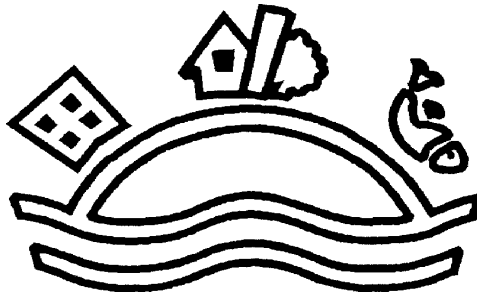


# Chapter 5

## Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Recommended Actions



## Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Recommended Actions

### GOALS:

**A strong, viable, rural community proud and supportive of its history, diversity, bountiful resources, traditional industries, and vision for the future.**

**Safe, clean, convenient, and efficient provision of community services and facilities providing for transportation, recreational opportunities, government services, and disposal of wastes .**

**A balanced, safe, and desirable pattern of land use that protects and conserves agricultural land, forest land, groundwater, surface water, wetlands and other valuable resources, providing an excellent resource base for wildlife habitat, recreation, agriculture, seafood industries, and tourism.**

### Objective:

*Safe, efficient development, compatible with Accomack County's current land use pattern.*

The county can use the zoning and subdivision ordinances to direct development towards the most suitable locations. Information from the Accomack County Soil Survey, Ground Water Management Plan, Flood Insurance Study, and Shoreline Situation Report can be used to identify areas that are unsuitable or hazardous for development. The county should consider directing development towards existing population centers. Clustering development around designated growth centers allows for more efficient services (solid waste collection and disposal, emergency services, transportation services, water and sewer, etc.) and preserves large, unfragmented areas of land for agriculture, forestry, recreation, and wildlife habitat. Existing land use maps can be used to identify existing pockets of development.

### Policies:

- *Encourage new development to occur in locations that contain soils suitable for development*
- *Direct development away from critically eroding shorelines.*
- *Strive to reduce the amount of substandard housing in Accomack County and increase affordable housing options for residents.*

### Recommended Actions:

- *Revise the Zoning Ordinance to create additional zoning districts to allow various types and densities of development to occur in a coordinated fashion.*

The county's current zoning ordinance has four zoning classifications (agricultural, residential, business, and industrial). The pattern of development could be better managed by creating additional zones which allow for a variety of commercial uses and residential densities, while protecting areas designated as important for agricultural use or environmental protection.

- *Revise the Future Land Use and Zoning Maps to reflect the distribution of soils suitable for septic system use.*

Bojac is the soil type most suitable for septic systems in Accomack County. The distribution of this soil is depicted in the Accomack County Soil Survey which was published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service in 1994. The distribution of residential land use on the future land use map should be revised, using the soil survey as a guide.

- *Amend the future land use map and zoning ordinance to maintain a low density of development outside of designated growth areas.*

In order to ensure effective use of areas outside of development clusters for agricultural, forestry, habitat, and recreational use, development outside of designated growth areas should be low density in nature. This density can be achieved through large minimum lot sizes, open space requirements for subdivisions, and conservation area zoning.

- *Amend the future land use map and zoning ordinance to direct high density development away from critically eroding shorelines.*

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science has developed a Shoreline Situation Report for each coastal county in the state. In order to prevent property loss due to erosion and reduce the need for shoreline erosion control measures, high density development should be directed away from areas identified in the Shoreline Situation Report as high erosion areas (loss of greater than one foot per year). The future land use map and zoning ordinance should be amended in accordance with this policy.

- *Develop a shoreline management plan to address shoreline erosion problems.*

A shoreline management plan should be developed to evaluate the shoreline erosion problem in Accomack County and evaluate the effectiveness of erosion control measures. The plan should identify areas with erosion problems, determine rates of erosion, consider adjacent land use, and evaluate the most effective means of control. The plan could be used by the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals for land use decisions and by the Wetlands Board in consideration of erosion control structure permits.

- *Create an updated Housing Plan.*

The county's Housing Plan should be updated to include updated information on housing conditions, an assessment of current housing assistance needs and a plan of action of meeting these needs. The county should cooperate with the Accomack-Northampton Housing and Redevelopment Corporation in development of this plan.

