

## Chapter 6: Future Planning, Programming, and Implementation

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### *Review of Local Comprehensive Plans and Supportive Land Use Policies*

As part of this long range transportation plan, each of the comprehensive planning documents were reviewed to evaluate how well they support Central Virginia's Regional Action Plan and consistency with the ideas embodied in the Alternative Perspectives Scenario, specifically consistency with overall policies and physical design guidelines that support development of mixed use centers and rural preservation objectives. Mixed use centers are envisioned as higher density, pedestrian oriented locations providing a range of retail, business, civic, cultural, and residential opportunities for the surrounding area.

### **Existing Planning and Policy Framework**

Most of the Central Virginia region's jurisdictions have plans that currently provide a basic foundation for more compact, multimodal development patterns, as well as a framework for preserving open spaces. This begins to speak to the philosophies of the Alternative Perspective Scenario. An advantage to further exploring policy language that embraces these Federally endorsed "livability" strategies is that it could make the region more competitive for state and federal funding. Thus, the CVMPO and local jurisdictions will need to consider additional commitments towards creating future plans, policies, and programs to maximize development and multimodal transportation opportunities within designated centers. Significant work has already begun within the region to lay the groundwork for this type of development pattern.

Policies that specifically address the Alternative Perspectives Scenario are described below:

- **Preserve open space:** includes land conservation and/or preservation policies and the provision of infrastructure based on these policies.
- **Increase land use density clustering and mixed uses:** includes activity centers, strategic investment areas, and any specific designation of a type of area to receive growth and/or intensification. specific mention of mixed-use areas and mixed-use development; discussion of areas with multiple uses near each other are not included here.
- **Preserve and enhance the safety and functionality of major regional transportation corridors:** specific mention of designated corridors or access management strategies.
- **Enhance availability of and viability of travel modes other than the private automobile:** includes policies or planning efforts to add new infrastructure to support pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and access.

The analysis indicates that a solid foundation for one or all of these categories exists in most jurisdictions. However, if an alternative perspective is to be embraced and advanced then it will be necessary for the region's localities to continue to work together to crystallize the Alternative Perspective into a vision that can be adopted as part of the LRTP, and develop an implementation strategy that advances these considerations.

## Local Planning and Policy Tools

If encouraging more compact forms of development is a desired future outcome of future planning efforts, then localities should consider beginning to take individual actions that will support the ideas put forth in the Alternative Perspective both now and in the future. The following section presents some of the most common barriers that localities will face in implementing the elements of the Alternative Perspective Scenario, as well as a general toolbox of cost-effective strategies to support mixed use center development, install or maintain infrastructure, and protect natural resources and the environment. The strategies can be implemented through the comprehensive plan process, zoning ordinances, design guidelines, and the CIP process, among others. Specific actions for each locality to consider should they choose to move forward with this philosophy are also provided.

### Designate and promote preferred growth areas/development sites.

Planning land uses and development intensities in preferred growth areas and development sites generates several benefits. It encourages and facilitates redevelopment and infill, supports transit, and guides new development to appropriate areas with ready access to existing infrastructure. Local governments need to play a more active role in selecting areas where new growth makes the most sense. They need to reinforce those choices by revising their development codes and capital improvement plans to make these areas more attractive to the development community than other, less appropriate areas. This more focused approach to development can benefit both individual landowners and the entire community.

To focus development where it makes the most sense, a community needs a detailed plan. This plan should include comprehensive subdivision regulations and street mapping, zoning, and design guidelines, as well as an infrastructure plan and a financing or implementation plan. Developing the plan should include a comprehensive stakeholder and public engagement process. The designation of growth areas should be supported by studies and data, such as a fiscal impact analysis or a cost of infrastructure study.

### Designate and promote rural/agricultural/open space preservation areas

In concert with strategies to designate areas suitable for growth, is the need to simultaneously provide for the long-term use of rural and designated natural resource lands for preservation, farming and forestry, and recreation. The goals of preservation vary depending on the unique situations of each community. In some rural communities, the goal of agricultural preservation is to enable existing farmlands to remain viable through the use of restrictions programs and marketing projects or tax breaks. Other more suburban communities may want to see existing agricultural lands developed in ways that decrease the impacts from conventional subdivision activity and preserve significant amounts of the open areas. In urban areas, the focus may be less on preservation and more on providing access to open space opportunities not often found in densely developed areas.

