

# Town of Charlotte Court House, Virginia 2024 Comprehensive Plan



Prepared by the Town of Charlotte Court House Planning Commission

Adopted 10/21/2024 by the Charlotte Court House Town Council

## Acknowledgements

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## I. Purpose

In Virginia, every governing body with zoning laws must adopt a comprehensive plan to provide direction for the physical development of land within its jurisdiction. The plan is used as a guide for public investment and decisions, as well as to provide the legal foundation for important land-management tools like zoning and subdivision ordinances. The Planning Commission is responsible for developing the comprehensive plan and reviewing it every five years for any necessary amendments. Once endorsed by the Planning Commission, the plan is then recommended to the governing body (in this case the Charlotte Court House Town Council) for adoption.

The Comprehensive Plan fulfills the requirements of § 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, which states "The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities."

As an update of the Comprehensive Plan for Charlotte Court House, this document provides a unique opportunity for the Town to formally set forth its goals and aspirations for the future, including the protection of historic buildings, which face threats from heavy truck traffic and a changing economic environment, while also seeking opportunities for positive change based on the Town's people, and the strength of its geographic, cultural, and natural resources.

## II. Goals

The Town has identified 12 goals in this Comprehensive Plan. Each goal is explored in further detail in the Comprehensive Plan Elements section of this report with policy recommendations. In the creation of this plan, a theme of interconnection emerged. A community is formed by connections and relationships; no one element exists in isolation. These connections lead to growth and new ideas that would not have come to fruition otherwise. Similarly, the goals of this plan are all interwoven. Policies and actions require looking at the big picture while having a particular topic area in mind. The goals have been grouped into four primary topic areas to highlight their interdependence.

### 1.0 Historic Preservation and Revitalization

Preservation is the first topic area, and perhaps the linchpin for Charlotte Court House. So much of the Town's identity comes from the Historic Court House complex and the surrounding core of historic buildings. Preservation and protection of the historic core balanced with appropriate infill are the top priorities for a healthy and vibrant community.



#### 1.0 Historic Preservation and Revitalization Goals

##### 1.1 Historic Resources Goal:

Historic Resources: Preserve the integrity of the Town's significant historic structures, landscapes, and streetscapes.

**1.2 Housing Goal:** Improve and expand the Town's housing stock in a manner that improves public safety, increases the tax base, and meets the needs of current and future residents.

**1.3 Infill Development Goal:** Add new buildings and uses to enhance the economic and social vitality of

Town, while preserving the historic scale and character.

**1.4 Land Use Goal:** Maintain a pattern of compatible land uses by amending the zoning ordinance so as to implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

### 2.0 Infrastructure and Public Facilities

To ensure the preservation of Charlotte Court House, upgrades to infrastructure are necessary. Infrastructure supports the connection and flow of a community on a variety of levels—pedestrian connections, public utilities, natural resources, etc. In this case, one major goal is to improve transportation in the town and the impact of traffic on the historic core.

## **2.0 Infrastructure Goals**

**2.1 Natural Green Infrastructure Goal:** Protect the functions of the local natural environmental resources such as air, water, flora, and fauna, so as to protect the health, safety and economy of the Town, and the enjoyment of citizens.

**2.2 Designed Green Infrastructure Goal:** Achieve a functional and esthetically pleasing network of human-scaled public and private green spaces throughout Town, including pathways, courtyards, greens, squares and pocket parks, for the benefit of citizens and visitors.

**2.3 Transportation Goal:** Achieve a transportation network that promotes safe and efficient circulation of motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, in a manner that also supports the other goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

**2.4 Traffic Goal:** Protect the fragile and significant historic buildings in the center of Town from the physical impact of heavy truck traffic.

**2.5 Streetscapes and Gateways Goal:** Enhance the beauty, safety, and functionality of the streets and sidewalks for all modes of travel.

**2.6 Water and Sewer Goal:** Provide public sewer and water service to every residence and business in Town.

**2.7 Broadband Internet Service Goal:** Achieve affordable, high-speed, broadband internet service accessibility to every address in Town.

## **3.0 Economic Development Goals**

Expand the local economy by adding compatible businesses that take advantage of local resources and employ local residents, attract new residents and visitors, and expand the tax base.

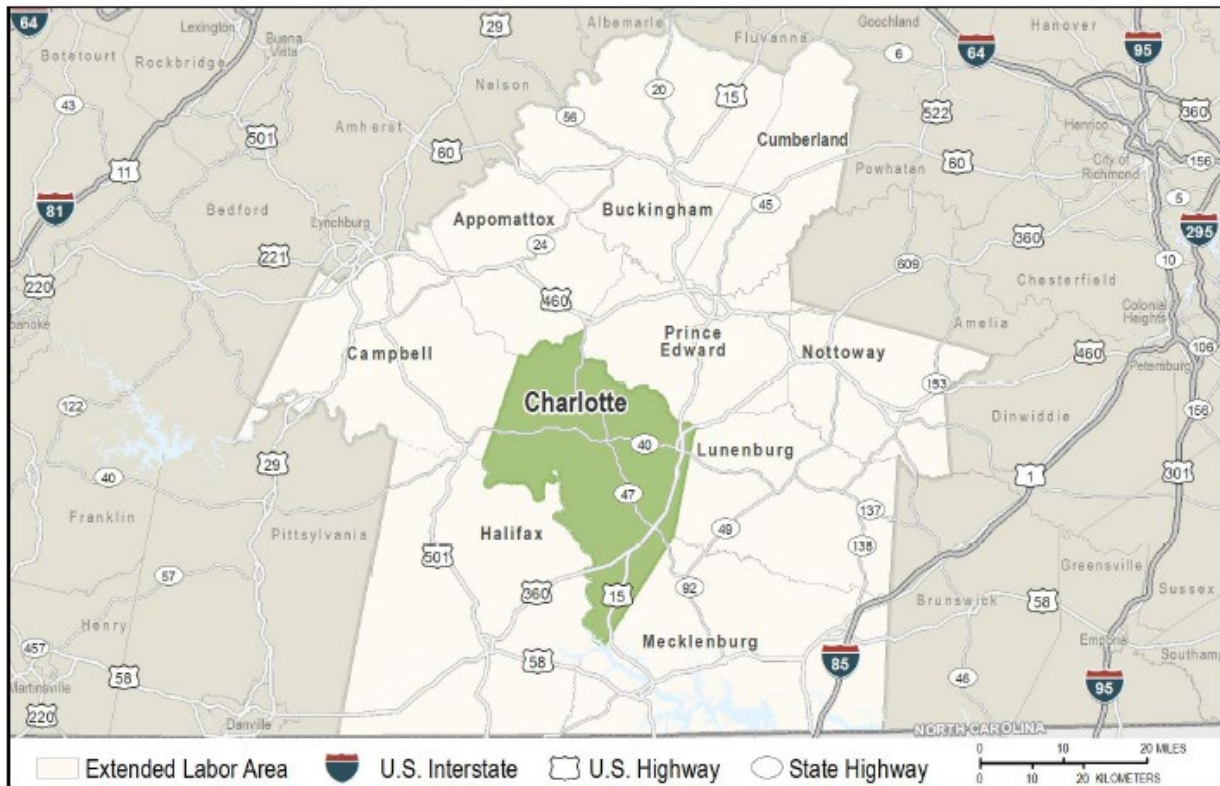
## **4.0 Partnerships and Collaboration Goals**

Work collaboratively with Charlotte County to address issues of mutual concern and to accomplish shared goals and objectives. Work collaboratively with state agencies, adjacent towns, the regional commission, and private businesses and groups to identify shared goals, projects and programs that can be better achieved through combined efforts and shared resources.

Finally, the success of the Comprehensive Plan will depend on the Town's ability to come together as a community and find creative solutions to achieve each goal. Charlotte Court House on its own has access to finite resources, and a number of the goals listed will require reaching out to other localities, agencies and companies to collaborate with the Town in recognition of the Town's place within the region and history of the Commonwealth.

### III. Regional Context

Located in the Central-Southside Region of Virginia, the Town of Charlotte Court House is the county seat of Charlotte County. The town was originally created by the House of Burgesses in 1759. The most prominent building within the town is the Courthouse, an 1823 building designed by Thomas Jefferson. With much of its nineteenth century architecture intact, Charlotte Courthouse is currently considered one of the best preserved courthouse towns in Virginia.



Charlotte Court House is approximately 80 miles southwest of the state capitol, Richmond, and 48 miles southeast of Lynchburg, Virginia. Charlotte County is predominately rural with a population estimated in 2021 to be 11,448. The Town is a centralized point of convergence within the County for transportation, schools, court facilities, local government, health care, commerce and culture. Charlotte Court House has a land area of 4 square miles, and a population density of 125 people per square mile for a total population of approximately 499.