- *Continue to support and fund programs that improve substandard housing and increase affordable housing opportunities.*

The county should continue to support and participate in proven housing assistance programs such as the Community Development Block Grant and Rental Assistance programs and explore and cooperate in the development of additional programs that address the county's housing needs.

**Objective:**

*Conservation of unique and environmentally sensitive areas for open space, recreation and habitat protection.*

The county has a wide variety of open space areas including forests, creeks, beaches, and marshland. In addition to their natural beauty, these areas are beneficial for wildlife habitat, hunting, fishing, hiking and bicycling. Undeveloped areas provide aesthetic benefits, preserve the rural character of the Shore, and can produce tourism revenue. The county can protect open space through zoning and subdivision regulations. Sensitive areas, which are often expensive and unsafe to develop, can be designated as conservation zones. Through the subdivision ordinance, developers can be encouraged to cluster development within a portion of the development tract, leaving the remainder as open space.

**Policies:**

- *Encourage the preservation of open space.*
- *Encourage conservation of barrier island lands, marsh land, forested areas, and creek corridors for recreation and habitat conservation.*
- *Accomack County's unique habitats should be identified and protected.*
- *The creation of additional wildlife habitat should be encouraged.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Amend the zoning ordinance to provide incentives for clustered development to preserve open space and promote a more efficient pattern of development.*

The practice of clustering involves concentrating the bulk of a site's permissible density on only a portion of the parcel or site. This permits the undeveloped portion of the site to remain in an undeveloped, natural state. Houses may be clustered, for instance, to prevent destruction of important wetlands on the parcel or maximize distance from a creek or floodplain. Clustering is often encouraged by providing density bonuses as an incentive. If developers cluster development on a certain portion of the parcel, for instance, away from an important natural resource, the developer may be given permission to increase the number of dwelling units that may be built. Clustering can lead to a more efficient pattern of development and retain the bulk of land for agricultural and open space uses.
- *Develop programs to encourage conservation of barrier islands, marsh land, forested areas, and creek corridors.*

When consistent with habitat conservation goals, alternatives to fee-simple ownership, such as conservation easements or lease-back agreements should be encouraged to keep property on the tax rolls and in productive use. Density bonuses could be provided in the subdivision ordinance for the clustering of development with a conservation easement placed on the remaining land.
- *The county should work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program to identify and protect unique habitats.*

Extensive study has been made of Eastern Shore wildlife habitats and additional studies are on-going. The county should review this data and work with representatives to identify habitat areas most in need

of conservation. Areas such as marsh and islands that are unsuitable for development but have value for wildlife habitat and recreational use could be zoned as conservation/recreation districts.

**Objective:**

*Recognition and protection of the county's rural nature, including historic resources and the character of villages and towns.*

The rural quality of Accomack County, embodied by agriculture, forestry and seafood operations, scenic views, low density development, historic homes, towns and villages, and a safe, quiet life-style, is highly valued by the community. The vision statement created for the comprehensive plan envisions a future when Accomack County is, "still a quiet, rural community and remains the 'vegetable garden of Virginia.'" Effort should be made to further define the elements that most contribute to the desirable rural character of Accomack County. Once the important contributing elements are identified, policies for their protection can be developed.

**Policies:**

- *Direct development towards areas that are consistent with Accomack County's historic pattern of development.*
- *Support efforts to identify and preserve significant cultural resources.*
- *Encourage the use of conservation easements to preserve significant rural and agricultural lands.*
- *Enhance opportunities for historical and cultural education.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Develop within the framework of the Accomack County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances procedures and guidelines which would allow for a mix of residential and commercial uses in keeping with the traditional development pattern of our towns and villages.*  
Traditionally, residential and certain commercial uses were mixed within towns and villages. This pattern of development is desirable in that it places users and providers of services in close proximity to each other and it furthers the goal of concentrating development in growth areas, preventing sprawl and preserving open space.
- *Consider conducting a survey of historic resources in Accomack County, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.*  
The Virginia Department of Historic Resources has shown considerable interest in conducting a survey of historic resources in Accomack County. Grant funding which requires a 50% cash match is available from the Department of Historic Resources for this survey. The survey would identify and place in historical context, Accomack County's cultural resources. This information could then be used to evaluate the need for protection of these resources.
- *Develop incentives to encourage the use of conservation easements to preserve significant rural and agricultural lands.*  
Conservation easement programs have the advantages of relatively low per acre acquisition costs and private ownership and management responsibility. Lands under conservation easements continue to pay local property taxes, although they may be at lowered market values. The use of conservation

easements in areas designated for agriculture, forestry or conservation could be encouraged by allowing additional density in developments that cluster building lots and place the remainder of the land under a conservation easement.

