

AC44

ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED MM.DD 2025

PART 1: PLAN POLICY

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PLAN

Placeholder page

PLACEHOLDER
TO BE UPDATED

The County reserves the right to make minor editorial corrections to this document without further public review or Board of Supervisors action. Such corrections may include, but are not limited to:

- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors
- Updates to organization names, titles, and contact information
- Correction of typographical errors and formatting inconsistencies
- Cross-reference updates and citation corrections
- Minor clarifications that do not alter the intent or substance of policies

These editorial changes will not affect the policy intent, goals, or implementation strategies contained in AC44. Any substantive changes to the Plan's content, policies, or recommendations will require appropriate public process and Board of Supervisors approval in accordance with Virginia Code § 15.2-2229.

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The County would like to thank our leadership and employees for their time and expertise in shaping a vision for the future of our community.

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A special thanks to our participating Working Group members and community members who provided feedback and thoughtul discussions throughout the AC44 process.

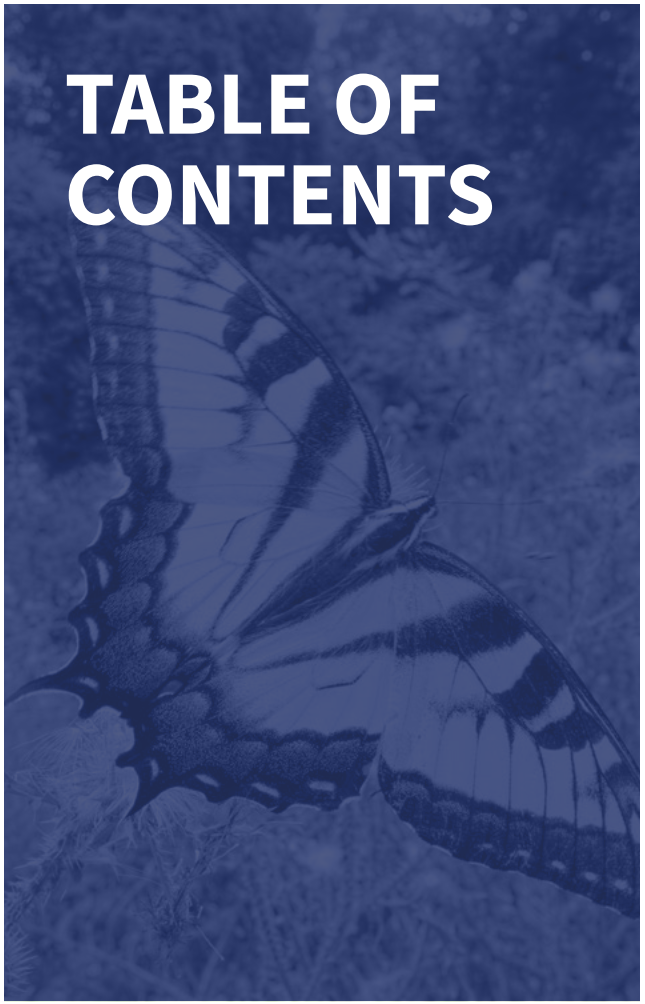
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AC44
ALBEMARLE COUNTY 2044

PART I: PLAN POLICY

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NAVIGATING AC44

AC44 is resource for community members and a policy guide for Albemarle County staff and officials. It articulates the community's vision for the County's future and the steps needed to implement that vision.

Part I establishes the legal context for AC44 and shows how it relates to other local and regional planning efforts. It summarizes the community engagement process and issues and themes heard, highlights AC44's Guiding Principles, and shares recent relevant trends.

Part II sets the stage for how and where growth and development happen differently in the County's Development Areas and Rural Area. It includes the history and content of the Growth Management Policy, defines the boundaries of the Development Areas and Rural Area, and establishes criteria for changing those boundaries. Part II provides the fundamental framework for AC44's recommendations in Part III.

Part III includes nine individual plan topics. These are the building blocks that work together to implement the Guiding Principles and the Growth Management Policy. Each topic includes policy details, a goal statement, objectives, and actions. The topics build on the Guiding Principles and community input themes heard, provide actionable responses to the challenges and opportunities in the community, and establish policy direction for Albemarle County. This section concludes with "Big Moves" key initiatives used for high-level prioritization, Comprehensive Plan Amendments, and potential metrics that will measure the successful implementation of AC44.



Part III includes these nine topic chapters.

Implementation of each AC44 topic is essential to the community's overall well-being and quality of life, including affordable and accessible housing, transportation choices, a healthy natural environment, places to recreate and enjoy nature, and access to public services and facilities.

Part IV provides AC44's appendices. They include:

- A summary of the AC44 process and public engagement activities.
- A detailed history of the county and existing conditions in the Community Story.
- Community Design Guidelines, which apply to all developments in the Development Areas.
- Links to County policy documents such as County Area Plans (e.g., the Crozet Master Plan and the Pantops Master Plan) and Topic Area Plans (e.g., the Climate Action Plan, the Biodiversity Action Plan, and Housing Albemarle).
- The 2022 Land Use Buildout Analysis Report and the 2025 Land Use Buildout Analysis Memorandum.

Each of the items identified as an 'adopted document' in AC44's appendices is considered part of AC44. Any updates to these plans require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The Implementation Chapter at the end of Part III provides more information on this process.

Part IV also includes reference documents that support and inform AC44. Local and regional partners create many of these resources. Examples of these documents include:

- The Rivanna River Urban Corridor Plan
- The Regional Transit Vision Plan
- The Regional Transit Governance Study
- The Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan



Community Design Guidelines provide criteria for the built environment during the review process for new development.



Regional plans incorporate area partners and establish a long-term vision for community resources such as transit service.

OVERVIEW

Albemarle County's beautiful landscapes, rich history, vibrant neighborhoods and businesses, thriving economy, world-class university, and diverse natural environment make the county one of the nation's most attractive and popular places to live and visit. The community has a strong tradition of protecting and enhancing the area's admired qualities and features while planning for the arrival of new community members and businesses.

AC44 establishes a long-range vision to guide the County's planning, development, and growth for the next 20 years. This Comprehensive Plan sets forth County government policy that helps guide public and private activities as they relate to land use, investment, and resource allocation. It establishes the blueprint for future decisions regarding protection of the natural environment, land use and development, transportation systems, public facilities and utilities, thriving economy, housing, and public services.

The Growth Management Policy is the foundation of AC44. It serves as the basic framework for the entire Comprehensive Plan. It emphasizes the importance of focused growth in the County's Development Areas and the creation of vibrant, mixed-use places while protecting the natural environment, historic and cultural resources, and character of the County's Rural Area. It also guides the provision of public services and facilities. For example, the Albemarle County Service Authority's Jurisdictional Area for public water and sewer primarily follows the boundaries of the Development Areas, promoting efficient use of infrastructure.

AC44 is the result of a dynamic planning process. While it cannot completely satisfy the interests of every community member, active participation from individuals and groups has been essential in creating a document that addresses the health, safety, and welfare of the community in a fair and equitable manner.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

AC44 is implemented by the public and private sectors and through partnerships. County staff use AC44 to guide public projects and investments (including the Capital Improvement Program) as well as new and updated regulations (including the Zoning Ordinance), to develop department work programs, and to evaluate rezoning and special use permit applications. The development and business communities use AC44 to guide development proposals and business location and expansion decisions. Partnerships leverage capacity and resources, including through community-led programs.



The County's Growth Management Policy provides guidance for growth in the Development Areas and preservation of scenic character and natural resources in the Rural Area.



AC44 supports improved multi-modal transportation infrastructure, such as this bike lane in Crozet.

Maintaining a balance among the diverse individual and collective interests of a growing, changing community can be challenging. With the guidance of the community's vision and AC44's Guiding Principles and the Objectives and Actions that implement them, the Comprehensive Plan better prepares the County to meet these challenges.

Comprehensive planning does not end with this document. Several actions, such as ordinance amendments, partnerships, and investments are needed to implement AC44. The Implementation Chapter in Part III provides more information on these actions.

STATE CODE

State law (Virginia Code 15.2-2223) requires that every county, city, and town adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of its territory. The State Code defines the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan as guiding and achieving coordinated, compatible development and supporting infrastructure within a locality to meet the needs of current and future community members. It also requires a review of the Comprehensive Plan at least once every five years by the Planning Commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.

The County also allows for County staff or the Board of Supervisors to initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The Implementation Chapter in Part III provides more information on this process.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS

Development of AC44 started in 2021. It included four phases and focused on conciseness, accessibility, and functionality.:

PHASE 1

- Review of the Growth Management Policy for accommodating growth over the next 20 years through the lens of equity and climate action.
- Development of Guiding Principles based on the common themes heard during community engagement activities.
- Confirmation of the Guiding Principles with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

PHASE 2

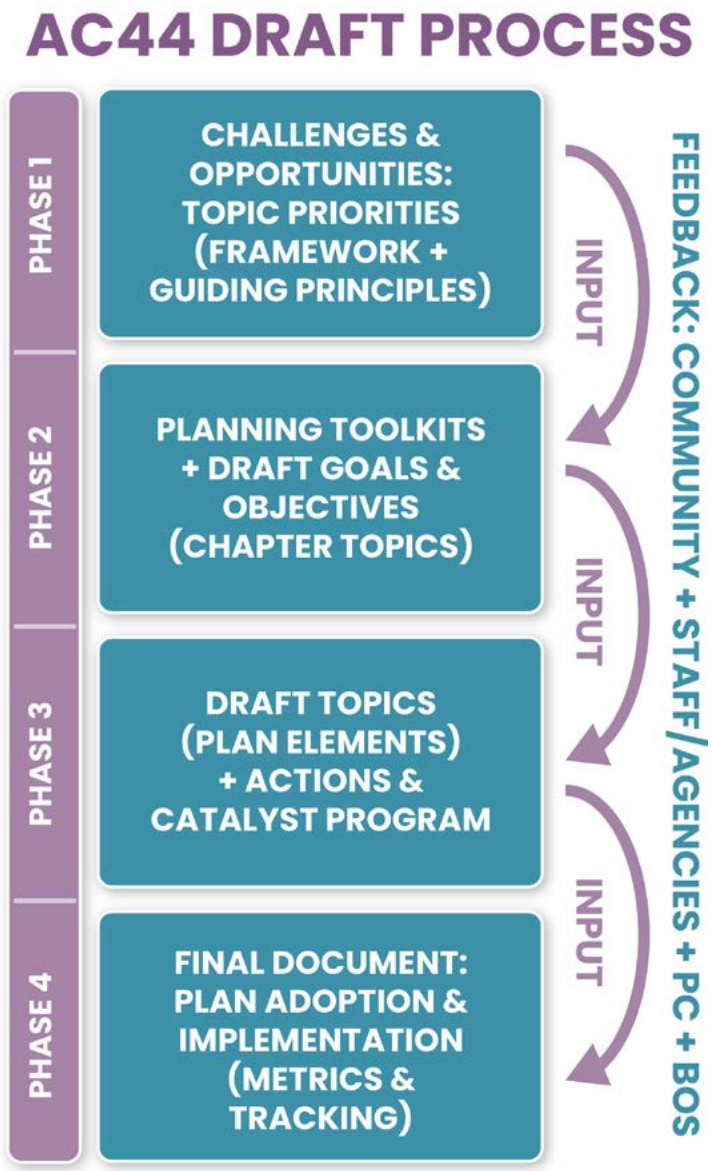
- Development draft goals and objectives for each plan topic.
- Engagement with the community.
- Confirmation of the goals and objectives with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

PHASE 3

- Drafting of each plan chapter.
- Engagement with the community.
- Confirmation of the policies and actions with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.
- Drafting of the other parts of AC44 such as Part I and the appendices.