In comparison, Charlotte County is 475 square miles in area; the greatest east to west distance is approximately 24 miles, and the greatest north to south distance is approximately 38 miles. There are four incorporated towns in the county; Charlotte Court House, the county seat; Drakes Branch, Keyville and Phenix. The terrain ranges from gently rolling to hilly, steep, and broken. General elevations are 350 to 450 feet, and no elevation is greater than 500 feet above sea level.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte County Source Water Protection Plan 2011.

Charlotte Court House is a small, historic town located in a rural, agricultural community, in a very rural part of the state. It has some features that compare favorably to the communities around it (such as relatively low unemployment rates and housing costs), while other features compare less favorably (such as household income levels). Below are comparisons of how Charlotte Court House stands in relation to the statewide average of Virginia for various features:

- Median household income below state average.
- Median house value below state average.
- Unemployed percentage below state average. (check source)
- Black race population percentage above state average.
- Median age below state average.
- Foreign-born population percentage below state average.
- House age above state average.



Below are various indicators of the proximity of the Town of Charlotte Court House to regional population centers:

- The nearest city with a population of 50,000 or more is Lynchburg, VA (38 miles, pop. 79,000).
- The nearest city with a population 200,000 or more is Raleigh, NC (85 miles, pop. 469,124).
- Nearest city with a population 1,000,000 or more is Philadelphia, PA (277 miles, pop. 1,603,797).<sup>2</sup>

With a location in the Southside region of Virginia, the town and its surrounding communities in the County have a relatively mild climate compared to many other parts of Virginia, which facilitates an agricultural economy, and also is inviting to tourists and retirees. The table that follows summarizes major climate features.

Charlotte County Climate Statistics <sup>2a</sup>

Criteria	Data
Average Annual Precipitation (2017-2021)	50.43 inches
Average Annual Snowfall	7 inches
Average Annual Temperature (2017-2021)	58.55° F
January Average Temperature (2018-2022)	37.34° F
July Average Temperature (2018-2022)	77.94° F

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<sup>2</sup> Analysis provided by <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/charlottecountyvirginia,US/PST045221>

<sup>2a</sup> <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/cag/county/time-series/VA-037/tavg/1/1/1895-2022><sup>2b</sup> [https:// source for snowfall?](https://source for snowfall?)

## IV. Community Planning Process



A Comprehensive Plan is a community plan, and therefore, public participation is an important element towards creating a successful plan that encompasses the overall vision and goals for Charlotte Court House. This plan was initially developed with citizen involvement through a series of public meetings, design workshops and a community tour during 2014.

The Planning Process relied on prior meetings with Town leaders to discuss the general elements of a Comprehensive Plan and the benefits of creating such a plan. A Steering Committee was formed to include the entire Planning Commission. This meeting was also a time to gather initial feedback regarding community issues and goals. A period of research and general information gathering followed this meeting.

At the Community Visioning Session of the Comprehensive Plan process, meeting attendees expressed a strong interest in preserving the historic core of Town. Most focused specifically on the preservation of the Court House and the old elementary school building. There was a clear consensus that preservation of the historic charm of Charlotte Court House is a top priority, but it must be balanced with some change to maintain the viability and affordability for those who live in the Town.

The Community Visioning Session also included a walking tour of the Town in which the group discussed and analyzed the physical development patterns of the Town. A unique product of this meeting is a Vision Map for Charlotte Court House meant to represent the community goals and priorities in an illustrative format.

The initial Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2017 and there have been minimum changes affecting the Town since that plan's adoption.

## 1.0 Historic Preservation and Revitalization

The culture and history of Charlotte Court House are foundational to the community's identity and future success. While many areas of Virginia have grown and changed, demolishing much of their historic resources, the core of Charlotte Court House has remained intact and authentic. The downtown historic district has largely been preserved due to the dedication and commitment of local residents to an area that many families have called home for generations. This type of continuity is a rarity in today's world of constant motion and change. These special attributes contribute greatly to the town's quality of life and to its social and economic fabric. During the planning process, community members ranked the historic district as the most important assets to be protected for the future well-being of the town and the region. Thus, the comprehensive plan focuses on preservation as an overarching goal that is connected to every other element of the plan.



### 1.1. Historic Resources

Charlotte Court House is the quintessential Virginia Courthouse Town. Originally founded in 1759 by the House of Burgesses, Charlotte Court House became the County Seat in 1764. Although no buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century remain, the courthouse district is a cohesive grouping of buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There are 15 individual sites within Charlotte County that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Of those, one

third of the historic sites are within the Town of Charlotte Court House. The present Charlotte County Courthouse was built by John Perciville in 1822-23 from plans drawn by Thomas Jefferson for the 1822 Buckingham County courthouse. This was the first temple form used for a court building in Virginia. According to the Historic Registry, it is Early Republic, Late Victorian in style. The Buckingham and Charlotte County courthouses inspired several other court structures in the piedmont area.<sup>3</sup>

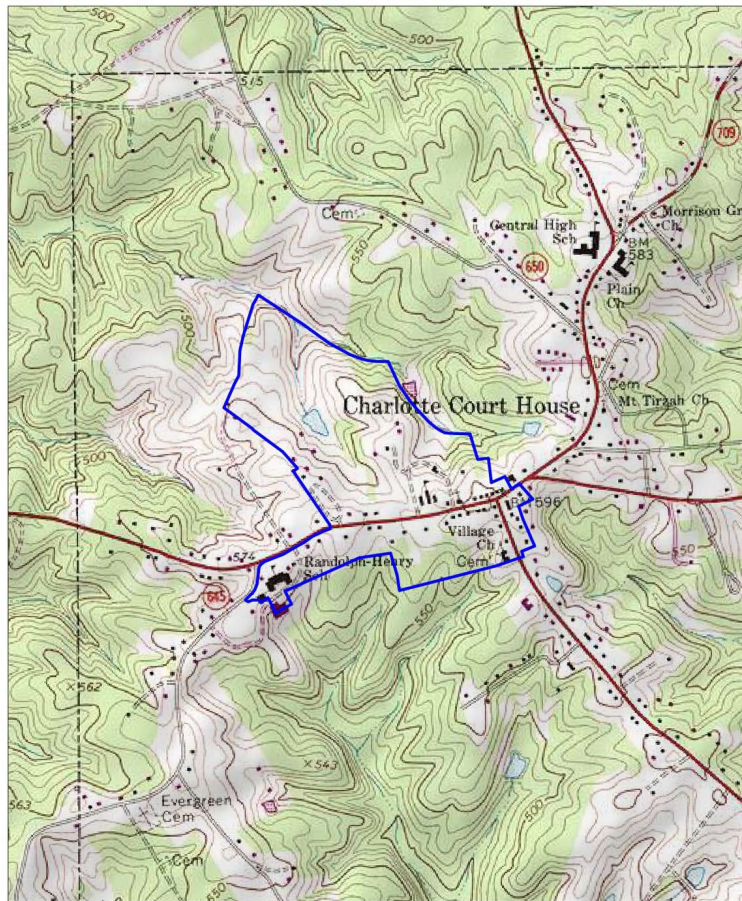
What makes the Town truly unique is not just the courthouse, but the surrounding context. The immediately surrounding historic district contains a nice variety of buildings—a ca. 1820 Tavern, small brick commercial structures, wood frame homes and two multi-acre estates. The Court House square and historic district is considered one of Virginia's best preserved government complexes, and the courthouse itself is noted to be one of the least altered in the State. The courthouse is an individually designated building, and it clearly links this region of the state to the history of growth and governance throughout the Commonwealth.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.virginiacourthouses.com/Charlotte/Charlotte.htm> is the only online citation found linking Jefferson to Charlotte Court House.

Additionally, in March 1799, Patrick Henry and John Randolph debated the question of States rights in Charlotte Court House. Henry believed the state did not have the right to oppose oppressive Federal laws. Randolph, on the other hand, believed states retained the right to oppose oppressive Federal laws. This very question was the central issue for the Civil War 100 years later and is still being decided by the courts. This was Henry's last speech and Randolph's first. Henry died three months later.<sup>4</sup>

The following map shows the full extent of the Charlotte Court House National Historic District. Within the Court House Square area, the traditional pattern of development is buildings on small rectangular lots situated close to the road. This graphic is also a good representation of the amount of undeveloped land within the Town.



185-0023 Charlotte Courthouse Historic District  
Town of Charlotte Courthouse, Charlotte County, VA  
Charlotte Courthouse USGS Quadrangle



This graphic is also a good representation of the amount of undeveloped land within the Town.