- *Continue the Eastern Shore Heritage Trail into Accomack County.*

This project would be a continuation of the trail which begins in Northampton County. The trail would combine routes for driving, bicycling, walking, and boating to view scenic areas and cultural sites. Trail would serve to promote and protect the rural nature and cultural history of the shore and would encourage visitors to travel off Route 13, visiting restaurants, shops, motels and inns along the way. Funding for this project should be sought from the Virginia Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Program.

- *Develop local heritage interpretive opportunities.*

Museums, visitor centers, information points, maps, and guide books should be developed to promote tourism and educate visitors and residents about the Eastern Shore's unique culture. The county should follow the recommendations of the Regional Economic Development Council and the Countryside Stewardship Exchange in developing interpretive facilities and materials.

**Objective:**

*Conservation of groundwater quality and quantity.*

Groundwater provides Accomack County's only potable water supply. Protection of groundwater quality and quantity is therefore critical. In 1992, the Ground Water Study Committee produced the *Ground Water Supply Protection and Management Plan for the Eastern Shore of Virginia* (Groundwater Plan). The plan recommends the development of a comprehensive groundwater protection and supply management strategy which will maintain an adequate supply of high quality water for the future needs of the region. The following policy recommendations for groundwater protection are derived from that strategy.

**Policies:**

- *Encourage the wise use of Accomack County's groundwater resources.*
- *Manage potentially polluting land uses so as to minimize contamination threats.*
- *Seek additional information on the groundwater aquifers, the recharge process, and contamination threats.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Clarify the location of the groundwater recharge spine boundaries and consider creation of a groundwater protection overlay district within those boundaries.*

Future research should be conducted to identify the extents of the groundwater recharge area that was identified in the *Ground Water Supply Protection and Management Plan*. Regulations, such as prohibiting the future siting of major polluting activities (landfills, septage lagoons, etc.) and requiring special permits based on performance standards and emergency management plans for uses such as underground storage tanks and toxic and hazardous materials could be placed on land use within this zone.

As development occurs in an area, the amount of land covered with impervious surfaces (preventing infiltration) increases and groundwater infiltration decreases. The creation and expansion of impervious surfaces such as buildings and parking lots in the groundwater recharge spine should be limited in order to maximize groundwater recharge and minimize the effects of erosion and non-point source pollution. Impervious surface extents can be managed by regulating allowable density in the recharge area through minimum lot size requirements and establishing limits on the percentage of a development site that can be covered with impervious surfaces.

- *Review the potential impact of new development on groundwater in the permit process.*  
Groundwater protection could be incorporated into development site plan review. Developers of projects that require conditional use permits would be required to estimate total groundwater usage and identify and mitigate potential negative impacts to groundwater quality and quantity from their development.

New water supply sources that tap the Yorktown-Eastover aquifer should be located in the central portion of the Eastern Shore peninsula. This approach will minimize both lateral intrusion from saltwater and vertical intrusion of saltwater through confining layers. New water supply sources should be screened in the upper and middle Yorktown-Eastover aquifer, avoiding the lower Yorktown-Eastover.

