable housing in the County by increasing the supply of diverse housing options and preserving existing affordable homes. As housing costs rise and the region grows, it is critical to protect long-term affordability, prevent displacement, and meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households, essential workers, seniors, and others with limited housing choices.

This priority calls for a multi-pronged approach that includes updating zoning and land use regulations to allow a broader range of housing types—such as duplexes, small-scale multifamily, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units—and enabling greater density in locations with access to jobs, transit, schools, and services. Streamlining development review, offering incentives for affordable housing, and removing regulatory barriers are essential to accelerating the production of both income-restricted and naturally occurring affordable units.

Equally important is preserving the existing stock of affordable housing, which often serves as the most cost-effective and immediate way to maintain housing access. This includes identifying at-risk properties, supporting rehabilitation and weatherization programs, promoting tools like community land trusts and housing trust funds, and working with nonprofit and mission-driven developers to acquire and protect affordable units. Anti-displacement strategies and tenant protections should be used to help residents stay in their homes and neighborhoods.

By combining preservation, production, and policy reform, the County can create a more inclusive and sustainable housing system that supports long-term community stability, economic opportunity, and quality of life for all residents.

Related Guiding Principle: **Welcoming and Equitable**

Related Chapters: TE, HOU, TRA



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Chapter abbreviations: RALU - Rural Area Land Use DALU - Development Areas Land Use ES - Environmental Stewardship PR - Parks and Recreation TE - Thriving Economy CFI - Community Facilities and Infrastructure HSG - Housing TRA - Transportation CR - Cultural Resources

3. Invest resources in compact and connected Development Areas with an emphasis on Activity Centers.

Description: Encourage smart, fair, and long-lasting growth by focusing new public and private investments to create urban places that are compact, walkable, and inviting. These places also take advantage of the existing infrastructure like roads, utilities, and public services and allow for redevelopment of older commercial areas that are typically over parked. They support a variety of housing types and increase access to nearby jobs. With daily needs located closer together, people can walk, bike, or take shorter car trips, saving time and reducing traffic. This approach uses resources wisely, protects the environment, and improves residents' overall quality of life by limiting inefficient growth.

Related Guiding Principle: **Connected and Accessible**

Related Chapters: DALU, PR, TRA



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4. Support agriculture and forestry uses in the Rural Area.

Description: The County is dedicated to supporting agriculture and forestry as key land uses in the Rural Area, in alignment with the Growth Management Policy. These working lands are essential not only for producing food, but also for preserving the County's rural character, cultural heritage, and environmental health.

As the region grows, it is critical to balance development with the long-term sustainability of rural landscapes. This priority focuses on maintaining the viability of farming and forestry operations while protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, forests, wildlife corridors, and watersheds.

Related Guiding Principle: **Green and Resilient**

Related Chapters: RALU



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5. Expand economic opportunity.

Description: Providing the best environment for diverse economic activity requires the implementation of long-term and short-term strategies. As a 20-year vision, the Comprehensive Plan provides a strong foundation for long-term economic vibrancy while the Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) is more focused and utilizes a shorter time horizon of five years. The Comprehensive Plan and the EDSP complement each other and work together to expand economic opportunities. AC44 can maximize the benefits of public participation in the local economy by integrating and advancing the EDSP alongside other county priorities.

The importance of the Comprehensive Plan's long-term role in economic diversity starts with establishing a strong land use foundation. Land use policies—such as zoning regulations, infrastructure planning, and development strategies—directly influence the types of businesses, industries, and housing that can exist in a given area. When land is used in a way that supports mixed-use development, accessible transportation, and varied housing options, it fosters a broader range of economic activities and employment opportunities. By thoughtfully managing land use, communities can encourage innovation, attract diverse industries, and build more equitable and adaptable local economies. The EDSP recognizes the value of these long-term efforts and includes its own shorter-term goals and strategies related to regulatory review, support for affordable housing, and placemaking.

Access to diverse economic opportunities is an essential component to a high quality of life. Together, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and EDSP ensures both greater opportunity and expanded access to our local economy.

Related Guiding Principle: **Thriving and Prosperous**

Related Chapters: TE

6. Mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Description: Protect public health, safety, and quality of life by preparing for the impacts of climate change and reducing local greenhouse gas emissions. Through proactive planning, community-wide action, and long-term investment, the region will strengthen its ability to withstand climate-related shocks while contributing to a sustainable future. More frequent heatwaves and wildfires, stronger storms, and drought and flooding events demand that we adapt critical infrastructure and emergency systems to safeguard lives—especially those most at risk. Upfront investments in resilience and energy efficiency reduce future costs related to disaster recovery, infrastructure failure, and health care impacts from pollution and heat. Healthy natural systems like wetlands, forests, and urban tree canopies absorb carbon, manage stormwater, and reduce urban heat, offering low-cost, high-impact climate protection. This priority embraces a dual mission: to mitigate the drivers of climate change by reducing emissions and resource use, while also preparing for its unavoidable impacts through informed land use, infrastructure upgrades, and equitable community investment.

Related Guiding Principle: **Green and Resilient**

Related Chapters: DALU, ES, CFI

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TRACKING AND REPORTING

Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of AC44 are central to its successful implementation. Metrics are data providing insight into county wide trends and patterns. These metrics provide a broader view of how conditions in the community change over time. Metrics may or may not be tied to specific programs, departments, or Big Moves. They can reflect trends such as those in housing affordability, transportation access, environmental quality, economic vitality, and equity. By tracking these metrics , the Board can assess whether policies and investments are moving the community in the desired direction and modify future planning decisions as needed. The following are example metrics to be monitored:

- *Population Growth*
- *Development Capacity*
- *Number of Affordable Housing Units (preserved and new)*
- *Number of Cost-Burdened Households*
- *Number of Fatal or Severe Injury Crashes*
- *Vehicle Miles Traveled*
- *Greenhouse Gas Emission*

An Annual Report with updated metrics will be provided to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for review. In addition to reporting recognized trends and patterns the report will include progress updates on AC44 actions.



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