The appropriate tool should be based on the goal. Local land use policies and regulations often encourage dispersed, lower density development through the use of larger minimum lot size standards in rural and farming areas. At the same time that these regulations increase land consumption patterns, they prohibit

infill and low impact rural conservation development. Two- and three-acre lots, and even five- and ten-acre “farmettes,” eat up traditional landscapes, ruin country vistas, and make natural economically productive uses in rural areas (such as farming or timbering) impossible to sustain.

#### Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

Access management strategies involve a combination of roadway engineering techniques and local land use policies that regulate the location and spacing of driveways and intersections along major corridors.

When multiple access points are located too close together along a heavily traveled corridor, drivers are subject to delay and congestion caused by bottlenecks and backups. Plus, since every cross street, driveway, and curb cut presents an opportunity for conflicts among vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians, crash rates can rise quickly along a developing corridor with uncontrolled access. When corridor access points are consolidated into a few strategic locations that provide connections to a well-designed local street network, vehicles can travel smoothly and safely along the main corridor while still being able to reach desired destinations quickly and conveniently.

Access management strategies are most effective when local and state agencies work together to coordinate roadway design and engineering standards with land use policies and regulations. Engineering policies such as the VDOT Access Management Guidelines and Secondary Street Acceptance Standards provide critical guidance on corridor management techniques such as intersection and traffic signal spacing, location of driveways, median openings, and corner clearance.

Local land use policies, ordinances and regulatory tools complement roadway engineering standards and techniques by guiding the location and design of commercial and residential sites. They address important site-level elements such as the orientation of buildings to streets and the provision of well-connected streets and multi-modal networks within and between parcels. At the corridor scale, access management policies support adopted land use plans and economic development priorities by increasing accessibility to areas where development is desired and reducing accessibility to areas designated for preservation.

Typically, access management strategies are implemented gradually as development and redevelopment occurs. Existing commercial driveways, for example, may be “grandfathered” into an access management ordinance, but may have to be moved to an alternate access point when the property is redeveloped or a new access road is constructed.

#### Allow or require mixed use zones

A common problem with the conventional Euclidean zoning used by many communities is its focus on separating potentially incompatible land uses. This separation has made development patterns inefficient, forcing residents to drive longer distances to get to their jobs, schools, shops, and services, which increases traffic congestion, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Such separation can frustrate efforts to promote alternative modes of transportation and create lively urban places.

Creating a compact, walkable environment typically includes providing a careful balance of land uses, jobs, housing, restaurants and shopping within a compact area. To be successful, mixed use development should utilize both vertical (multiple floors) and horizontal (adjacent buildings) mixed use; include an interconnected street network that enhances mobility for pedestrians and cyclists, and allows users to park once and walk between several uses; and provide a balance between activities that occur between the daytime, evening, and weekend hours, fostering a busier, safer, and more exciting environment 24 hours a day. Mixed-use zones will look different in various contexts, from downtowns to transit-oriented development (TOD) to commercial corridors to the neighborhood corner store. Communities should be mindful of these variations so that there is not a “one size fits all” solution for how land uses are mixed to accommodate market conditions and design expectations.

Regulations can require mixed use development for individual parcels or promote single land uses that provide land use diversity within a 1/4-mile range of a parcel, and prohibit developments, such as drive-through businesses, that discourage pedestrian activity. In all cases, a specific definition of mixed use is needed that establishes a threshold by which the mix of uses is measured.

#### Use urban dimensions in urban places

Conventional zoning codes focus on various dimensional standards that govern a range of topics, including minimum lot sizes and widths, floor area ratios, setbacks, and building heights. These standards often have unintentionally stifled more compact development in many cities and towns, preventing the development of attractive, lively, and cost-efficient places. Recalibrating dimensional standards can help accommodate and promote a more compact development pattern and create attractive urban environments. Changes in dimensional standards, such as the size of lots, setback requirements, height restrictions, etc., can also improve connectivity enhanced site planning and design. Form-based codes are another option for communities that are looking to promote compact form and walkable neighborhoods.