Screening only in the higher layers minimizes many of the problems of upconing of high chloride content water. Well fields rather than single wells to produce large volumes of water should be encouraged. A series of wells each pumping a moderate amount of water will create less upconing, less well interference and less lateral intrusion than one or two high volume wells. New and existing water supply users should be encourage to pump at moderate volumes on an extended basis and to use surface storage (tanks, lined ponds) rather than pumping hard for short intervals to meet peak demands. The continual pumping of moderate volumes will allow a smaller upcone to develop and to stabilize, eliminating much of the problem of salt and freshwater mixing that occurs with intermittent pumping. A progressively enlarged mixing zone between fresh and saltwater will promote the intrusion of high chloride water into the freshwater zone. The use of water supplies from the unconfined Columbia aquifer should be encouraged in situations where water quality is less of concern. The Columbia receives considerably more recharge than the Yorktown-Eastover aquifer, and while its water quality is sometimes marginal as a potable water supply, the quality is perfectly adequate for a number of industrial, agricultural and even domestic uses. High volume users of water that do not need water of drinking quality standards should be urged to use the Columbia as a source where adequate flows can be achieved.

- *Amend the subdivision ordinance to limit the allowable density of remotely located drainfields.* On-site septic system density is effectively regulated through the zoning ordinance's minimum lot size requirements. There are no restrictions, however, on the allowable density of systems located on remote sites. Minimum separation distances or minimum lot size requirements for remote drainfields would limit the potential for water quality impact from overly dense drainfield concentration.
- *Amend the subdivision ordinance to require that the location of remotely located drainfields be recorded on the subdivision plat and that proper easements to those areas be provided.* Remotely located drainfield locations should be recorded on the subdivision plat to ease future location of the drainfield areas. Easements should be provided for access to remote drainfields locations and these easements should be indicated on the subdivision plat.
- *Continue to conduct research on the geology of the aquifers, nature of recharge and contamination threats.* Answers should be sought to questions about the rate, volume, timing and distribution of recharge from the unconfined Columbia aquifer to the Yorktown-Eastover aquifer, salt water movement into the Columbia and Yorktown-Eastover aquifers, suitability of paleochannels for water supply use, impact of pesticides on groundwater, and impact of agricultural nitrogen use on groundwater. Assistance for this research may be available from the US Geologic Survey, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Office of Pesticide Management, and Virginia Tech.

**Objective:**

*Protection of high quality surface waters and restoration of degraded water supplies to an excellent level of purity.*

**Policies:**

- *Encourage and promote the use of Best Management Practices for all land uses.*
- *Manage development so as to minimize impact on surface water quality from nonpoint source pollution.*
- *Seek additional information on water quality within Accomack County's creeks, streams, and bays.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Encourage the use of Best Management Practices by agricultural and forestry operations.*  
Agricultural operations are a major source of nonpoint source water pollution. The tillage of soil permits erosion which, in turn, takes with it pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Intensive, non-traditional methods of cultivation, such as the practice of growing vegetable crops under plastic mulch, make intensive use of chemicals and create impervious surfaces, creating special management problems. Best Management Practices (BMPs) that can be used to manage these problems include crop rotation, conservation tillage, diversions, sediment basins and other structural practices, and containment of animal wastes. The use of nutrient management plans should also be encouraged. Nutrient management plans should include soil nutrient testing, crop productivity recommendations, animal waste management, and fertilizer use record keeping.

The commercial harvesting of woodlands can also have severe impacts on water quality. Clear cutting and other harvesting practices destabilize soil and open up areas to substantial erosion and runoff. In addition, the removal of shading trees from stream banks can cause a water temperature rise which can impact organisms living in the stream. Forestal BMPs include protection of an undisturbed area on 50 feet of either side of a stream, culverts or bridges for stream crossings, and revegetation of bare soil areas.

- *Add marina, dock and pier development standards to the Zoning Ordinance.*  
The zoning ordinance should provide some guidelines for density of private docks and piers and the location of commercial marinas. All new marinas should be required to provide pump out facilities.
- *Cooperate with government and private organizations to establish a water quality monitoring network in Accomack County.*  
Several federal, state and private groups monitor surface water quality in Accomack County. These groups and their areas of coverage should be identified to ensure that sufficient water quality data is available county-wide. Where monitoring deficiencies are found, the county should work with agencies to develop additional monitoring programs.

- *Develop plans for the replacement of septic systems with central sewage facilities in more densely developed areas.*

Areas that have the greatest potential for future central sewage facilities should be identified. These should be areas with existing or potential development density to economically support a treatment facility. The pattern of distribution for these systems should reflect traditional village development. The extension of service outside designated areas should be avoided to prevent sprawl. Systems should be designed to accommodate septic wastes and septic haulers should be required to dispose in such facilities. Systems should be designed to use land application of treated wastewater.