PHASE 4

- Incorporation of comments and finalization of the document.
- Adoption of AC44 by the Board of Supervisors.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The four Guiding Principles for AC44 began as a set of four Big Ideas that were explored through extensive community input. The Guiding Principles provide a guide for where the community wants to go and what the community wants to work toward, with an aspirational view of Albemarle County in 2044.

The four Guiding Principles for AC44 are:

- A Green and Resilient Community
- A Welcoming and Equitable Community
- A Connected and Accessible Community
- A Thriving and Prosperous Community

The Guiding Principles also reflect the Board of Supervisor's priorities for incorporating equity and climate action throughout AC44. The Guiding Principles present a snapshot of a community that centered equity and resilience in its policies, plans, and actions. It will be a community that is resilient to challenges (including climate change) and where all people can thrive.

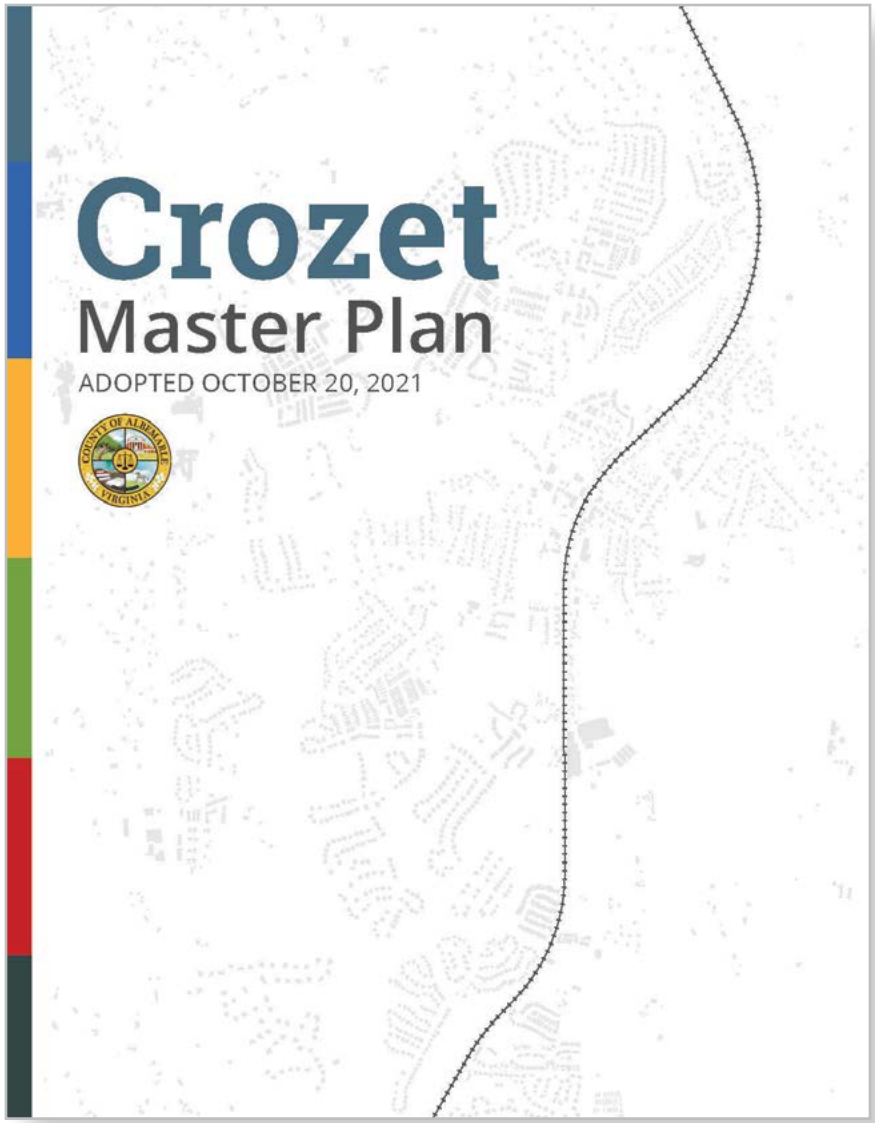
The Guiding Principles build a strong foundation for AC44's Objectives and Actions. They identify areas of significant common ground and consistent themes heard during community engagement activities. They also provide a vision for where we want to end up, while AC44's Objectives, Actions, and policies work toward achieving that vision. The graphic on this page shares the Guiding Principles and some of their supporting statements.



The four Guiding Principles and supporting statements were developed as part of AC44's extensive community engagement activities.



The Guiding Principles inform the policies and priorities of AC44 needed to achieve the community's collective vision for Albemarle County.



Area Plans, such as the Crozet Master Plan adopted in 2021, provide more detailed guidance for specific Development Area neighborhoods.

CONNECTION TO OTHER COUNTY PLANS

AC44 establishes a long-range vision and direction that guides planning, development, and growth for the next 20 years, as well as establishing a blueprint for the decisions regarding the protection of the natural environment and land use development, and for transportation, utilities, public facilities/services, housing, and economic development efforts.

SUPPORTING PLANS: AREA PLANS, TOPIC AREA PLANS & CORRIDOR STUDIES

AC44 focuses on the entire county. Area Plans and Corridor Studies are supporting documents that are guided by, and augment, AC44's overall direction. They address more specific areas of the county in greater detail. The Area Plans provide specific analysis and guidance and recommendations for the respective areas, while continuing to use and apply the overall guidance derived from the Comprehensive Plan. There are six Area Plans. They cover sections of the County's designated Development Areas:

- **Pantops**
- **Southern and Western Neighborhoods**
- **Crozet**
- **Village of Rivanna**
- **Places29**
  - **Includes Rio 29 Small Area Plan)**

Four supporting Corridor Studies provide specific guidance for two road corridors, one river corridor, and an employment district:

- *The Avon Street Corridor*
- *The Rio Road (east) Corridor*
- *The Rivanna River Urban Corridor*
- *The Broadway Blueprint Phase 2*

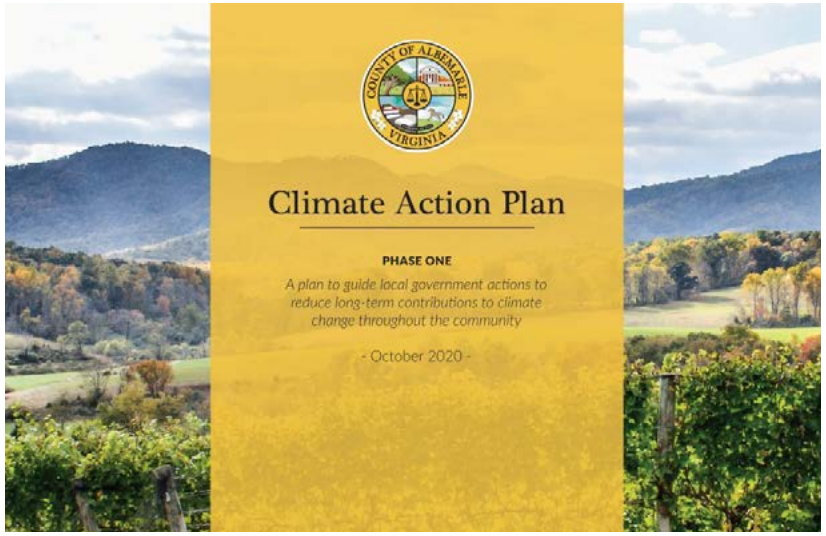
These plans and corridor studies are available online and in AC44's appendices.

Topic Area Plans provide focused analyses of specific topic areas. They typically include policies and implementation strategies/ recommendations. The community vision and Guiding Principles articulated in AC44 help inform the Topic Area Plans and studies. In turn, the policies and recommendations in those plans inform AC44 and are adopted into the Comprehensive Plan by reference in AC44's appendices. Topic Area Plans include:

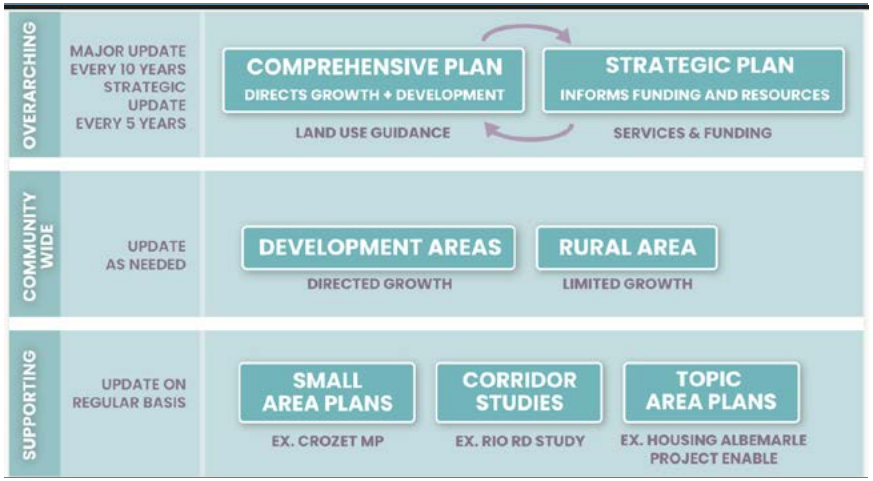
- *Housing Albemarle*
- *The Climate Action Plan*
- *The Economic Development Strategic Plan*



The Rio Road Corridor Plan was completed in 2022.



The County's Climate Action Plan (2020) provides guidance to address climate change impacts.



The County Strategic Plan directs resources and funding. Strategic Plan priorities are also aligned with Comprehensive Plan implementation.



The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission works with nearby localities to coordinate regional planning efforts.

THE COUNTY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic planning and related budgeting set priorities and focus energy and resources for the County's future. Albemarle County has used strategic planning for many years to inform policy development and financial decision-making and to achieve the community values articulated in AC44.

REGIONAL PLANNING

The County participates in several regional planning and service delivery organizations, including the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC), the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, the Thomas Jefferson Regional Home Consortium, Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee (LUEPC), and the Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transit Authority (CARTA). Working together, these organizations enable the exchange of information, coordinated planning for the future, avoiding duplication of services, and greater efficiency in the provision of infrastructure.