The Town has created a walking tour that covers buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Court House. This resource is available on the Town website, and the idea could be expanded to cover other historic sites within the Town and Charlotte County. Many other historic and heritage trails cross through Charlotte County, such as the Civil Rights in Education Heritage, Trail, the Virginia Civil War Trail and the Tobacco Heritage Trail. The Town has an opportunity to cross market historic resources within these existing sites of regional and national significance. A larger audience of visitors could be attracted to this region if the historic narrative is intentionally woven into these larger events and trends.

Map Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

It is only recently that the Courthouse was confirmed to have been designed by Thomas Jefferson. This information provides an opportunity for both economic development through tourism and access to funding for preservation. Currently, this information is well-known in the community but unknown to just about everyone else. Over half a million tourists visit Monticello each year,<sup>5</sup> and many others visit Poplar Forest, Jefferson's retreat near Lynchburg. The linkage of these sites to Thomas Jefferson would bring enthusiasts to the Town.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.virginiacourthouses.com/Charlotte/Charlotte.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Monticello's Economic Impact on the Charlottesville Albemarle Area, Weldon Cooper, 2001. This report is from 2001 and focuses on the broader economic impact of Monticello.

As a Town rich with historic resources, it is important to consider the long term protection of these assets. Threats to historic buildings and properties can come from very obvious actions such as new development in a historic district or redevelopment of historic sites. One change can permanently alter the character of the whole Town.

Other threats, such as demolition by neglect, can be less obvious because they occur over an extended period of time, but the result may be the same. The most important tool for controlling demolition by neglect is a carefully drafted provision in the local preservation ordinance requiring affirmative maintenance and ensuring that the local commission is equipped with adequate remedies and enforcement authority. By amending the zoning ordinance, the Town can increase its effectiveness in the appropriate maintenance of properties, both historic and not. (National Trust for Historic Preservation)

While several sites are listed in the National Historic Register, this designation doesn't provide any direct protection. Local policies should be implemented to serve this purpose. Charlotte Court House has mapped the local historic district, but the Town should also adopt Design Guidelines that are clear and consistent to help to establish what is permissible and harmonious within the historic, providing guidance for change and protection within the district.

**Historic Preservation and Revitalization Goal:**

Preserve the integrity of the Town's significant historic structures, landscapes, and streetscapes.



**Historic Preservation and Revitalization Policy:**

Encourage the preservation and revitalization of significant historic resources by adopting design guidelines and demolition by neglect provisions for the Town's historic district, promoting the benefits of preservation, and facilitating the adaptive reuse of historic structures to provide an economic underpinning for their preservation.

Encourage regional partners to join with the Town to enhance tourism resources, including coordinated efforts such as heritage trails and the recently created Charlotte State Forest.

## 1.2. Infill Development

The Courthouse facilities are the central activity node of the Town, and the community desire is to concentrate on the protection of this area with limited and carefully considered new development. With the Town measuring 4 square miles, there are many opportunities for infill projects and redevelopment of existing buildings. This section of the Plan focuses on areas that might be appropriate for future infill and how that development can enhance the positive elements of each area. In a historic town such as this, new development should be geared towards opportunities for the Town and enhancing the physical form and infrastructure of the streetscape.

Per the vision map, activity nodes were identified, each having a distinct character. County Schools create the western node and entry to the Town. Any development or improvements in this area should be directly related and beneficial to the students and schools. On the eastern edge of town, a mixed-use district is shown in the vicinity of Central High School and Moses Hall, the historic African American school and business district.

This eastern node is an area of cultural and historical significance with the potential for major revitalization. In this node, historic resources exist that have yet to be formally recognized or studied in-depth. Virginia is home to the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail, a commemorative trail of 41 sites throughout Southside Virginia detailing the courageous activism in this area.

“Virginia has led the nation in many ways, particularly in education. The birthplace of the free public education system our country now enjoys has its roots right here in Southside Virginia. It was here, along the sleepy back roads of a few rural counties, that today’s African Americans, Native Americans, and women developed the right to an education that equaled that of white males.”<sup>6</sup>

The Charlotte Courthouse Library, established in 1937 and one of the first lending libraries for African Americans in the country, is a current stop along the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail. Virginia Retreat has plans to add twelve new sites to the trail, with one of those sites being Central High School. Central High School was built in 1938, concurrently with Randolph Henry High School.

The Town should consider adapting portions of the School as a heritage and community center with interpretive information about the Civil Rights movement and African American heritage in this area. At a time when many parts of the state were vehemently opposing integration, Charlotte Court House had intentionally created an excellent public education for African Americans and willingly integrated its school system. This is an interesting and important story to be told.

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<sup>6</sup> Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail  
<http://www.virginia.org/Listings/HistoricSites/CivilRightsinEducationHeritageTrail/>



Central High School

The school is now used as a Head Start center and many of the surrounding buildings are either vacant, losing tenants, or underutilized. New commercial and community development could be focused in this area to invigorate an area that has historically been mixed use. This area can create an active synergy with the mixed use area surrounding the Courthouse, while not having the added constraints of design within a historic district.

Charlotte Court House was also home to the national headquarters for the Grand United Order of Moses, organized in 1904 as an insurance society and social organization to benefit the black race. The organization was large and had branches in many states. Annual meetings drew delegates and new initiates from all over the country, creating independence and prosperity for black citizens. A newspaper article from *The Afro-American Newspaper*, Baltimore, MD., dated September 20, 1930, recorded over 10,000 attendees, including over 700 white citizens. In 1951, the Moses Society also established a nursing home for African Americans on the property.<sup>7</sup>

Within the Historic Core of Town, there are also infill opportunities. During the Visioning Workshop for this Comprehensive Plan, community members explored redevelopment possibilities for several parcels on the edge of the core. Possibilities include a new street to create a shorter downtown block while opening the potential for new retail and residential within an easy walk to the Courthouse and other Town amenities.

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<sup>7</sup> Historic Architectural Survey of Charlotte County, Virginia, Hill Studio, P.C.

**1.2 Infill Goal:**

Add new buildings and uses to enhance the economic and social vitality of Town, while preserving the historic scale and character.

**Infill Policy:**

Encourage new construction and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, particularly in the historic African American Business District, while ensuring that such construction is compatible with historic structures and streetscapes, and sensitively defines traditional open space areas.

## 1.3. Population and Housing

### Demographics

The population of the Town of Charlotte Court House was 539 in 1970, and has gradually decreased each decade since. The Census estimated the Town's population at 564 in 1999, which appears to be the best estimate of the population for that period.

Similarly, the populations in the Towns of Drakes Branch and Phenix have shown decreases in population over the past 30 years. The Town of Keysville's population increased from 704 in 1980 to 817 in 2000, but has remained essentially stable during the past decade.

The Town's population is younger than the county and state average, and has a poverty rate similar to the County's and slightly higher than the state average.

The population of the Town is expected to be essentially stable during the coming years, although it is difficult to predict because a single event - such as the location of a new industry - could dramatically change the trend. Thus, for planning purposes, it is reasonable to assume only minor changes in the local population, either a slight decline or a slight increase during the next two decades.

### Housing Characteristics

The Town's housing stock is significantly more affordable than many other areas of the state, but it is also generally older. In the past 5 years, there has been minimal residential development within the Town. During that period, 15 permits were processed with a majority being building permits for decks on existing homes. Two new homes were constructed.

Currently, there is not a strong demand for new housing in the local area. According to local sources, there is minimal to no vacancy of residential units in Town (despite the census data on housing tenure shown in the appendix). Therefore, if a new industry located in the area, or if Charlotte Court House became a popular area for retirement-aged people, additional housing would be necessary. Thus, it would be prudent for the Town to plan for potential additions to the housing stock in case such market pressures arise.

As noted in the section on infrastructure, one key hindrance to new development is the lack of a town-wide public sewer system. By providing all properties with an opportunity to connect to a public sewer system, the Town could have more commercial opportunities as well as infill development to enhance the Central Business District.

Although housing affordability in the Town is generally good, it is still an issue of some concern. About two-thirds of the housing stock in Charlotte Court House is owner-occupied and this housing stock has relatively good levels of affordability compared to the County and the rest of Virginia. However, one-third of the housing is rental and the affordability level of this housing is relatively low, as shown in the table below. Manufactured home development is permitted in Rural Residential which makes up a large majority of the land area available for development in Town.