**Objective:**

*Establishment of a “business friendly” environment that promotes economic development that is compatible with the county’s adopted objectives and vision for the future.*

**Policies:**

- *Provide incentives to bring new businesses to Accomack County and encourage additional investment by existing businesses.*
- *Support the Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission and the Tourism Commission in their efforts to promote the Eastern Shore of Virginia.*
- *Support programs that promote entrepreneurship and assist small and medium size businesses.*
- *Support development of the Virginia Space Port at Wallops Island.*
- *Minimize economic impact of local regulations.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Obtain Foreign-Trade-Zone designation for the Accomack County Airport Industrial Park and the Virginia Space Flight Facility.*  
Foreign Trade Zone designation was recommended by the economic development advisory council. Foreign Trade Zone designation exempts import taxes for goods imported at that site, providing an additional incentive for business recruitment.
- *Explore local economic development incentives.*  
Local incentives would serve to advertise the county’s pro-business attitudes. Local incentives could be anything from accelerated permit processing and crime prevention programs to tax abatement for rehabilitation of commercial or industrial property.
- *Support the creation of a marketplace on U.S. Route 13 for the sale and promotion of local arts, crafts, and food products.*  
Artisans and small production companies are a growing sector of the county’s economy. The marketplace would provide an additional outlet for sale of their products, while also encouraging travelers to stop in Accomack County.
- *Research, and possibly establish a revolving fund for, the construction of industrial buildings and establish a “ready-to-build” program for new businesses.*  
Available industrial buildings are a prime concern on businesses considering locating in an area. The availability of quality business facilities and approved business locations can make Accomack County more attractive to new industry. A revolving building fund for the construction of industrial and commercial facilities and a ready-to-build program which includes site preparation and permit approval are feasible options for attracting business with infrastructure.

- *Consider the impact of local regulations on economic development.*

Local regulations can impact existing businesses and desirability of the area for new businesses. The county should be careful to consider potential economic impact of any new regulations.

**Objective:**

*Thriving and growing seafood, agricultural and forestry industries.*

**Policies:**

- *Direct development away from prime agricultural lands as designated by Agricultural and Forestal Districts.*
- *Protect, restore and maintain water quality at a level that will meet the needs of seafood industries.*
- *Ensure that adequate land area is available on which to conduct viable seafood, agriculture and forestry operations.*
- *Strive to strike a balance between the needs of Accomack County's resource based industries, including agriculture, forestry and the seafood industry.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Revise the future land use map and zoning ordinance to direct residential and commercial development away from land in Agricultural and Forestal Districts.*  
The future land use map and zoning ordinance should be amended to direct residential and commercial development away from land in agricultural and forestal districts.
- *Revise the Zoning Ordinance to create an Agriculture and Forestry Zoning District that minimizes obstructions to efficient and economical production of agricultural and forestal products.*  
The zoning ordinance should be amended to create an agriculture and forestry district that is primarily for agriculture and forestry uses. The existing Agricultural Zoning District allows for uses that are not compatible with agricultural operations.
- *Identify areas with existing aquaculture operations and areas particularly suitable for aquaculture.*  
In order to promote aquaculture as an economically important industry in Accomack County, measures need to be taken to protect the resources necessary for viable operations. The county should work with the Waterman's Association and VIMS to identify areas in need of protection.
- *Ensure adequate waterfront access for commercial seafood operations.*  
In the review of plans for waterfront developments and commercial marinas, consideration should be given to providing public waterfront access. Also, the county could designate areas on the future land use map for commercial waterfront use.