#### Fix parking requirements

The parking standards found in many conventional zoning codes can be a significant barrier to lively, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use developments and activity centers, especially in existing downtowns. Parking standards commonly call for too much off-street parking and require all or too much of it to be provided on the development site. Providing an overabundance of free parking encourages driving, while onsite parking can serve as a barrier to pedestrian access of destinations. On-site parking reductions should be encouraged through elimination of parking minimums, use of parking maximums, shared-parking agreements, in-lieu agreements to shift parking to community parking facilities, or similar strategies.

On-site parking located between the sidewalk and buildings creates an inconvenient and potentially unsafe barrier to pedestrian activity. Parking should be located to the rear of the building wherever possible. Any offstreet parking adjacent to the public right-of-way should be screened with landscaping or fencing in such a way that does not create a barrier to adjacent sites or blocks. Long aisles of parking bays should be broken up with landscaped islands. Pedestrian access should be designed around the perimeter of on-site parking and between parking aisles.

### Increase density/intensity in urban centers

Increased density creates the customer base needed for transit, retail, and amenities residents want. There are a number of strategies and tools that communities may use to decide which parts of their community should be densest. Through the comprehensive plan process, the community should target areas that have the character and infrastructure to support higher density development. Communities should ensure that higher density developments go into mixed-use areas that will allow walking and biking to shops and services, which reduces driving and can minimize parking requirements. Lastly, communities should focus much of their higher density where it can be served conveniently by bus or rail transit, which will also reduce the need to drive and provide other environmental benefits.

These policies can be implemented through new mixed-use or transit-oriented development (TOD) districts, changes in zoning designations, or modifying zoning to allow greater density in existing districts. Other strategies include creating new compatibility standards and design guidelines to improve transitions between higher density development and low-density neighborhoods.

### Enact design standards for walkable places

In many communities, current codes result in places that prevent or discourage walking by imposing low-density design, including overly wide streets and landscapes designed for cars instead of people. In such places, the pedestrian realm is treated as an afterthought - the space left over between the edge of the street and the buildings and parking lots. One significant challenge to developing a walkable community is the lack of design standards or performance measures for walkability, like those that guide other kinds of transportation planning and design. Thus many communities are not in a position to guide private development and public works investments to build good pedestrian accommodation into development and redevelopment, and they do not have programs or provisions to repair older, pedestrian-hostile areas.

Design standards can be provided for facilities, including public works facilities built by and for the city (e.g., streets and sidewalks), and requirements for private development and redevelopment projects. Communities usually regulate facility design through design standards adopted as ordinances or as administrative rules. In addition to guiding the planning and design decisions for municipal facilities, these design requirements may be applied to private projects in part through the zoning approval process and in part through subdivision regulations. In some communities, form-based codes are used not only to guide the design of streets and sidewalks, but also to create a connection between all elements of the built environment. Communities may also use level of service standards to ensure that development and redevelopment projects meet minimum criteria for walkability. Finally, communities may adopt Safe Routes to School program planning and design criteria and may designate pedestrian districts or zones in special areas (e.g., in downtowns, around transit stations, and near schools).

## Suggested Local Planning Actions

The following section provides a list of suggested action items for localities to consider as they move forward with plan implementation.

### Amherst County

- Designate preferred locations for Village Center and Mixes Use Development on the Future Land Use Map
- Permit residences in the upper floors of buildings in appropriate existing commercially zoned districts to encourage a mix of uses
- Consider increasing lot size in Ag districts as part of the draft sliding scale ordinance
- Consider revising LOS standards that take into account desired character and multimodal facilities along designated corridors
- Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

### Town of Amherst

- Specifically designate areas of higher density, mixed use development (i.e. UDA)
- Establish min lot sizes for residential districts within ½ mile of CBD to promote higher density development
- Consider alternatives for agricultural zoning within Town
- Develop design guidelines that support pedestrian friendly streets within CBD and other designated areas
- Consider adopting/revising LOS standards that take into account desired character and multimodal facilities along designated corridors
- Consider reduced parking requirements to support infill development downtown
- Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