## Comparative Housing Affordability

	Virginia	Charlotte County	Charlotte Court House
Median Housing Value	\$249,700	\$98,900	\$105,400
Percent of Rental Units Affordable	50%	52%	37%
Percent of Owner-Occupied Units Affordable	72%	76%	74%

Sources:

- U. S. Census Bureau, Selected Housing Characteristics, 2008-2012 ACS 5-year Estimates (Table DP04)
- Herd Planning & Design (added total of all occupied units paying gross rent or owner costs of less than 30% of household income from data in Table DP04)

One of the key issues identified by citizens during the planning process was the problem of abandoned and substandard housing units, which constitute both a public safety issue as well as a property value issue. Other issues included the support for compatible mixed use development in the core of Town, with residential zones surrounding the core, as well as the desire to maintain a generally rural character in the outlying areas of Town.

### **Housing Goal:**

Improve and expand the Town's housing stock in a manner that improves public safety, increases the tax base, and meets the needs of current and future residents.

### **Housing Policies:**

1. Encourage a variety of compatible infill residential development, including single family and small multi-family buildings, and mixed-use development on appropriate sites within the Town. New housing supply should include units that add to the supply of affordable rental housing for local residents.
2. Encourage the rehabilitation, maintenance, or demolition of substandard structures.

### Housing Plan:

The Code of Virginia requires that the local comprehensive plan designate areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing “sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.”

The Town’s plan for housing, as embodied in this comprehensive plan, is to implement the following policies and strategies:

- The zoning ordinance provides one or more zoning districts [General Residential and Rural Residential] that will facilitate an enlargement of the supply of affordable rental housing including:
  - permitting the development of accessory dwelling units in conjunction with single-family dwellings, and
  - permitting the development of residential dwelling units on the upper stories of commercial structures.

## 1.4. Land Use

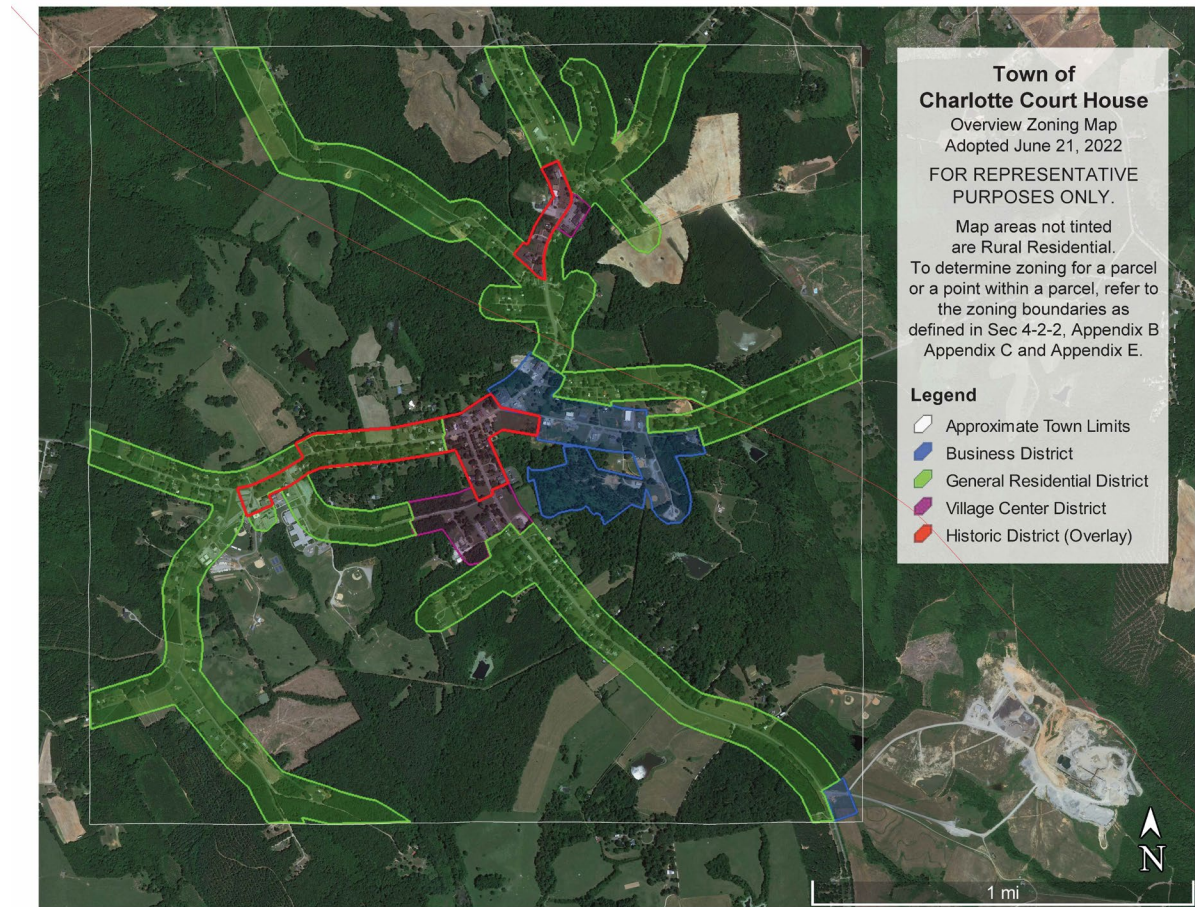
### Existing Land Use

The land use component of the plan is closely connected to the other elements of the plan, particularly infrastructure and preservation, because infrastructure supports land use and development activity and preservation of historic resources provides the foundation for the Town’s desired land use pattern.

The Town’s existing land use pattern clearly reflects its historic roots as an important county seat and economic center within rural, Southside Virginia. It has a strong, human scale historic core area containing a mix of commercial, civic, and residential uses, surrounded by adjacent residential neighborhoods, all enclosed by a low density, residential/agricultural environment. This pattern provides an excellent framework for the Town to preserve its historic, “rural village” character while also allowing significant infill development to occur, if and when the market demand emerges.

Land use patterns are determined mainly by a combination of market demand, land owner desires, infrastructure capacity, and land development regulations (zoning and subdivision ordinances).

**Current Zoning Map**



## Future Land Use Strategies:

The two major methods for the Town to achieve its planning and land use goals are to provide the appropriate infrastructure and development regulations. Pursuit of those two key implementation efforts are critical for the Town to achieve its desired future.

Some recommendations include the following:

- **Desired Parking Patterns**—Citizens and Town Officials have expressed a desire to have commercial parking located to the side or rear of buildings to preserve the historic character of Charlotte Court House. To eliminate existing traffic and pedestrian hazards near the intersection of Highway 40 and Highway 47, the Town will work to eliminate on-street parking near this intersection, including the areas in front of the historic buildings and along the approach to the intersection. For example, the Town may designate feet or between "X" and "Y."
- **Landscape, Lighting and Signage**—Added requirements for site plans will ensure that new development will be more consistent with desirable existing development. Elements such as landscaping, underground placement of wires, lighting and signage can serve to unify and beautify a business district while protecting dark skies.
- **Mixed Use Zoning**—In certain areas in the core of Town, mixed use zoning is recommended to allow for a variety of uses in coordination with the existing land use patterns. A move towards consolidated districts will provide and level of consistency on what is allowed in a given area vs. parcel by parcel.
- **Rural Residential Zoning**—The Town of Charlotte Court House quickly disperses from rural village to rural agricultural land. The updated zoning ordinance clarifies residential zones and rural residential zones while excluding intensive agriculture within the Town limits.
- **Subdivision Ordinance** -- The Town of Charlotte Court House has established a Subdivision Ordinance to encourage harmony of new development with existing patterns. Other topics, such as desired parking patterns and landscaping, will be addressed.

## Land Use Categories

### Rural Residential:

Encourages the preservation of agricultural lands and low intensity agricultural activities that are compatible with low density residential uses within Town boundaries. Low density, large lot, or clustered residential development is allowed, as well as agricultural uses such as conventional crop cultivation and low-intensity livestock grazing. The Rural Residential Land Use designation will promote the protection of area water supply and the conservation of natural and scenic resources.

### General Residential:

Recognizes the existence of previously established low density residential districts, provides incentives for clustering of development, and provides for new low density residential development in the community.

Village Center:

Encourages a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses that create a village atmosphere while promoting quality of life and pedestrian activity. A variety of housing types and compact, pedestrian-oriented development are permitted. Creative design is encouraged for infill projects that are compatible with the character of existing lots and buildings.

Business:

Provides flexibility and variety of development for retail, service, and civic uses with light industrial and residential uses as secondary uses. The intent of this land use is to create a development form and character that will promote the economic and social vitality and serve as the commercial hub of Charlotte Court House and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment.