**Objective:**

*Safe and efficient provision of community services including transportation, recreational facilities and solid waste collection and disposal.*

**Policies:**

- *Maintain and protect U.S. Route 13's capacity as a thoroughfare.*
- *Discourage strip development along transportation corridors.*
- *Support the development of an effective public transportation network.*
- *Keep Accomack County's roadways litter free.*
- *Reduce the amount of recyclable material that enters the landfill.*
- *Enhance recreational opportunities for residents of Accomack County.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Develop a comprehensive Route 13 corridor plan.*  
Accomack County should work with the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission to create a corridor plan for Route 13 which incorporates concentration of access to major nodes, elimination of safety problems, storm water management facilities within the rights-of-ways to protect water quality, land use controls to concentrate development in nodes, a transit program to connect the villages and major nodes within the corridor, and coordination of tourism attractions with Route 13 signage.
- *Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require a minimum 200 foot setback for structures located along Route 13.*  
Setbacks should be increased for development along Route 13 for increased safety, improved access, and to allow for future changes in the traffic pattern. The Accomack County Zoning Ordinance currently requires a fifty foot setback for agricultural, residential, or industrial uses on Route 13 and a twenty foot setback for business uses.
- *Initiate a continuing program to keep roadsides free from litter.*  
The county should initiate and promote twice annual litter cleanups. Anti-litter educational programs should also be conducted in the county schools and at public events.
- *Restructure the county's solid waste collection system.*  
The greenbox collection system should be reevaluated to ensure that the distribution of boxes is efficient and cost effective. Locations should be redesigned to improve safety, ease of use, and appearance.
- *Develop an enhanced toxic waste disposal program.*  
Safe methods of disposal of toxic wastes should be made readily available to county residents. The county should work with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs to develop a safe system for the disposal of pesticides and pesticide containers. The county could also hold annual

household chemical cleanup days during which residents could bring paints, oil, yard and garden and household chemicals to collection centers for safe disposal.

- *Develop a program for the collection of recyclable materials to reduce the expense of burial of large quantities of waste in the landfills.*

The current system of recyclable collection sites should be expanded upon to provide county-wide coverage.

- *Acquire and develop recreational areas and facilities near population centers.*

The county should consider developing additional recreation facilities throughout the county. Facilities should be provided for monitored youth activities and open community facilities such as parks and tennis courts.

- *Develop a public access plan to improve access to the Bay and Ocean, including beaches, parks and forested lands.*

A public access plan should be developed to identify the condition and ownership of public boat ramps, docks and piers. The plan should include the access point and any related facilities such as parking facilities. Additional access sites should be acquired in areas where a need is determined. Community piers should be developed to increase recreational fishing opportunities. New commercial marina facilities could be required to provide community access and community facilities.

- *Develop a trails and greenways plan.*

The county should develop a trails and greenway plan that links existing and proposed recreational, natural, cultural, water, business/commercial and other resources. The proposed Heritage Trail should be a component of this system. A scenic bike route system could connect the county's wildlife areas, parks, historic sites, and cultural resources.

**Objective:**

*Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan through fair and effective zoning practices and well planned public facilities and services.*

**Policies:**

- *Zoning and subdivision ordinances are intended by law to implement this plan; therefore, future land use decisions regarding zoning and subdivision ordinance amendments, rezoning, special use permits, and subdivision approvals should be consistent with the recommendations of this plan*
- *Build upon the process initiated by the Countryside Stewardship Exchange and Comprehensive Plan visioning workshops to define values and ensure that policies, plans, projects, and regulations are aligned with the community's goals.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- *Revise the Accomack County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to be consistent with the recommendations of this plan.*

The zoning and subdivision ordinances are the primary land use regulations in Accomack County and the most effective tools available for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. These ordinances should be updated and revised as the county's needs and goals change. Following adoption of the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance which were denied by the Board of Supervisors. The Board directed the Planning Commission to review and revise the Comprehensive Plan prior to making any further recommendations for zoning ordinance revisions.

- *Establish and implement a Capital Improvements Program consistent with recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.*

A Capital Improvements Program is a five year plan to guide the construction or acquisition of capital projects. It identifies needed capital projects, estimates their costs, ranks them by priority, lists the year each should be started and determines the best method of paying for them within the community's fiscal capabilities. State Code requires that the Capital Improvements Program be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. A Capital Improvements Program helps a locality prioritize projects, anticipate future capital facility needs, avoid poorly planned projects, and spread out the financial impact of expensive projects.

- *Seek public input in the development of local regulations.*

All plans and ordinances should reflect the community's vision for the future. The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission should continue to seek public participation in the planning process and the development of ordinances in order to ensure that policies adopted are consistent with community goals.