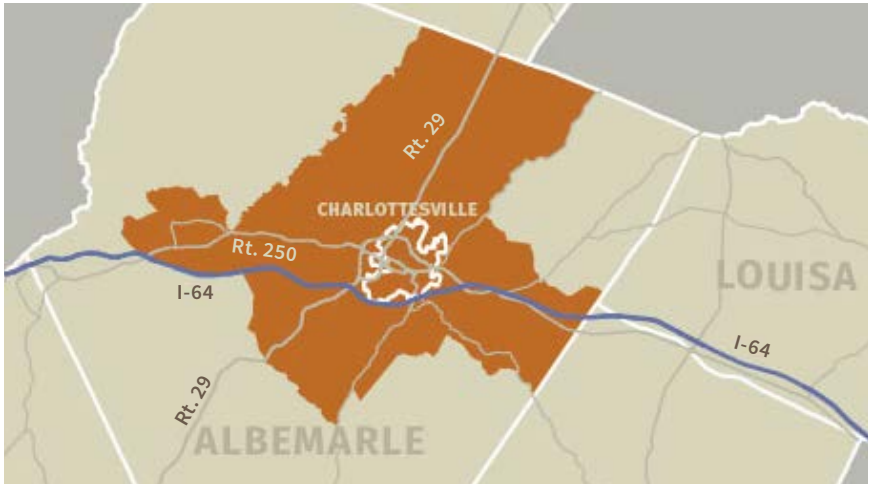
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC)

The TJPDC works with local government agencies to coordinate initiatives and develop effective solutions to address community needs. Services include planning, technical assistance, and data and information gathering. This includes producing plans that cover the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson. TJPDC is responsible for managing and coordinating several regional planning efforts and programs, including MPO/regional transportation planning and regional hazard mitigation planning.

Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

An MPO is the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census. The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO is the forum for cooperative decision-making among Albemarle County, City of Charlottesville, and state and federal officials.

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO develops the area's Long-Range Transportation Plan, which guides the development of an efficient transportation system for the region for 20 years. It also includes a list of projects to address mobility needs. It must be updated every five years; the last update took place in 2024. The plan covers all of the City of Charlottesville and urbanizing parts of the County.



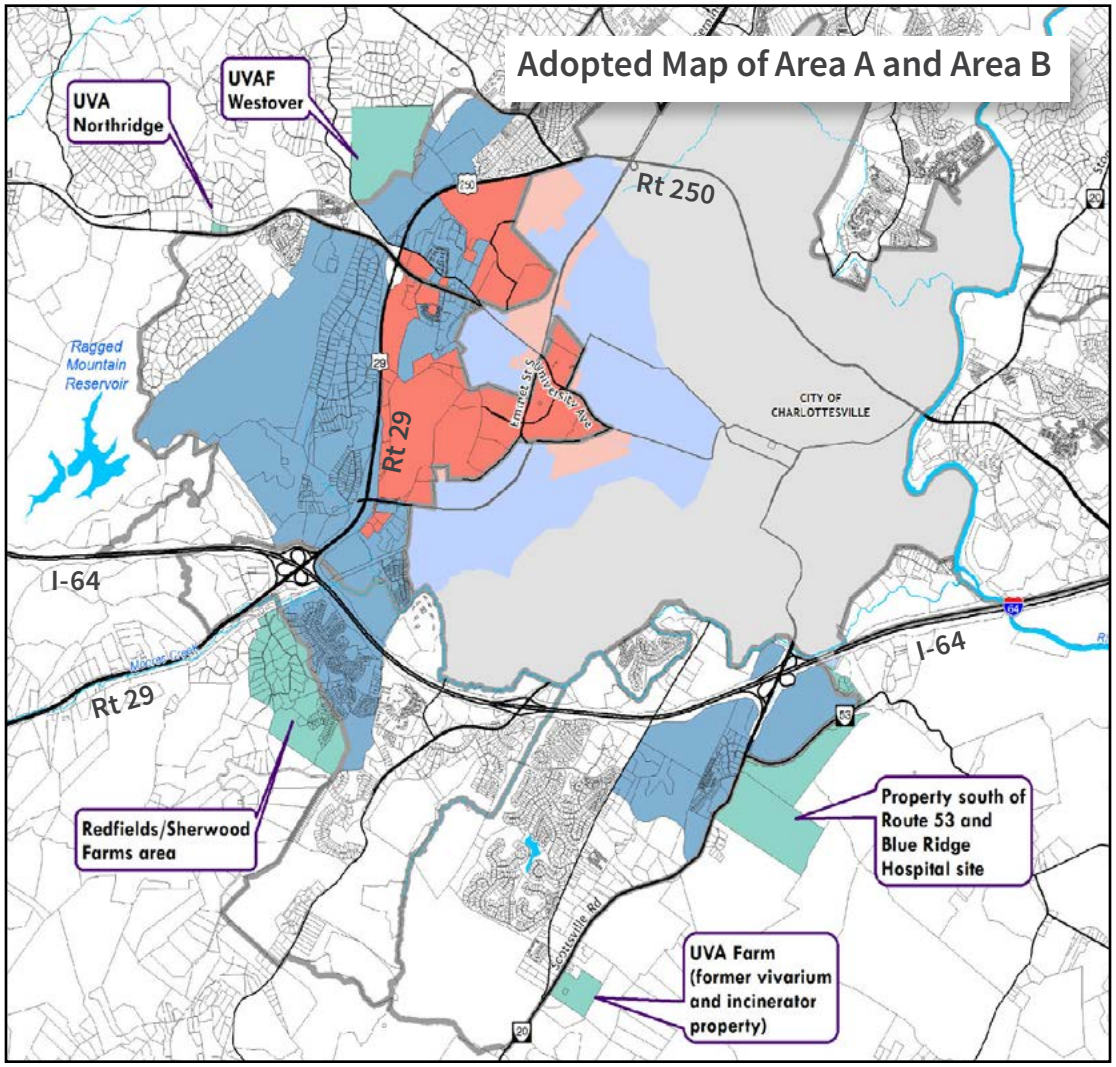
The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO is responsible for the Long-Range Transportation Plan for the local metropolitan area.

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP coordinates spending of federal transportation funds in the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO region with state and local funds. The TIP is a prioritized listing/program of transportation projects that the MPO develops and formally adopts as part of the transportation planning process. Any project that will involve federal funding (such as SMART SCALE or revenue sharing) or requires other federal funding must be in the TIP .

Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee (LUEPC)

LUEPC, formerly known as The Planning & Coordination Council, was established in 1986 as part of a Three-Party agreement to promote cooperation in planning and community development among the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia. LUEPC consists of representatives from the County, the City, the University of Virginia, the UVA Foundation, and the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority.



Three-Party Agreements

Officials from the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia signed this agreement in 1986. It outlines how the three entities will interact with each other on land use issues, depending on which entity owns the land.

Area A – All properties owned by the University of Virginia and its related foundation that are used for educational purposes.

Area B – Land that lies at the boundaries of the University in either the city or the county or that has otherwise been designated as part of Area B, and where the activities of any or all three of the parties might have a significant impact. The City's and County's Comprehensive Plans and the University of Virginia's Grounds Framework Plan continue to guide development in these areas.

Area C – All land not included in Area A and Area B.