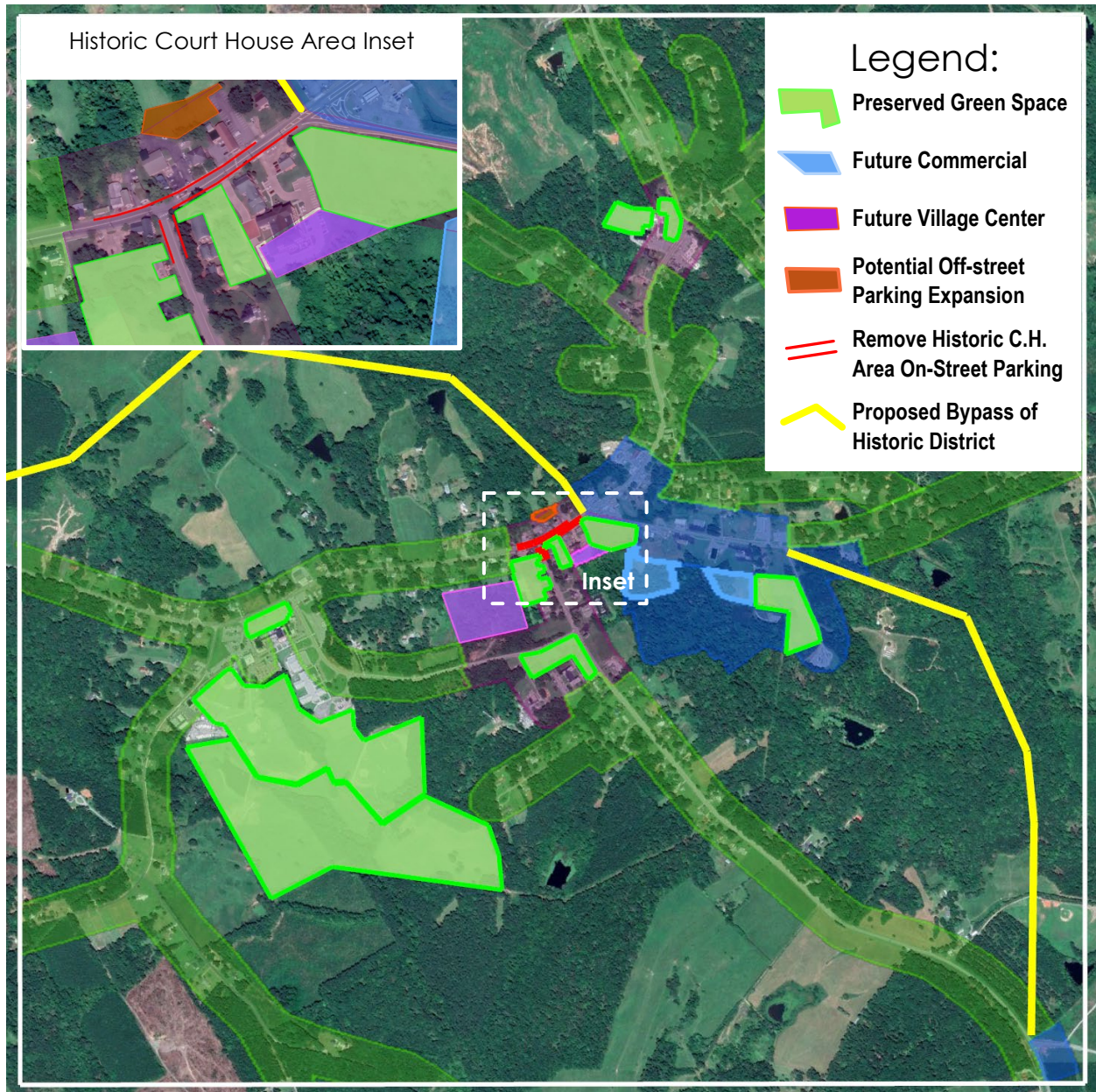
**1.4 Land Use Goal:**

Maintain a pattern of compatible land uses that reflect the Town's historic pattern, by amending the zoning ordinance, zoning map, and subdivision ordinance from time to time, so as to better implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Land Use Policy:**

Use the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan to provide guidance in amending the zoning ordinance, zoning map, and the subdivision ordinance, and as a guide for all future Town decisions regarding land use and infrastructure changes to achieve a traditional, human-scaled, mixed-use environment in the historic core area, surrounded by low density residential uses and small-scale, non-intensive agricultural activities.

## Future Land Use and Transportation Map



## Town of Charlotte Court House Future Land Use and Transportation Map

Lightly tinted areas show current zoning boundaries and are for representative purposes only.

To determine current zoning for a parcel or a point within a parcel, refer to the zoning boundaries as defined in Zoning Ordinance Sec 4-2-2, Appendix B, Appendix C and Appendix E.

## 2.0 Infrastructure and Public Facilities

**2.1 Natural Green Infrastructure Goal:** Protect the functions of the local natural environmental resources such as air, water, flora, and fauna, so as to protect the health, safety and economy of the Town, and the enjoyment of citizens.

**2.2 Designed Green Infrastructure Goal:** Achieve a functional and esthetically pleasing network of human-scaled public and private green spaces throughout Town, including pathways, courtyards, greens, squares and pocket parks, for the benefit of citizens and visitors.

**2.3 Transportation Goal:** Achieve a transportation network that promotes safe and efficient circulation of motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, in a manner that also supports the other goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

**2.4 Traffic Goal:** Protect the fragile and significant historic buildings in the center of Town from the physical impact of heavy truck traffic.

**2.5 Streetscapes Goal:** Enhance the beauty, safety, and functionality of the streets and sidewalks for all modes of travel.

**2.6 Water and Sewer Goal:** Provide public sewer and water service to every residence and business in Town.

**2.7 Broadband Internet Service Goal:** Achieve affordable, high-speed, broadband internet service accessibility to every address in Town.

Infrastructure is the term typically used when referring to the linear structures that support the physical activities of the community, including sewer and water pipes (and treatment plants); highways, streets, trails, and sidewalks; power lines, power generating plants, and substations; and other such public structures. These are a subset of public facilities in general, which also include the buildings that support the various services provided to the community, such as administrative offices, fire and rescue stations, etc. This plan addresses each infrastructure component separately from the other public facilities and services because they such a critical foundational element to the future growth and vitality of the Town.

Infrastructure consists of two major components: natural and manmade.

The natural infrastructure component is often referred to as “green infrastructure” and includes two basic kinds of resources:

- Natural -These elements remain largely in their natural state and thus perform “work” that would otherwise have to be performed by expensive manmade systems and structures, such as clean air, vegetation that filters pollutants from surface water run-off, and topographical formations (ponds and swales) that collect and retain stormwater to mitigate flooding; and
- Designed - These elements have been designed or re-shaped in part by humans and thus overlap in character and function with purely manmade infrastructure. These include a range of community amenities such as passive parks, trails, and the like.

The manmade infrastructure component includes:

- Streets, sidewalks, and bikeways to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles;
- Water and wastewater treatment systems to allow town-scale development intensity by providing safe drinking water and sewage disposal;
- Communications and energy systems such as electric power and telecommunications facilities such as cables, wires, towers, etc.; and
- Those "hybrids" of natural and manmade infrastructure such as the visually defined green spaces like courtyards, greens, and squares that define the visual and functional character of the streetscapes and spaces between buildings, to create a comfortable and pleasing human environment.

The quality and completeness of both kinds of infrastructure elements are fundamental to the overall quality of life in the Town. The natural environmental systems perform free work for the population, thereby lessening the demand on manmade infrastructure; while the manmade components provide convenience and efficiency (transportation); public health, land development and revitalization (water and sewer systems); and a desirable visual character that reflects the historic nature of the Town (buildings and adjacent green spaces).

## 2.1. Natural Green Infrastructure

The major natural resources that provide infrastructure “services” to the Town include:

### Topography and Hydrology

Charlotte County is a moderately high plateau, dissected by numerous streams that create surface relief that ranges from undulating and rolling to hilly and steep. The average elevation ranges from 350 to 450 feet above sea level.

The area in and around Charlotte Court House is drained by several small tributary creeks including Birds Branch to the east of town, Wards Fork Creek and Roaches Branch to the west, and Bush Ford Branch to the south. These creeks feed the Roanoke Creek which in turns flows to the Roanoke (Staunton) River.

Flood hazard areas identified on the Flood Insurance Rate Map are identified as a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). SFHA are defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Based upon these flood hazard maps, the Town of Charlotte Court House has a relatively low risk of flooding.