### Bedford County

- Revise zoning to increase min. lot size for Ag/Rural Preserve and reduce lot sizes for higher density residential
- Develop incentives (such as expedited review) for use of PR-1 districts
- Modify codes for commercial districts to allow residential development, especially over first-floor retail
- Remove obstacles to mixed-use development by creating zoning districts that allow mixed-use development by right (i.e., without the need for a rezoning or special approval process)
- Continue to develop tools for Rural Preservation – Ag/forestal districts, conservation subdivision, and easement education for local landowners
- Consider adopting/revising LOS standards that take into account desired character and multimodal facilities along designated corridors
- Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

### Campbell County

- Create a zoning district that allows mixed-use development by right
- Revise zoning/subdivision to promote more compact development
- Establish design guidelines for pedestrian-friendly streets in UDA's
- Adopt connectivity standards for residential, commercial and PUDs
- Consider cluster subdivision/zoning and conservation easements to preserve open space
- Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

### City of Lynchburg

- Consider mandatory mixed-use development in preferred locations (e.g. near transit stops)
- Include provisions to develop compact urban communities and central places with densities that support transit and walking.
- Revise zoning/subdivision to support pedestrian and transit-friendly design features
- Adopt design guidelines for transit-oriented development
- Apply access management strategies to preserve corridor capacity, safety, and functionality

## **Regional Policy and Planning Tools**

While local jurisdictions will be primarily responsible for promoting the land use suggestions embodied in the Alternative Perspectives Scenario, there is a need for on-going MPO support. The best MPOs around the country are actively involved in land use issues beyond just the development of long range transportation plans and traffic forecasts, providing leadership, coordination, education, technical resources, and funding for local jurisdictions to foster a new urban form and implement innovative approaches to development. The MPO is often the central facilitator of the process, responsible for taking the regional-level view of land use and transportation decision-making and transmitting regional goals, objectives and project priorities to the local jurisdictions.

The MPO and Region 2000 will need to continue to serve as incubators for integrated land use and transportation projects and a center for discussing the region's transportation needs. It is important that local governing bodies and organizations consult PLAN 2035 in their long range transportation and land use planning decisions. CVMPO and its member localities can maximize the efficacy of PLAN 2035 through the following:

### Maximizing Regional Relationships

The MPO and Region 2000 can maximize regional relationships and partnerships to create a seamless transportation network that identifies and recognizes the impacts to our neighbors from every land use and/or transportation decision we make. Region 2000 should leverage these relationships to commit to the preservation and protection of our regional quality of life. Localities can implement cross-boundary development decisions that promote and sustain multimodal travel choices and healthy lifestyles. Develop and utilize regional development advisory boards to provide input and feedback on decisions.

### Maximizing the Use of Highway Dollars

Flex highway funds to support multimodal investments such as transit, bicycling and pedestrian networks. Counties could flex primary and secondary roadway funding to expand regional transit service at some point in the future when the locality's primary and secondary funding streams are more robust.

### Transportation Corridor Studies

CVMPO will promote transportation corridor studies conducted in the Planning District's member localities and seek out additional grant-funded studies in the region. They are intended to provide specific land use and transportation planning recommendations that can then be incorporated into local comprehensive plans and possibly contribute to the amendment of local zoning ordinances. The Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization and Region 200 should work with localities conducting corridor planning projects to advance the ideas embodied the "New Perspectives Scenario" and Plan 2035.

The typical commercial and retail development pattern throughout the region is currently largely characterized by strip commercial and single use buildings that do not share access onto the abutting travel corridors. The arterials, such as Timberlake Drive, Old Forest Road, Lakeside Drive, Fort Avenue, and others generally do not provide ample opportunities for walking or bicycling and the abutting development is not transit supportive (i.e. inclusive of transit ready densities).

However, with a change in transportation and land use policies, these corridors could evolve over time to become multimodal corridors. This conversion will take a joint effort and investment between the public and private sectors. The public sector will need to identify areas of the community that would benefit from densification with the goal of creating a multimodal environment. With those areas in mind, the public sector will need to prioritize improvements for multimodal accommodations and access management, along with transportation system management (TSM) improvements to optimize capacity without adding new lanes. Also, land development policies for key corridors that encourage denser mixed use development, interconnectivity between parcels, maximum parking ratios, managed access, and building form among others will help to create development that is more supportive of a multimodal environment.

The private sector will need to work in concert with the public sector to provide development plans that provide a mix of uses with shared access between abutting parcels. Sub-area master planning could become the key for facilitating a coordinated effort needed to create the desired environment.