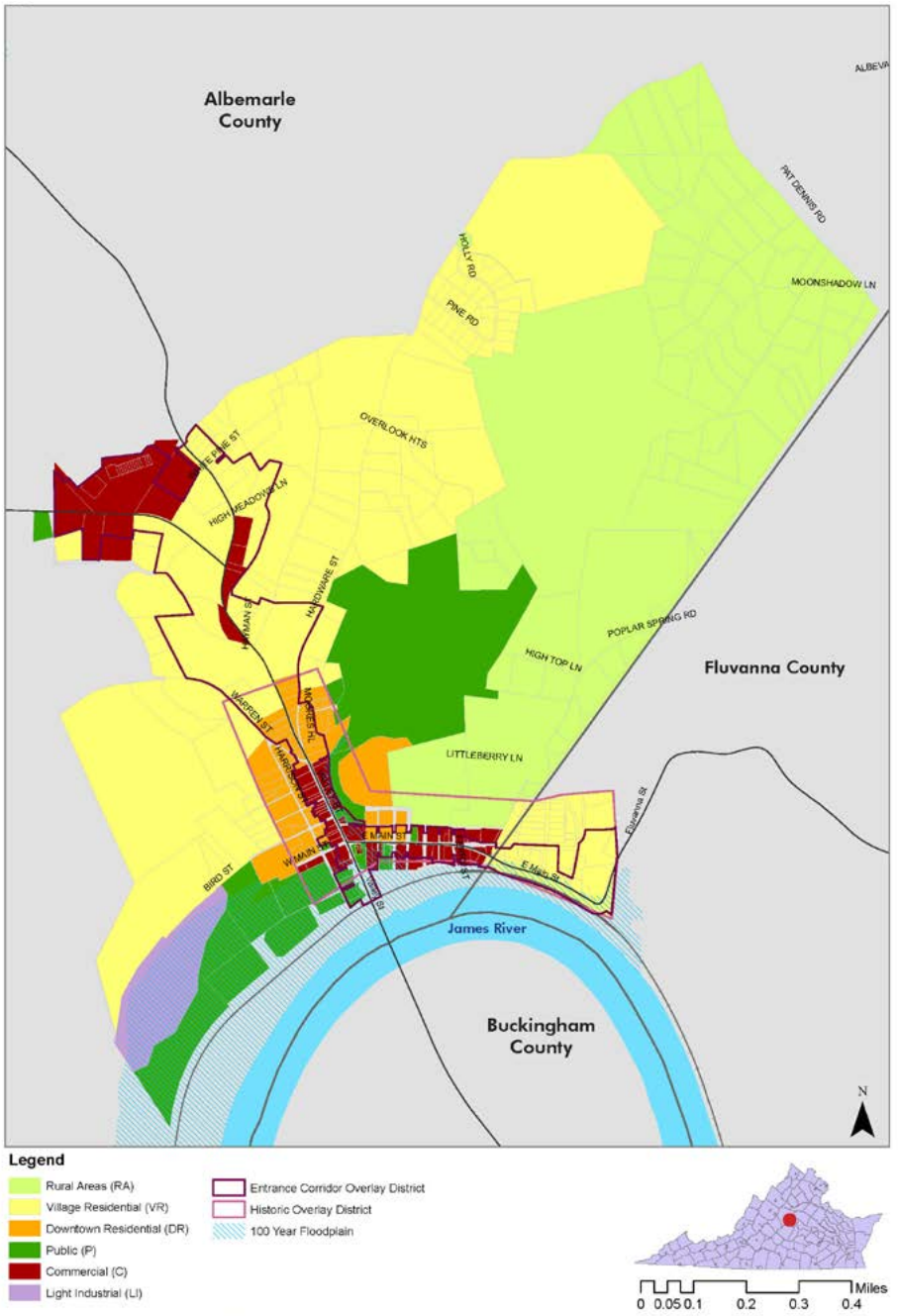
THE TOWN OF SCOTTSVILLE

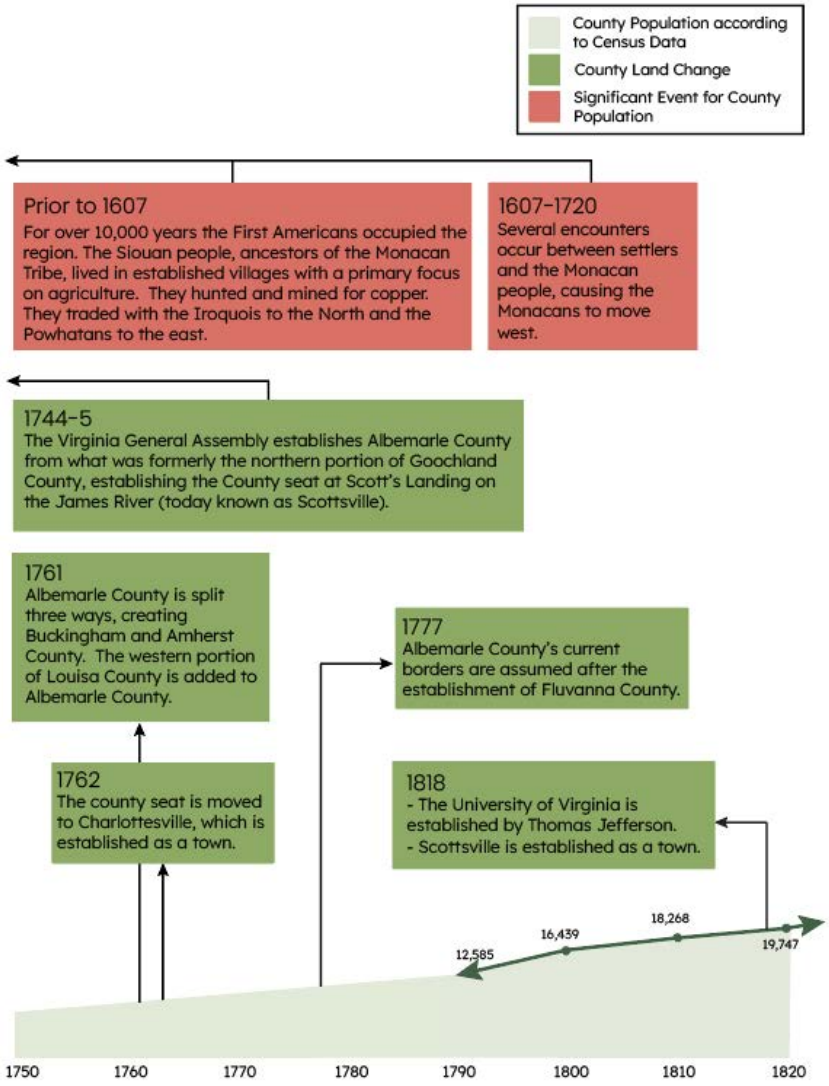
The Town of Scottsville is the only incorporated area in the County. It is located in the County's southeast corner. Most of the Town's acreage and residents – about 961 acres and 500 people – are in Albemarle County. About 20 acres of the Town and 24 town residents are in Fluvanna County.

Scottsville offers amenities, shops, employment opportunities, and community services to town and county residents. Scottsville property owners and business owners pay real estate and property taxes to the County in which their property lies. Albemarle County and Fluvanna County are responsible for providing Scottsville residents with the same level of services available to other county residents. Albemarle County delivers services such as schools, fire and rescue services, social services, library access, parks and recreation, and utilities. The County and the Town provide mutual aid across the localities' two police departments.

The Town of Scottsville has its own governance, including its own Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. AC44's Development Areas Chapter lists strategies for collaboration.

TOWN OF SCOTTSVILLE ZONING MAP (2021)





Albemarle County timeline of events (1750 to 1820).

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

A BRIEF HISTORY

Understanding Albemarle County's history provides important context for the county's physical layout and development. This brief history summarizes the structural and land use decisions, at the local and national level, that have shaped the community. Appendix B: Community Story provides more information on the county's history.

Albemarle County was officially established in 1744. Its history extends far earlier. By 1744, Native Americans had been living in the area for over 10,000 years. The Monacan Indian Nation is documented as having lived in Albemarle County for at least 1,000 years. As British colonists moved west across Virginia in the 1700s, they forced Native Americans from their lands. Much of the Monacan Indian Nation, unwilling to enter into conflict with the colonists, relocated west. Many members settled in present-day Amherst County; some remained in Albemarle County. Additional conflicts and discriminatory laws forced Monacans and other Native Americans to leave this area and even move out of Virginia. Despite discrimination, many Monacans reside in Virginia. The Monacan Indian Nation was officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1989 and was federally recognized in 2018.

Racial and ethnic disparities in the United States continued throughout the early and mid-1900s. A variety of methods were used to exclude non-white residents from homeownership in neighborhoods and entire sections of localities. In Albemarle County, one of the predominant exclusionary housing practices was the use of racial covenants to restrict where residents could live based on their race, ethnicity, or religion. A racial covenant is a binding legal obligation between buyer and seller that is written into the deed of a property to restrict who can live on a property based on race, ethnicity, or religion. While covenants restrict only individual properties, developers often wrote them into the deeds of entire neighborhoods as houses were sold. The use of racial

covenants became widespread throughout the country beginning in the 1920s. Most often, they targeted Black Americans.

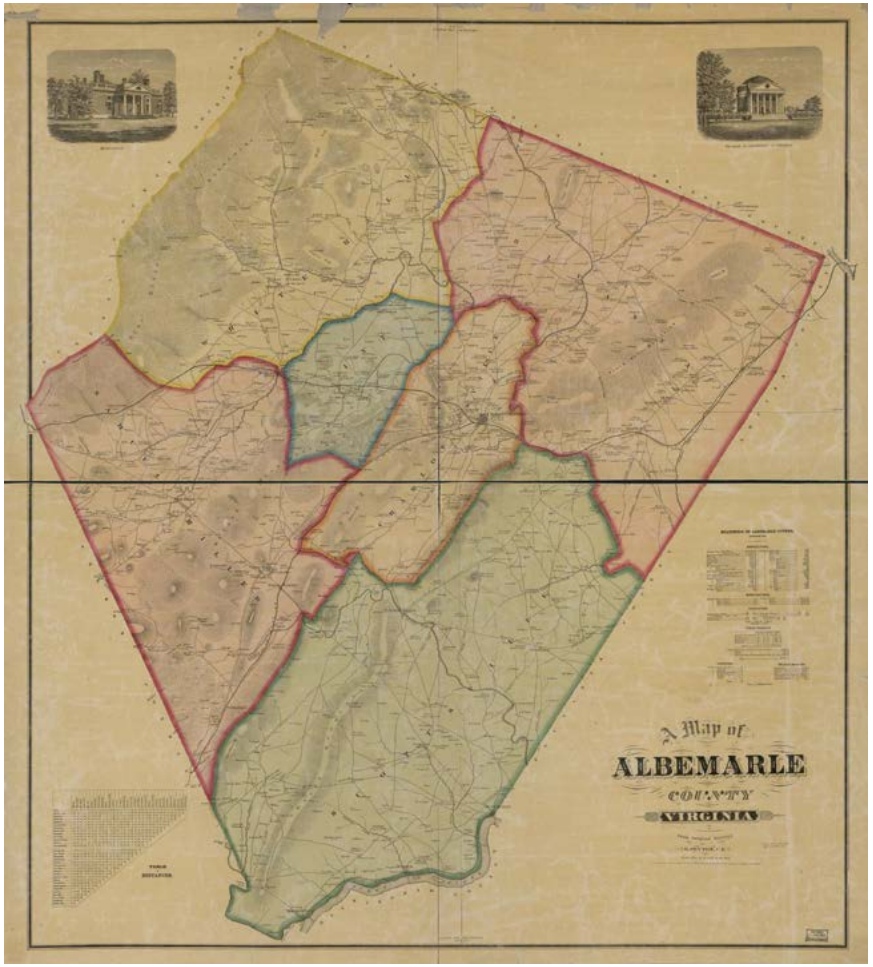
In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that racial covenants could not be enforced. While these racial covenants were no longer enforceable, they were still added to property deeds; many remain today.

It would be another 20 years until the Fair Housing Act prohibited housing discrimination based on race in 1968. In the meantime, federal discriminatory lending practices continued. The federal government also provided localities with funding for 'slum clearance' and 'blight removal,' which often meant the destruction of Black neighborhoods to make room for new projects such as highways.

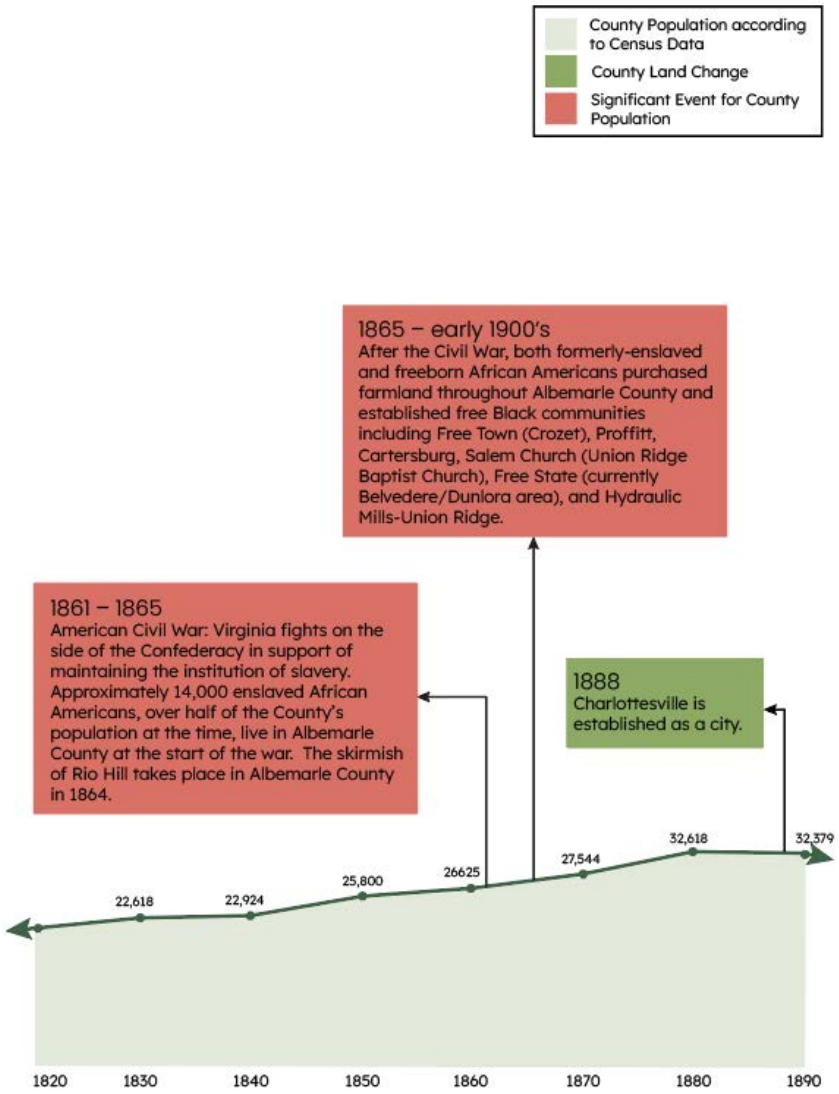
LOCAL PLANNING & GROWTH HISTORY

Prior to 1900, the City of Charlottesville annexed land from Albemarle County about five times. These annexations were relatively small areas, totaling about 1.2 square miles. After 1900, the City annexed land from the County three more times. These annexations added over 7 square miles of land to Charlottesville, establishing the City's current boundaries. In 1972, the City tried to annex an additional 12 square miles of County land. The effort failed.