### Geology

The hills and ridges of the County are granitic, while the valleys are intermixed with metamorphic rocks, with bands of hard gneiss, quartz and mica schist. Sand, granite, mica, and copper have been mined commercially in the County. Charlotte County is underlain by igneous and metamorphic rocks. Groundwater is present in the lower part of the unconsolidated zone and in fractures and thin weathered zones in the bedrock. Most wells are relatively shallow and, thus, do not have large yields, but some of the deeper wells (more than 200 feet) have produced yields above 25 gallons per minute. The entrance to BMC Quarry is at the southern edge of Town on Route 47. While the quarry is not within the Town limits it is in close proximity to a Town well. The entrance to the quarry is within Town limits.

### Soils

Cecil soils are the predominate soil within the Town of Charlotte, and these are generally well-drained soils and thus suitable for on-site drainfields; therefore, the soils do not generally present problems for providing such facilities for normal uses such as residential.

### Groundwater and Water Supply

Charlotte County prepared a water resource protection plan which includes guidelines for protecting ground water resources and well heads, which are crucial to most County residents, and particularly to the Town of Charlotte Court House. This plan delineates protection areas around existing public water supply wells. Due to the complex nature of the fractured rock in which the groundwater lies, and the irregular topography surrounding the wells, these well head protection areas cannot be precisely drawn. Thus, a 1,000-foot radius shows a primary protection area, representing the direct source of groundwater for the well. A 1-mile radius shows a secondary area that probably sources the well, but to a lesser degree. Due to lack of precision, these areas are only providing general guidance about where the water supply might be influenced from contaminant sources.

## 2.1 Natural Green Infrastructure Goal:

Protect the functions of the local natural environmental resources such as air, water, flora, and fauna, so as to protect the health, safety and economy of the Town, and the enjoyment of citizens.

### Natural Green Infrastructure Policy:

The Town will work with State agencies, Charlotte County, and local landowners to implement a variety of voluntary and regulatory methods to protect environmental resources, including the County's Source Water Protection Plan, stormwater management regulations, and Town zoning regulations.

## 2.2. Designed Green Infrastructure

The primary public space within the Town of Charlotte Court House is the area of Courthouse Square. The governmental complex of buildings is interspersed amongst pathways and



landscaped areas. The collection of buildings defines human-scaled outdoor spaces between and around the structures. Sidewalks and structures line the roads, but there are also gathering areas set back from the street. According to residents, this space is rarely used for gathering or lingering for which it was designed. Increasing noise and impact from truck traffic was identified as a potential factor in this lack of use.

Mature gardens surround the Town Library, providing another public space for gathering or contemplation. This location is sometimes used for special events such as weddings. During a public workshop, community members discussed the potential for a new public space at the corner of David Bruce Avenue and George Washington Highway.

The sidewalk network throughout the Town is probably the most heavily utilized pedestrian public space. Many community members use the loop connecting the Court House to Randolph Henry School and around to LeGrande Avenue for their daily walks and exercise. The popularity of this loop could inform new pedestrian pathways and routes in other areas of Town.

The Town should also consider the promotion of outdoor gathering and dining spaces in general. Given the mild climate in the area and the potential to reroute truck traffic, these spaces could promote a higher quality of life for residents, attract more tourists, and boost the economy by creating places for people to come and spend money.

## 2.2 Designed Green Infrastructure Goal:

Achieve a functional and esthetically pleasing network of human-scaled public and private green spaces throughout Town, including pathways, courtyards, greens, squares, and pocket parks, for the benefit of citizens and visitors.

### Designed Green Infrastructure Policy:

The Town will work with State agencies, Charlotte County, and local landowners to implement a variety of voluntary and regulatory methods to design, build, expand and enhance the system of designed green spaces throughout Town, especially in and around the historic core area.

## 2.3 Transportation + Traffic

The Town of Charlotte Court House's transportation network provides the fundamental framework for connection within the community and out to the surrounding region. Located at the intersection of Route 40 and 47, the Town is central to the County and to a larger, regional transportation network. Besides serving regional functions, the transportation system should be designed to foster a safe, livable community. The transportation network promotes movement of people, vehicles and goods; but it should also prioritize and enhance walking and biking opportunities. A functional transportation network can bring new economic opportunities to the community, and if designed well, increase quality of life.

When considering the transportation network, an important goal is the provision for complete streets. The National Complete Street Coalition describes complete streets as *streets for everyone*, with an emphasis on safe access for *all users*. An extensive sidewalk network extends along many of the primary routes through Town to encourage pedestrian activity.

Charlotte Court House lies at the confluence of two primary routes through the County, Route 40 and Route 47. Commercial operations around Charlotte County heavily depend upon these routes for movement of goods. Because of the existing road network, numerous trucks pass through the middle of Town, and thus, the heart of the Court Square Historic District every day. Members of the community and Town Officials have expressed concern over the amount of truck traffic and the negative impact it creates on people and historic buildings. Beyond the standard concern of too much traffic, trucks create excessive noise and are potentially damaging to the historic structures sited close to the roadway. Trucks also have a difficult time negotiating turning movements in Town. With the goal to improve safety and the quality of life within the core of Town and continue to encourage and support economic prosperity in the region, Charlotte Court House has suggested an alternative truck route to provide a road network that is appropriate and convenient for this type of traffic.

Virginia Department of Transportation estimates show an average daily volume of 4,600 vehicles passing through the Town of Charlotte Court House, making this section of road the second most heavily utilized part of the network within the County.<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> Most other roads in Charlotte County have less than half that volume. This data justifies the need to take a closer look at this section of

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<sup>8</sup> Second only to Route 15 near Keysville.

<sup>9</sup> VDOT 2012 Daily Traffic Volume Estimates for District 19

roadway to see what improvements may be necessary. The chart with original data is located in the Appendix.

In a letter to VDOT in 2005, the Town describes the serious problem with truck traffic flowing through the Central Business District. In 11 hours, 534 trucks passed through Charlotte Court House. This traffic creates significant safety hazards and has negative impacts on quality of life and a damaging effect to historic buildings located very close to the road. In response, the mayor of Charlotte Court House requested a truck route to bypass Charlotte Court House. Since that letter to VDOT, truck traffic is still a major issue. According to local VDOT representatives, they have no open files regarding this request but are willing to discuss potential solutions and the process for achieving this goal. The Town should consider exploring this issue further with VDOT and maintaining updated truck counts that reflect current conditions.

During a public workshop, community members mapped out conceptual ideas for a truck route that would resolve this ongoing issue (See Vision Map). New connections in the form of streets and pedestrian paths can create more retail opportunities downtown and the chance for pedestrians to have a safe and enjoyable walking experience to places like the ballpark, thereby promoting the economic vitality of the Town.

Key observations during the workshop included:

- Germantown Road route could use existing roads as a de facto bypass
- A bypass could take a northern or southern route
- The 40 and 47 connection is a key factor
- The Town Plan should show multiple concepts pending further study and discussion with the County and VDOT



### 2.3 Transportation Goal:

Transportation: Achieve a transportation network that promotes safe and efficient circulation of motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, in a manner that also supports the other goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Transportation Policy:**

Transportation: The Town will work with VDOT, Charlotte County, and local landowners, to improve connectivity of streets, paths and sidewalks throughout Town, with special focus on ensuring the comfort, convenience and safety of pedestrians.

Transportation Plan:

The Code of Virginia requires that the local comprehensive plan designate new and expanded transportation facilities that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan, to include roads, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, and other facilities as appropriate.

The proposed future transportation facilities for the Town are included in the Future Land Use Map (Section 1.4). The primary improvement contemplated is a Truck Bypass around the Town.

## 2.4 Traffic Goal:

Protect the fragile and significant historic buildings in the center of Town from the physical impact of heavy truck traffic.

**Traffic Policies:**

Traffic: The Town will work with VDOT, Charlotte County, and local landowners, to create one or more alternative routes for truck traffic so as to protect the historic buildings in the center of Town. Alternative routes may include existing state highways, as well as the construction of one or more new road linkages that allow trucks to by-pass the center of Town.

Transportation Plan:

The Code of Virginia requires that the local comprehensive plan designate new and expanded transportation facilities that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan, to include roads, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, and other facilities as appropriate.

The proposed future transportation facilities for the Town are included in the Future Land Use Map (Section 1.4). The primary improvement contemplated is a Truck Bypass around the Town.

## 2.5 Streetscapes

A vast amount of the public space in most towns and cities is found within the street network. Streets serve the purpose to move people and traffic from one area to another, but streets can also be so much more. The appearance of the streetscape can either enhance the experience Charlotte Court House, or it can detract and degrade.