Tensions over the annexation attempt and the need to coordinate public water supply planning led to a 1982 Annexation and Revenue



Historic map of Albemarle County, 1875. Source: Library of Congress



Albemarle County timeline of events (1820 to 1890).

Sharing Agreement between the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, which remains in place today. The City gave up its authority to annex in exchange for the County contributing a portion of its real property tax base to the City. This occurs annually as a part of the budget, according to the formula in the agreement.

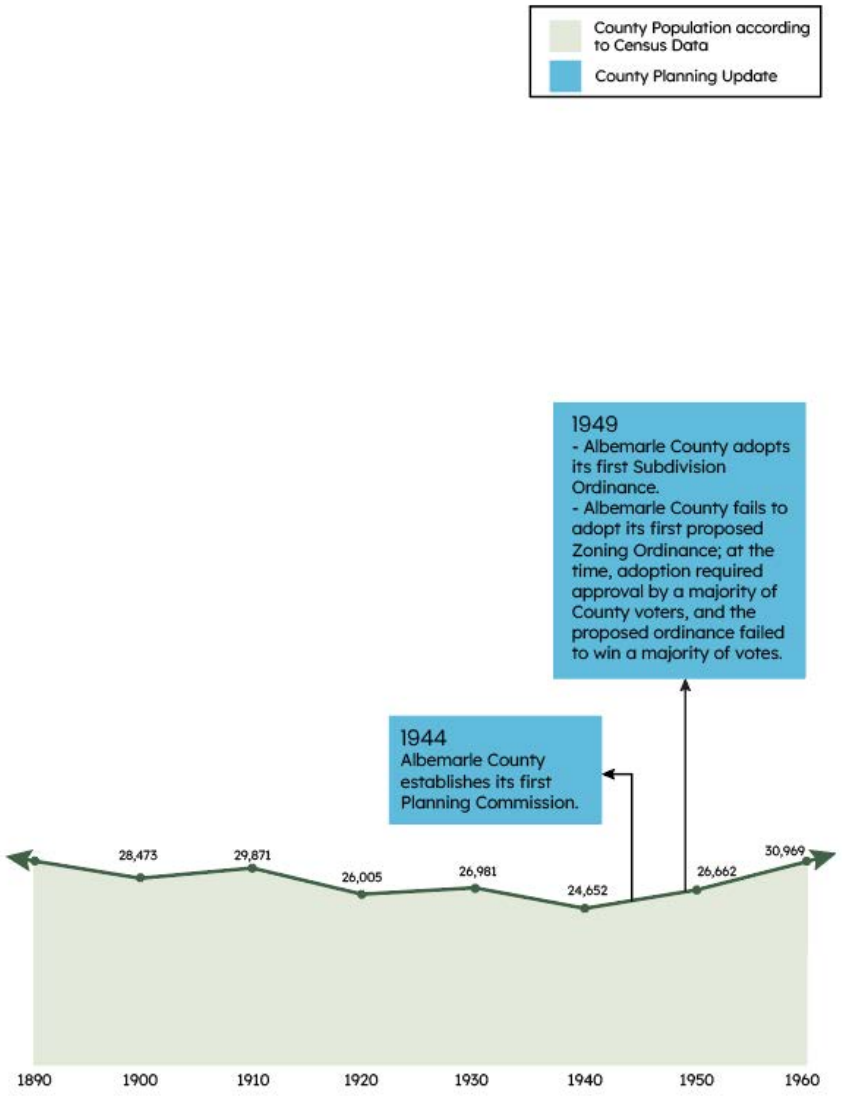
By 1962, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors recognized that regulating where public water and sewer could be supplied could incentivize development in certain areas and potentially protect against annexation. In 1964, the County established the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA).

In 1964, the County also adopted Service Authority Project Areas to establish where public water and/or public sewer service would be provided. These Project Areas were mapped and adopted as the ACSA Jurisdictional Area in 1982. The ACSA Jurisdictional Area remains in place today and has been amended time. The boundaries primarily correspond with the Development Areas boundaries. Some areas with public water or public sewer (or both) are located in the Rural Area.

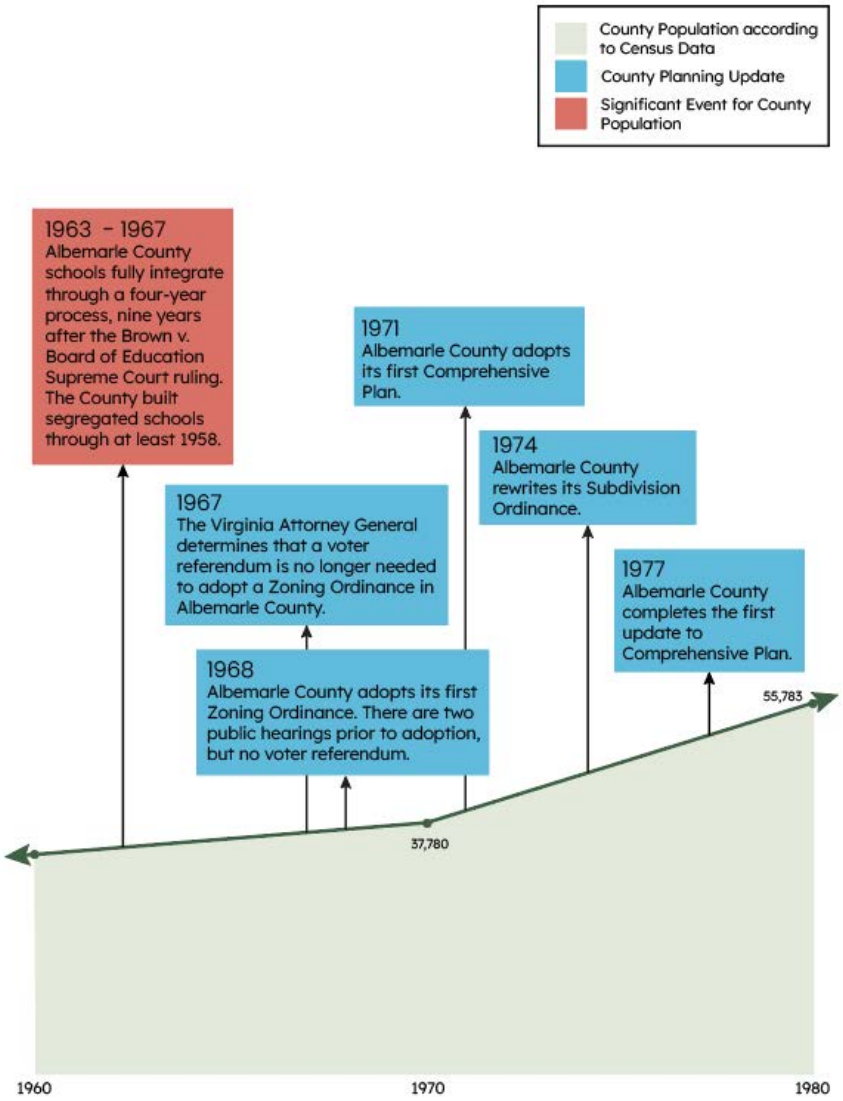
In 1972, as a result of state and federal pressure, the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County worked cooperatively on water and sewer services. These Project Areas were mapped and adopted as the ACSA Jurisdictional Area in 1982. A subsequent state mandate required a single regional wastewater treatment facility for the Charlottesville-Albemarle urban area. It was established at Moore's Creek. Interceptor lines would carry waste from Crozet and the other larger outlying Development Areas to the regional facility. However, many of the Villages designated in the 1971 Comprehensive Plan were too small and too distant to warrant the cost of extending similar interceptor lines or package plants.

The County adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1969 and its first Comprehensive Plan in 1971. The first Comprehensive Plan established the County's first Growth Management Policy, directing growth into the Urban Area (similar to Neighborhoods 1 through 7), five Communities, and 14 Villages. Encouraging development in the designated Development Areas was intended to reduce sprawl, protect natural resources, and provide public services and utilities more efficiently. The 1971 Comprehensive Plan also directed new public utilities, including public water and sewer, to these Development Areas. At the time, most of the new residential development was built in the Rural Area.

In 1980, a comprehensive rezoning of the County down-zoned areas in water supply watersheds previously zoned for urban development to Rural Area zoning. This action was taken to protect the quality of drinking water supplies and reduced the acreage of the Development Areas. Other zoning ordinance and map changes during the same period were made to bring zoning regulations into conformance with other recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan at that time.



Albemarle County timeline of events (1890 to 1960).

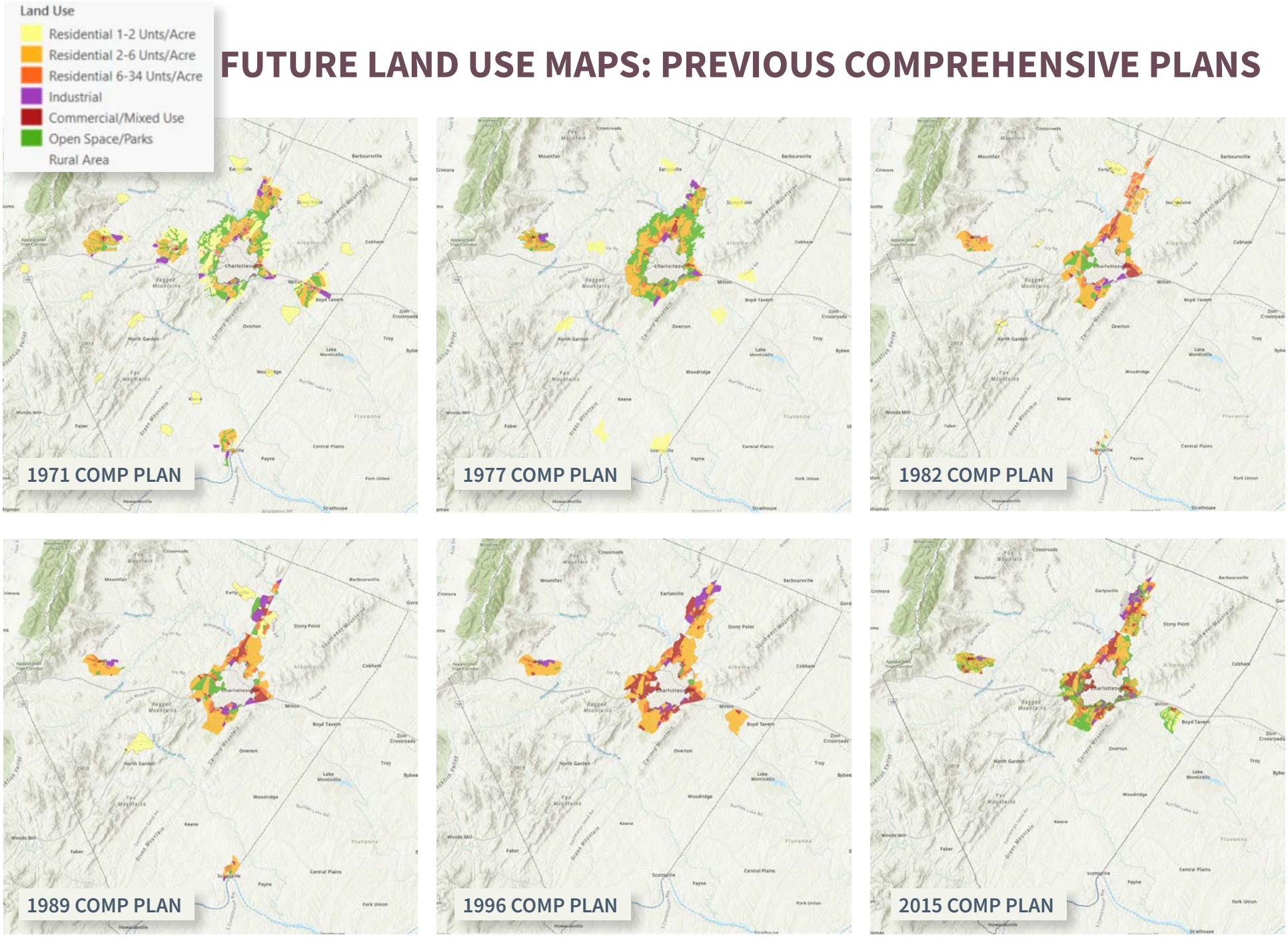


Albemarle County timeline of events (1960 to 1980).