The term “streetscape” primarily includes anything within the public right-of-way—the street itself, trees, landscape, lighting, furniture, artwork, signage, parking, sidewalk and patios. All of these elements form the layers of the streetscape. For example, the size of the street can determine speed of traffic and comfort levels for cyclists and pedestrians. A wide straight road encourages drivers to go quickly. For some roads, this is appropriate. Other roads, such as residential streets or business districts, should encourage slower movement.

As discussed in the transportation element, the Town faces the specific challenges of a major crossroads and heavy truck traffic at its very core. In the past, roads have been widened, in some cases totally eliminating the front setbacks of historic buildings. The push to move cars and large truck quickly along this regional road network is directly at odds to the preservation of the historic district and the creation of a streetscape to harmonize and enhance the district.



During the walking tour of the Town, members of the public and the planning consultant team discussed options to enhance the streetscapes of primary routes in Charlotte Court House. The exercise began by comparing the historic core of town to newer development. Within the core, buildings and trees frame the street. Public parks provide potential gathering spaces. Signage is minimal, and the sidewalk network is complete. Parking is available on street and parking lots are typically tucked behind or beside buildings. Overhead lines are a significant detractor from the historic character of the Town and should be put underground as funds become available.

In comparison, some areas of development do not have street trees or landscaping. Parking lots line the road, signage and lighting are obtrusive and sidewalks aren't provided. This environment is geared towards the function and convenience of the automobile while providing little benefit for the Town or the pedestrian.

With the significant traffic through town, the Town should consider efforts to buffer pedestrians from traffic.

Landscape and trees define the edge of the roadway while provide shade for pedestrians and visual interest throughout the seasons. The addition of street trees can totally transform the character of a street. By creating landscape requirements for commercial and multifamily developments, new developments can blend more seamlessly with the core of town. Lighting and signage also have a major impact on the visual identity of the Town. As a first step, these elements should be regulated carefully within the Zoning Ordinance and design guidelines. Picture below illustrates a streetscape which could be improved by landscaping.



Once regulations are established, the Town might consider creating a coordinated streetscape plans that shows improvements based on the main corridors and allows for phasing in enhancements.

## **2.5 Streetscape Goal:**

Enhance the beauty, safety, and functionality of the streets and sidewalks for all modes of travel.

### **Streetscape Policy:**

Improve the streetscape of the major streets in Town by adding street trees, defining on-street parking areas, and relegating off-street parking to the rear of buildings.

## 2.6 Water and Sewer

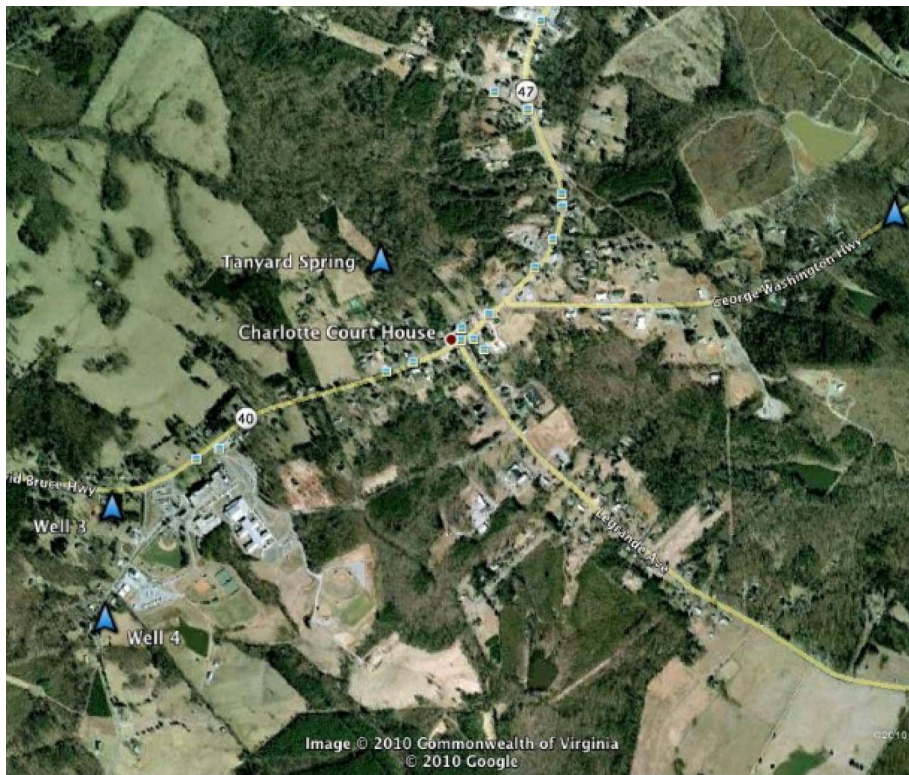
### Water

The Town of Charlotte Court House community waterworks consists of four drilled wells and two elevated steel storage tanks with capacities of 30,000 and 100,000 gallons. There is corrosion control at all sources and disinfection at the Arcadia Field well source.

County facilities such as the Jail, Randolph-Henry High School, and Central Middle School, consume approximately 26% of the Town's water supply.

The total effective source capacity for the Town of Charlotte Court House system is estimated at 89,600 gallons per day. The storage capacity for the Charlotte Court House system is 130,000 gallons.

There are approximately six existing homes within the Town's service area that rely on a private well. The majority of these homes are not occupied on a full-time basis, but are used only occasionally. There are no businesses using private wells. New homes and businesses are required to connect to the public water system.



Source: Charlotte County Water Source Protection Plan 2011

## Sewer

In 2009 the County installed a forced main sewer line between the towns of Charlotte Court House and Drakes Branch. This line is currently used to transport wastewater from Randolph-Henry High School, Central Middle School, the Sheriff's Department and Jail, and several other government buildings in Charlotte Court House to the Drakes Branch water treatment facility.

All structures not served by the town water treatment systems rely on individual septic tanks and drainfields. The feasibility and capacity of the individual systems depends on the drainage rate ("percolation") of the soil on each site, which varies widely throughout the County. Therefore, allowable building density will also vary, since areas with low drainage rates (poor percolation) will require larger areas for each drainfield, and thus larger lot sizes (unless the site has access to the public wastewater system.) According to the local health department, the soils in the Town are generally well-drained for on-site wastewater systems.

Wastewater collection and treatment in the County is provided by municipal systems in the towns of Keysville and Drakes Branch and by a private system at Southside Virginia Community College. The former Westpoint Stevens manufacturing plant also has a private system that is currently not in use.

Location	Design Capacity (gal/day)	Average Flow (gal/day)	Receiving Stream
Drakes Branch	80,000	40,000	Twitty's Creek

Source: Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan

A map of the County sewer system which serves the Town is available on page 7 of the Preliminary Engineering Report prepared by Dewberry and dated September 2016. This report is available on the Town website under downloads, planning commission or <https://www.towncch.com/downloads/planning-commission/157-sewer-infrastructure-upgrade-p-e-r-september-2016/file>.

Long term considerations include:

- The Health department requires water connections, and prohibits new wells
- Sewer connections are not cost effective for some properties, but many sites do not have sufficient land area to upgrade the septic system
- Sewer expansion throughout Town should be done in phases

Service extension could include increasing the number of sewer connections within the core of Town, and thus increase the total flow to the Drakes Branch force main, and/or expanding the treatment capacity of the County's mass drainfields to accommodate the increased flow.

The engineering firm of Dewberry prepared a preliminary engineering report titled "Charlotte Court House Sewer Infrastructure Upgrade" dated September 2016 which indicated there is significant reserve capacity in the force main leading to Drakes Branch and the Drakes Branch sewer plat which, with minimum upgrades (e.g., replacement pumps), could be available to provide sewer services within the Town. The full report is available on the Town's website ([www.towncch.com](http://www.towncch.com)).

## **2.6 Water and Sewer Goal:**

Provide public sewer and water service to every residence and business in the Town.

### **Water and Sewer Policy:**

Work with the County to identify priorities and funding methods for extending sewer service in phases throughout the core area of Town.

## 2.7 Broadband Internet Service

Broadband connectivity is available in the county government complex in Charlotte Court House, in the public schools, and, throughout most of the Town through HFC Cable Modem service supporting 100Mb/s down and 10Mb/s up or better. Fiber broadband service covering all areas is anticipated within the next three years based on federally funded Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Connect America Fund, Virginia DHCD Virginia Telecommunication Initiative, the Affordable Connectivity Program and other programs. Current area broadband companies participating in these awards include ShenTel, Kinnex, Riverstreet and Empower Broadband. According to FCC and County resources, Shentel, Kinner and Riverstreet serve or have announced plans to provide broadband within Charlotte Court House.

Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (MBC) has an open-access middle mile fiber optic network that follows along major roads in Southside Virginia and connects to the existing MBC fiber network (<https://mbc-va.com/interactive-coverage-map/> ).