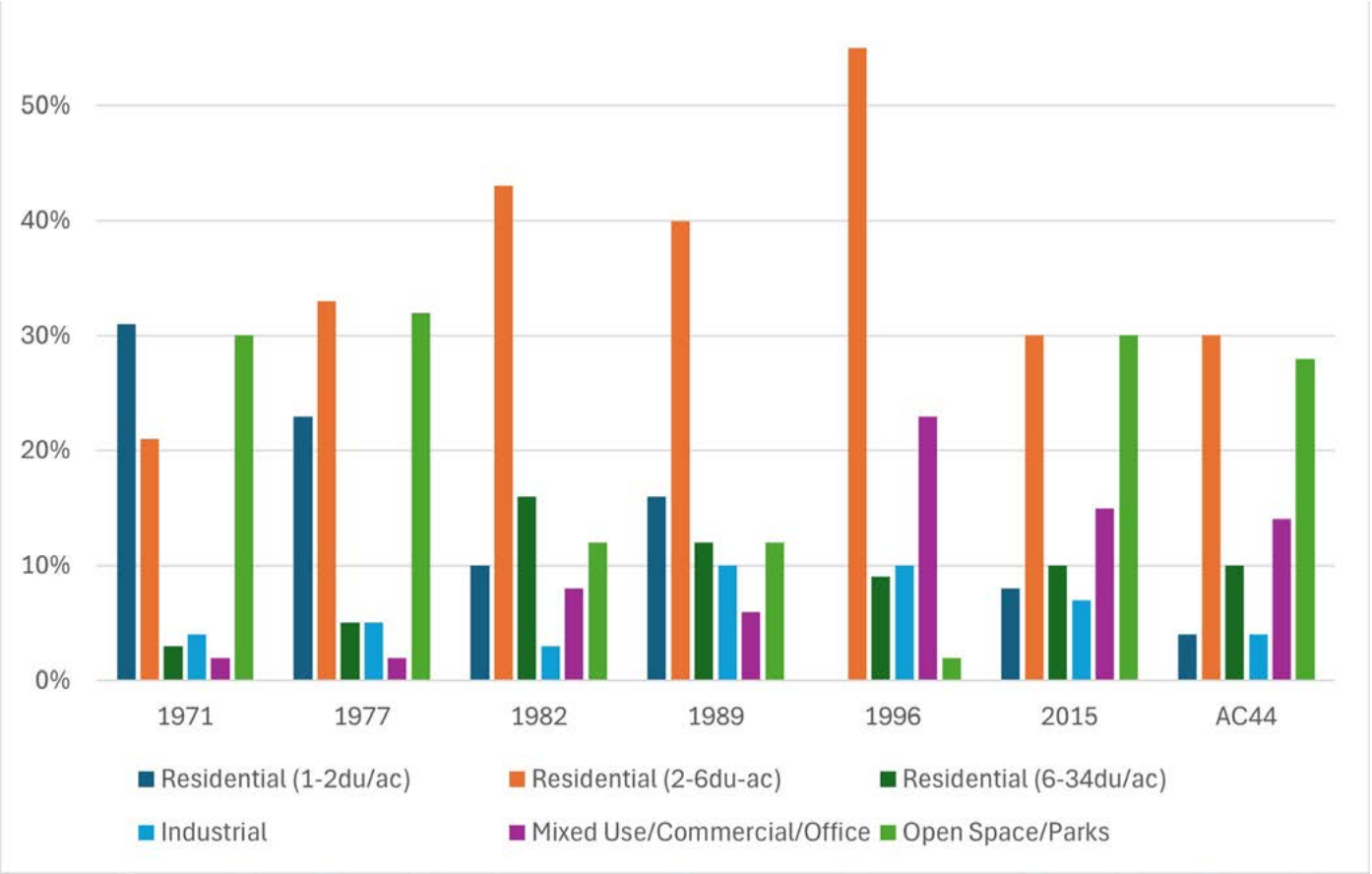
Comprehensive Plan updates in 1977, 1982, 1989, 1996, and 2015 upheld the Growth Management Policy. The 1996 Comprehensive Plan placed greater emphasis on using the Development Areas effectively and encouraging more walkable, mixed-use, and dense communities. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan continued this focus, adding neighborhood master plans, updating housing and financial policies, and allowing more compatible uses in the Rural Area.

Today, AC44 continues to reflect the County's strong land use policies and commitment to protecting and enhancing the county's admired qualities and features while planning for anticipated new community members and businesses. AC44 will guide the County's planning, development and growth for the next 20 years, emphasizing the importance of focused growth in the Development Areas and the creation of vibrant, mixed-use places while protecting the character of the Rural Area.

FUTURE LAND USE MAPS: PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PLANS



COMPARISON OF LAND USE CATEGORIES BY AREA ACROSS PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PLANS



This graph shows the approximate percentages of land area dedicated to the general land use categories in each Comprehensive Plan in the Development Areas. The intended purpose is to generally show how the percentage of each land use has changed over time. These estimates were calculated using GIS after digitizing the land use maps in the 1971-1996 Comprehensive Plans. Not all percentages add up to 100%; there are some gaps (unmarked designations) in the Development Areas in the 1971-1996 maps.

Note: ***Maximizing development density in the Development Areas will be a critical component of the Growth Management Policy and realizing Land Use Category recommendations in AC44.***

Land Use & Climate Change

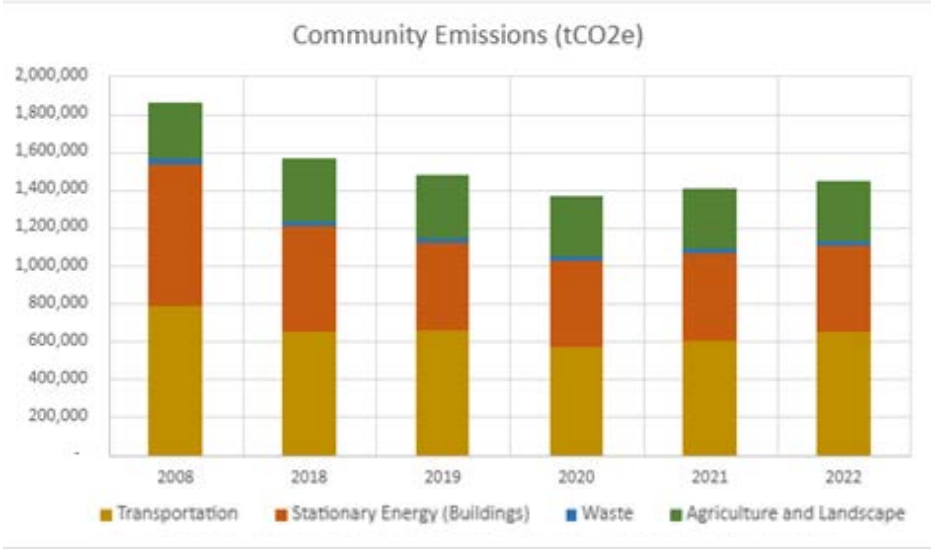
Land use decisions across the planet have contributed to climate change in numerous ways, and Albemarle County is no exception. Communities around the globe have contributed to the climate crisis for centuries, with limited knowledge of those contributions and impacts until recent decades. However, the current data and research on climate impacts require recognition of how previous practices have contributed to the problem so that our community can be part of the solution going forward.

Converting forested land to cropland, pasture, and other land uses has increased Earth's surface reflectance by 0.2 watts per square meter. These changes occurred throughout the globe over previous centuries, including notable changes in the United States, dating back to 1750. Vegetation also contributes water vapor to the atmosphere through evapo-transportation, and removal of that vegetation leads to warming and to decreased carbon sequestration. Greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, have been the primary driver of the climate crisis since the Industrial Revolution. How humans allocate and develop land has a significant influence on those emissions. Development patterns in the United States, particularly during the 20th century, were driven by the growth of the automobile industry. Land uses became more dispersed, with places of employment and commerce located farther from new residential areas. The increased sprawl further reinforced the need for personal vehicles to provide essential connections to everyday needs. This trend has also led to under-investment in transit systems and infrastructure for walking and cycling. Continued subsidies for fossil fuel infrastructure alongside under- investment in renewable energy sources has strengthened the reliance on fossil fuels to heat and power buildings. A global food supply chain that relies upon the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and inefficient livestock practices have shaped the landscape of our food, textiles, and fuel since World War II. Particularly in the United States, an ingrained consumer culture generates excessive waste that continues to overburden landfills with materials emitting greenhouse gases. These are all part of the community's contributions, and the County has an opportunity to be part of the solution moving forward.

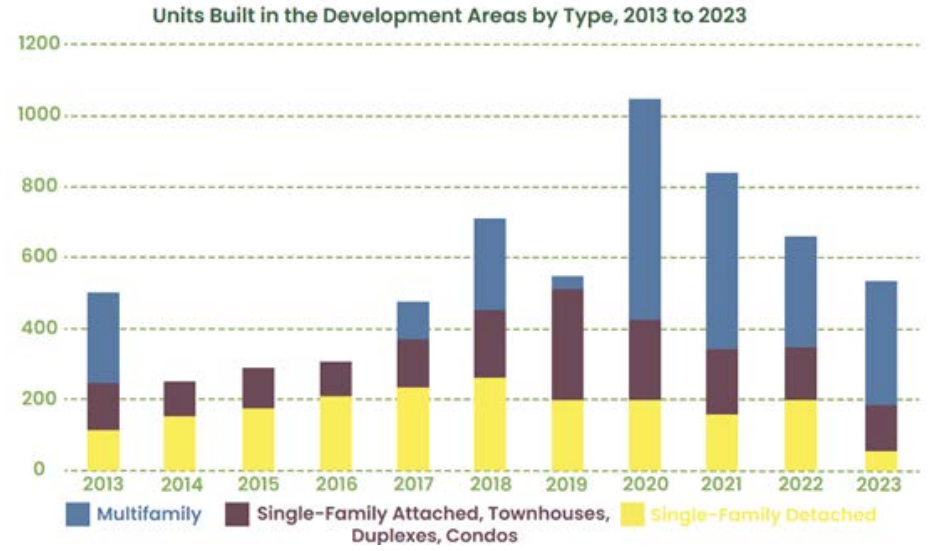
RECENT TRENDS

Important trends and changes that inform AC44 include residential and business growth, new and updated local policies, plans, and priorities, and new state code provisions. Many of these trends are included in the Part III chapters of AC44. Overarching trends that informed this Comprehensive Plan update include:

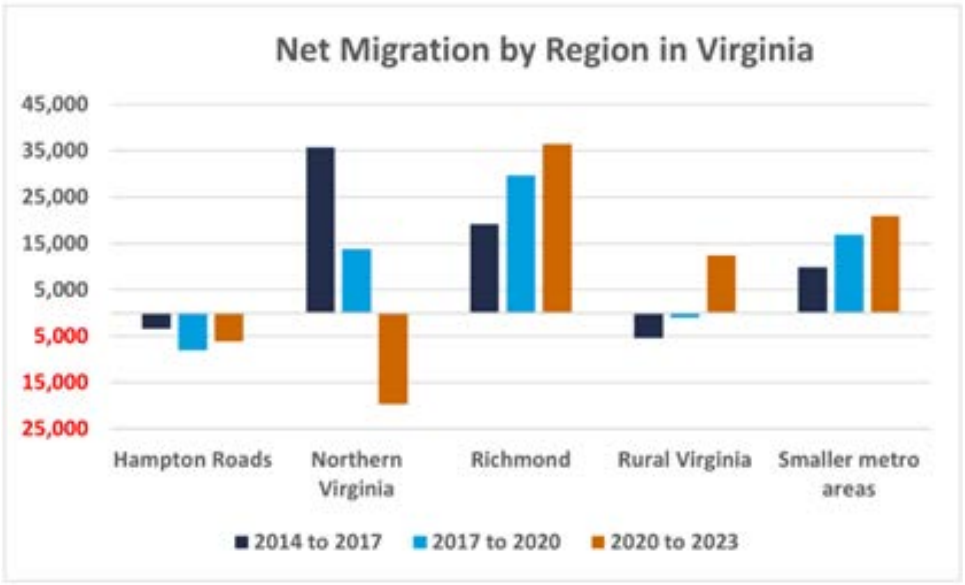
- In the next 20 years, Albemarle County is expected to experience continued growth, with an estimated 31,000 new residents living in the county by 2044. The County's 2022 and 2025 Buildout Analyses (provided in the appendices) provide more information on county data.
- According to U.S. Census data, the County's population increased about 13.6% from 2010 to 2020. This growth has resulted in increased demand for urban services and infrastructure, including parks, broadband, school capacity, and transportation improvements.
- According to the County's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories, local emissions have been on a generally downward trend since the baseline year of 2008. After a decrease related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, emissions increased in 2021 and 2022.
- While the median household income and housing values continue to rise in the county, growth and change have not been experienced uniformly. As shown in the Albemarle County Equity Profile, over 29% of county households were ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed households. An additional 8% of county households were living in poverty (according to the latest 2023 data).
- Between 2012 and 2023, the percentage of residents in Albemarle County over the age of 65 increased from about 15.5% of all county residents to 21.2% of all county residents.
- During the same period, average county household size decreased from 2.45 people per household to 2.31 people per household.



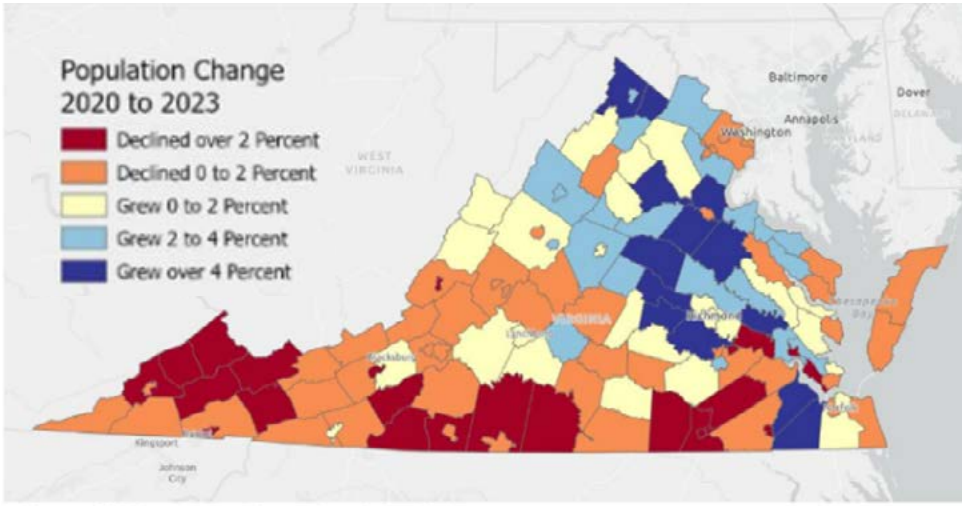
Emissions inventories were completed in 2008, a baseline year, and annually from 2018 to 2022. The two biggest sources of community emissions are from transportation and energy use in buildings.



Between 2013 and 2023, about 39% of the total housing units built in the Development Areas have been multi-family units, followed by single-family detached units (31%) and single-family attached/townhouses (28%). The remaining 2% of housing units were duplexes, mobile homes, and accessory apartments.



According to a Cooper Center study, Virginia residents are moving from larger metropolitan areas to rural counties and smaller metropolitan areas.



– Source: Weldon Cooper Center Population Estimates

Albemarle County was one of about half of the counties in Virginia that experienced population growth between 2020 and 2023.

- Continued U.S. population growth is expected, but at a slower rate than previous years. The South and West regions are expected to gain population, while the Northeast and Midwest are predicted to shrink after 2030. By 2030, according to the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, about one in five people in the U.S. will be over the age of 65.
- Over the last 30 years, according to the County's Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment, Albemarle County has seen an increase in the number of days over 95 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the number of days when rainfall delivers more than an inch or 2 inches of water, and a decrease in the number of days with below freezing temperatures.
- The rise in remote work, e-commerce, available broadband, and desire for outdoor recreation has continued the trend of people moving within the U.S. from larger metros to rural counties and smaller metros (fewer than 250,000 residents). In 2023, rural counties and small metros became the top destination for people moving within the country for the first time in decades, according to the Cooper Center.
- Mirroring national trends, many people moving within Virginia are moving from larger metropolitan areas (especially Northern Virginia) to rural counties and smaller metropolitan areas, according to the Cooper Center.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Category	Albemarle County	Commonwealth of Virginia
Population		
Total Population	113,683	8,657,499
Population Density (per sq. mi.)	152	219
Land Area (sq. mi.)	721	39,490
Age		
Median Age	39.8 years	38.8 years
Under 18 years	19.1%	21.8%
18 to 64 years	59.7%	61.3%
65 years and over	21.2%	16.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	74.0%	59.0%
Black or African American	8.8%	18.4%
Hispanic or Latino	7.4%	10.5%
Asian	5.5%	6.8%
Two or More Races	3.9%	3.7%
Household		
Total Households	45,064	3,330,000
Average Household Size	2.31 persons	2.60 persons

Category	Albemarle County	Commonwealth of Virginia
Economics		
Median Household Income	$102,617	$90,974
Per Capita Income	$61,032	$49,217
Poverty Rate	6.77%	9.9%
Unemployment Rate (2022)	2.5%	2.8%
Education		
High School Graduate or Higher	94.4%	91.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	60.6%	40.8%
Housing		
Total Housing Units	50,048	3,650,000
Owner-Occupied	66.0%	67.2%
Renter-Occupied	34.0%	32.8%
Median Home Value	$492,800	$360,700
Median Gross Rent	$1,607	$1,295

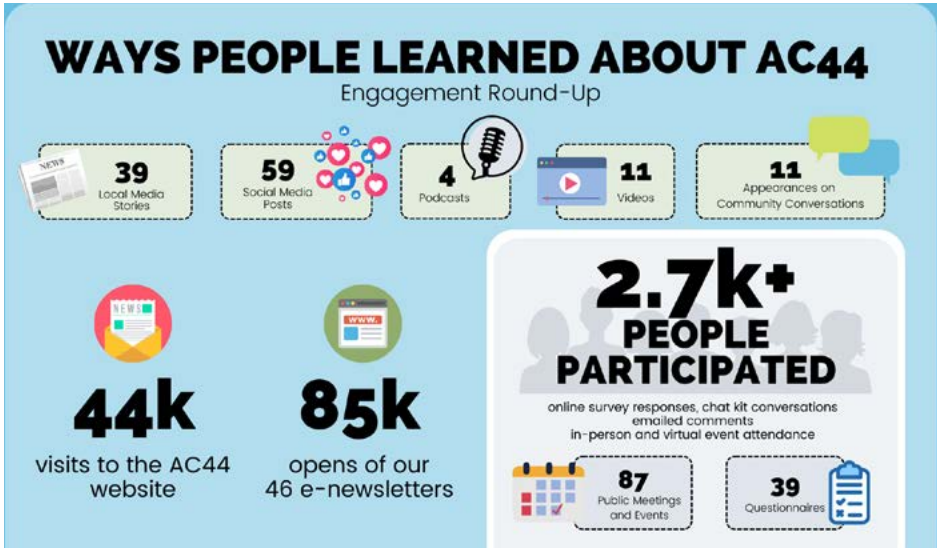
U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Albemarle County's community engagement approach for AC44 used a process grounded in transparency, inclusivity, and phased participation. The County structured engagement over several years and phases, combining in-person events, online questionnaires, virtual sessions, and targeted outreach to gather diverse community input. Each phase of the process built on the previous one, starting with foundational policy review, progressing through exploration of land use and transportation options, and culminating in detailed feedback on draft Goals, Objectives, and Actions. Appendix A provides a detailed account of AC44's community engagement history and methods.

The engagement process elevated voices from across the county and ensured key themes such as equity and resilience were reflected in AC44. Tools such as 'chat kits,' interactive open houses, and meetings with boards and community groups informed AC44's development while encouraging ongoing public dialogue. Public input was incorporated in an ongoing process to shape plan content, from the initial Growth Management Policy evaluation to the refinement of planning toolkits and future land use recommendations.

Overall, the County's engagement process for AC44 exemplifies a responsive, adaptive, and community-centered approach to long-range planning, fostering a shared vision for a more equitable and resilient future.



Throughout the AC44 process, the County engaged the public and sought feedback in various ways. The AC44 website hosted information resources and received public input.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Affordable and accessible housing

Community input emphasized that everyone in the community should have access to housing they can afford and maintain, and that is safe and healthy.

A protected and restored natural environment

Protecting and restoring the natural environment continues to be a top priority for the community, including for the benefit of native plants and animals, recreation and access to nature, water quality, scenic beauty, and community enjoyment.

Vibrant mixed-use centers in the Development Areas

Community members identified the vision for the Development Areas, including neighborhoods with a variety of housing types that are walkable to businesses, services, jobs, and parks, protected and restored natural areas, vibrant and connected Activity Centers, and efficient use of land and infrastructure.

Multimodal transportation choices

Community input emphasized the importance of safe, affordable, and comfortable transportation options for walking, biking, regular and reliable transit, and driving.

Rural Area with small-scale rural communities and protected natural environment, historic, cultural, and scenic resources

Community members identified the key elements of the Rural Area, including small-scale rural communities that support surrounding community members, protected and restored natural areas, celebrated historic and cultural resources, and working farms.



Public amenities such as trails and shared use paths are important to community members.

Access to parks and trails

Community input underscored the importance of having parks, trails, community centers, and natural areas throughout the county. Parks are a critical aspect of quality of life and well-being.

Resilient and healthy community

Community members highlighted the importance of ensuring the community is resilient to impacts and shocks to the environment and economy, including from the effects of climate change. A resilient community is better prepared for and able to recover from natural hazards, storms, and economic downturns.

County Mission and Vision

The Comprehensive Plan is strongly tied to Albemarle County's Strategic Plan through the County's established Mission and Vision. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is essential for well-being and quality of life, including affordable and accessible housing, transportation choices, a healthy natural environment, places to recreate and enjoy nature, and access to public services and facilities. The Growth Management Policy supports the prudent use of public funds through more efficient and cost-effective service delivery.

The County's Vision identifies many of the building blocks needed to achieve well-being and quality of life.

Albemarle County's Mission

To enhance the well-being and quality of life for all community members through the provision of the highest level of public service consistent with the prudent use of public funds.

Albemarle County's Vision

Albemarle County envisions a community with the following, for present and future generations.

- Abundant natural, rural, historic, and scenic resources
- Healthy ecosystems
- Active and vibrant development areas
- A physical environment that supports healthy lifestyles
- A thriving economy
- Exceptional educational opportunities

The County's Mission and Vision provide a strong foundation for AC44. Additionally, several elements of AC44 are well-aligned with climate action. Healthy ecosystems and abundant natural resources are not possible without actively working to stabilize the climate. Dense, vibrant multimodal development areas are essential for achieving the County's climate goals.

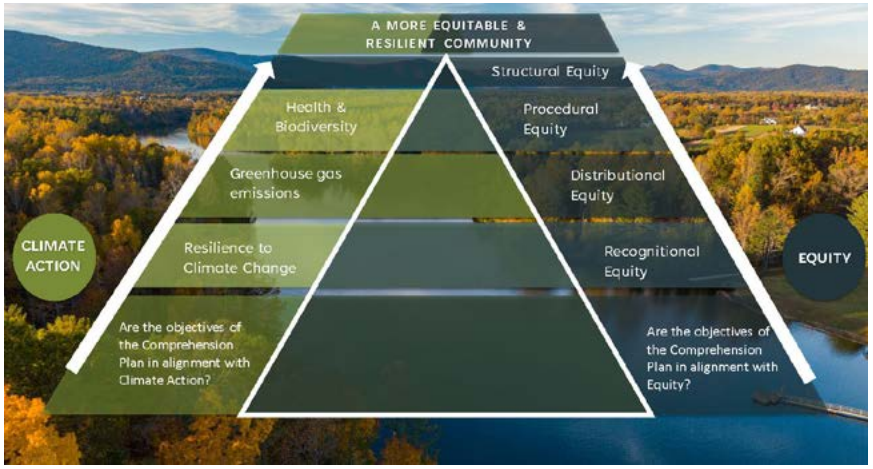
Shifting away from personal vehicles to a community where members can walk and bike to school, work, and commercial centers will increase healthy lifestyles while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Over time, the County can continue to help focus the area's economy on sectors that are well-aligned with environmental needs and priorities.

EQUITY & CLIMATE ACTION LENS

The Board of Supervisors has consistently emphasized the importance of centering equity and climate action in the County's organization and service to the community. The Equity and Climate Action (ECA) Lens identifies information that can create opportunities for the community's benefit.

For the County to successfully prioritize equity and climate action in its service to the community, it needs to integrate an understanding of equity and climate impacts across the organization and county planning. By consistently incorporating the perspectives of equity and climate action in the County's activities now, we will be setting ourselves up for a more resilient, equitable, and thriving community in the coming decades. Integrating equity and climate action throughout AC44 aligns well with the County's Strategic Plan, Mission, and Vision, as well as its Values (see below).

- *Integrity:* Honest and fair treatment often means relying on data to ensure all community members benefit as the County achieves its goals. Local and statewide studies help the County understand where there is work to do and facilitate necessary conversations.
- *Innovation:* As the community continues to grow and evolve, local challenges require new solutions. The County must actively pursue creative approaches to social disparities, environmental impacts, and community involvement to reach its goals.
- *Stewardship:* The value of stewardship is inherently future-focused. The County must ensure that its natural, physical, social, and financial systems are improved for all community members, present and future.
- *Learning:* Education must be an integral part of the growth of the community, both inside and outside of the classroom. Addressing climate change and social disparities will require continuous and collective learning to address the needs of the community and the people who serve it.
- *Community:* The County is committed to enhancing the well-being of all community members through equitable and inclusive services and strategic planning for a resilient, equitable, and engaged community.



Equity and climate action are vital for community well-being.

Equity

The County's 2021 Equity Profile states that "Albemarle County is becoming increasingly racially/ethnically diverse. Albemarle County is also home to a substantial number of foreign-born residents and older residents (over age 60). Such diversity requires that the County consider opportunities to deliver culturally sensitive public services to these respective groups." To build a thriving community for all, an ongoing, consistent process of action, reflection, and analysis of fair outcomes must be prioritized. This requires a commitment to learning and understanding quantified and qualitative metrics pertaining to existing disparities in quality of life, health, education, economic opportunity, access to resources and services, as well as the historical and present causes and conditions of such disparities. Furthermore, as the County strategizes and implements plans, meaningful involvement and community engagement should reflect the community it serves, including members of historically underrepresented groups. The Community Story in Appendix B provides more information on community demographics and quality of life.

Climate Action

Climate action includes reducing the community's greenhouse gas emissions – climate change mitigation – and preparing for the future impacts of climate change – climate change adaptation. Recommendations related to climate action cross all AC44 chapters and include recommendations incorporated throughout the Growth Management Policy. These connections are also emphasized in the County's Climate Action Plan. Its vision is to:

- Benefit the health of all residents.
- Protect the local natural environment.



Trees play a vital role in carbon sequestration and flood mitigation.

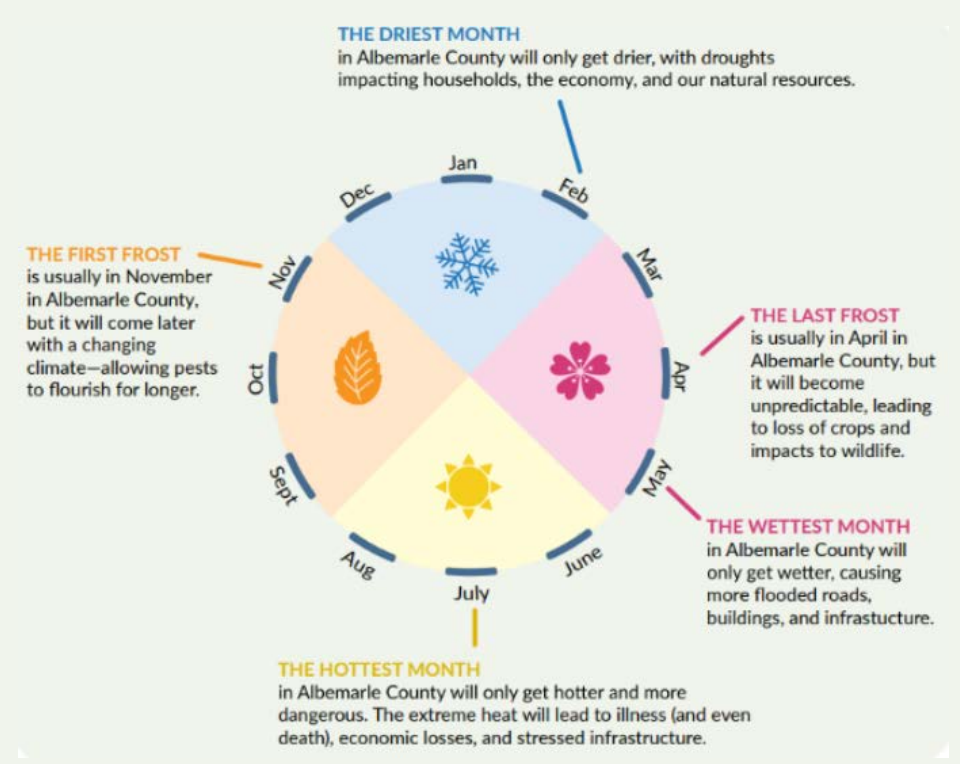
- Stimulate the creation of green jobs to support a thriving local economy.
- Promote education on climate action for youth and adults.
- Contribute to a more equitable community, with the benefits of climate action programs easily accessible and affordable for every resident regardless of socioeconomic status.

Local climate action delivers multiple benefits, including economic growth, community health, and environmental protection while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Preserving forests and planting trees enhances wildlife habitat, sequesters carbon, improves watershed health, and mitigates flood risk. Preserving and restoring biodiversity and ecological support are necessary for our survival and in turn make the county a more enjoyable place to live, work, and visit. Increasing the health of the local natural environment also helps to preserve the character of rural and wild places in the county for generations to come.

Climate change impacts community members unequally, with extreme heat (days over 90 degrees) disproportionately affecting outdoor workers and people with inefficient HVAC systems or inadequate home insulation. Equitable climate action planning ensures benefits for everyone in the community, prevents worsening existing disparities, and addresses existing inequities. Meaningful engagement with underserved communities in program development enhances service quality for everyone.

Because humans have done little to address the causes of climate change over several decades, avoiding the effects of the crisis in the coming years will be challenging. Therefore, the community must adapt to those climate-driven hazards, such as increased drought, increased rainfall, and increased heat. To address that adaptation need, the County is developing a Climate Resilience Plan through the Resilient Together project, a collaboration with the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia.

Resilience means adapting systems to mitigate the impacts of climate change and improving responses when disasters strike, strengthening emergency response, and fostering community networks when a disaster cannot be avoided. Resilience also involves anticipating and thriving amid climate challenges while safeguarding quality of life, reliable infrastructure, economic vitality, and resource conservation for present and future generation alike. Like climate action, resilience is integrated throughout AC44.



Climate change impacts include more frequent severe weather events.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2044

Albemarle County has developed AC44, this Comprehensive Plan update, as part of our commitment to planning for an inclusive and resilient future for all community members.

The Goals, Objectives, and Actions outlined in AC44 serve as a roadmap for realizing our shared 20-year vision and bringing Albemarle County's Mission, Vision, and Values to life.

Success requires coordinated implementation efforts from County programs, community organizations, residents, local businesses, and regional partners working together toward common objectives.

When fully implemented, AC44 will ensure that future generations continue to benefit from the county's distinctive rural character, scenic landscapes, and rich natural and historic resources, while enjoying vibrant, connected communities supported by a thriving economy and excellent educational opportunities.







Images credit: Scott Clark