**2.7 Broadband Internet Service Goal:** Achieve affordable, high-speed, broadband internet service available to every address in Town.

**Broadband Internet Service Policy:** The Town will work with the state and county governments, as well as private service providers, to enable affordable access to fiber broadband for local businesses and residents.

## 2.8 Other Public Facilities

### Town Administration

The Town's administrative office is located at 350 George Washington Hwy, Charlotte Court House, VA 23923.

### Emergency Services

Emergency services are coordinated by the County Administrator and Public Safety Director, which includes organizing the response efforts of emergency service providers and government agencies, as well as providing the public with information, assessing damage, and overseeing procurement of resources.

Fire protection services are provided by seven fire departments throughout the County, the primary department for the Town is located at 608 David Bruce Ave, PO Box 246, Charlotte C.H., VA 23923. The others are in Wylliesburg, Cullen, Drakes Branch, Keysville, Phenix, and Red House. Although these are volunteer companies, the County provides assistance in the form of the E-911 system and dispatching services as well as some direct funding.

Emergency medical service is provided to Town citizens by the Volunteer Rescue Squads in coordination with the Public Safety Director. The Rescue Squad's main location is on Route 40 in Keysville; they also operate a satellite office in Wylliesburg which serves the southern part of the county and house an ambulance and staff at the Phenix Volunteer Fire Department to better serve the western portion of the county and Charlotte Court House.

### **Public Schools**

Public education is provided by Charlotte County to all of its citizens. The school system consists of one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools. Central Middle School and Randolph Henry High School are located within the Town of Charlotte Court House, on a consolidated site owned and operated by the County. The County School Board Administrative Offices are located on LeGrande Avenue in the Town in the County Administration Complex at 250 LeGrande Ave A, Charlotte Court House, VA 23923. Pre-K through fifth grade students from the Town attend Eureka Elementary, located four miles east of Charlotte Court House. A Head Start Center is also located in Town.

### **Library Services**

Charlotte County provides library services through four facilities, including the Main Library in Charlotte Court House, as well as branch libraries in Keysville, Phenix and Wylliesburg. The Main Library is open six days per week, while the branches are open between three and five days per week.

### **Law enforcement**

Law enforcement services are provided by the County Sheriff's office, located in the Town of Charlotte Court House, in the County Administration Complex. The County Law Enforcement Building houses the Sheriff's Department, Jail, Magistrate's Office, and Dispatch/E-911 Center. The Virginia State Police has primary responsibility for enforcement of traffic laws within the county.

### **Health Department**

The local branch of the State Health Department is located at 270 David Bruce Ave, Charlotte Court House, VA 23923. The Department provides a variety of services related to environmental health, emergency preparedness, disease control, Women, Infants and Children program, and other health programs and outreach.

### **Parks and Recreation**

The Town has no public parks and recreation facilities. However, there are some private facilities such as the Dixie Youth Ballpark.

### **Other Facilities**

In addition to the public facilities cited above, various other County public and private facilities are located in the Town of Charlotte Court House, including the Courthouse, Virginia Extension Office, Human Services Building, Charlotte Learning Center, Charter Oak Center, and Apex Day Support Services.

### 3.0 Economic Development

The Southside region, which includes the Town and Charlotte County, has faced significant and continual changes in the economic environment during the past few decades, and the Town has been directly and indirectly affected by these changes. The agriculture and forestry sectors have remained relatively strong in recent years, with an increase in the number of farms and amount of land in farms in the County, and an increase in the total market value of farm products sold.

As the agriculture sector continues to evolve, opportunities to link it to tourism are opening up as well, particularly in conjunction with the region's historic sites, scenic resources, and outdoor recreational activities. These opportunities are important for the Town, as it is the socio-economic and political center of the community and a focal point for visitors and residents alike.

Overall, growth in population and jobs has been slow in the region, with some areas losing people and jobs, due to some of the larger trends cited above. Yet the region has significant resources with which to strengthen the economy related to technology and demographics, including tourism, health care, broadband interconnectivity, and wood products manufacturing.

Key economic concerns and opportunities identified by citizens include:

- The need for job expansion
- The need to improve the Town's tax base
- Marketing of the Town's assets
- The desire and opportunity for additional restaurants, which could serve a "boutique" market niche
- The potential for an expanded telework sector, including part-time or partial telework activity
- Keep the Town largely as it is – that is, do not overwhelm the Town with change - while recognizing the need for economic expansion in order to support preservation

#### Tourism

One major economic opportunity for exploration is tourism and travel. With historic resources, beautiful countryside, hunting and the possibility of agri-tourism, there are many reasons to grow the tourism industry in Charlotte Court House and Charlotte County. Charlotte Court House should encourage more restaurants and dining opportunities for visitors and residents alike, as well as small scale lodging. Outdoor dining could also be successful in the area for a majority of the year. Once tourists are attracted, dining and cultural activities give them a reason to stay and spend money.

The strongest tourism resource of the Town is its collection of historic buildings and outdoor spaces associated with the Jefferson-designed Courthouse. These buildings, and the Courthouse structure in particular, have the potential for serving as the basis for a new infusion of tourists if the Town, County, and related entities throughout Virginia can coordinate their efforts to promote visitation to buildings that were designed or influenced by Thomas Jefferson.

#### Telework

The Town of Charlotte Court House has numerous positive aspects that could make it a potential spot for economic investment and new housing opportunities. As previously noted, the Town is located within proximity to both Lynchburg and Richmond. The region also offers a favorable

climate and lower than average cost of living. The prime agricultural land within Charlotte County is not just an economic amenity, it is also a visual asset. The walkable nature of the Town combined with the intact historic resources maintain the authenticity of place, linkages to the past and current quality of life. All of these positive qualities could be used to attract new economic activity and residents to the area.

Broadband connectivity is available in the county government complex in Charlotte Court House, in the public schools, and via hybrid-fiber-coax (cable-modem) service in the incorporated towns. In the rural areas, the use of wireless internet LTE modems and satellite internet has increased significantly in the last few years.

Several broadband initiatives are underway that will provide increased service options to the towns and broadband access to some outlying areas in the county.

Charlotte Court House is in a position to encourage telecommuters. By providing Broadband throughout the Town, the opportunity would be open for anyone to live here and work from their home office and computer, either on full or part-time basis (one to three days per week). This style of work is increasingly common throughout the Commonwealth. New residents could increase the tax base and open up opportunities for more retail establishments and commercial opportunities, thus bolstering the local economy. New residents also foster the possibility of new local businesses to serve their needs while helping the economy.

### Retirement/Assisted Living/Health Care

The number of individuals aged 60 and older is increasing 60% faster than the population overall, so it is important for communities to consider how they might attract retirees. Improving the economic health of a region through investing in retirees could serve to retain young people and families in Charlotte Court House by the creation of new jobs and related services.<sup>10</sup>

Trends are beginning to indicate that baby boomers will participate more in phased retirement programs, where they reduce their work schedules, rather than the traditional "cliff" retirement, where they are working one day, retired the next. This trend could support the goal to lay the infrastructure for this group to telecommute in Charlotte Court House. Also important will be planning for new housing types such as assisted living facilities, units geared towards one story living, and retirement homes. This group will also have healthcare needs, so the Town should evaluate what services are currently available and what improvements might be necessary to serve elderly populations as well as families.<sup>11</sup>

### Agriculture

With a Virginia Cooperative Extension Office on LeGrande Avenue, Charlotte Court House already has a strong partnership with Virginia Tech to promote agricultural education and opportunities in the area. This partnership could be built upon to increase agri-tourism and new agricultural businesses.

Community viability programs are dedicated to strengthening communities and their economic viability by creating innovative programs that allow citizens and local governments to respond to local issues. The faculty can assess community needs, design a plan of action, and determine the appropriate delivery method suitable for various programs. Such a program should be an ongoing resource for new ideas in planning and economy.

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<sup>10</sup> [www.baby-boomer-retirement.com](http://www.baby-boomer-retirement.com)

<sup>11</sup> SHRM Research, Visions No.2-2005, Exploring the Future of Workplace

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Office can specifically assist in strengthening the local food system for Charlotte County. From an economic perspective, encouraging the buying and consumption of local foods can have a positive impact on the local economy by recirculating and reinvesting dollars in local independent businesses.

**3.0 Economic Development Goal:**

Expand the local economy by adding compatible businesses that take advantage of local resources and employ local residents, attract new residents and visitors, and expand the tax base.

**Economic Development Policy:** Encourage the establishment, attraction, and expansion of businesses and jobs that are appropriate for the Town, such as government agencies, institutions, restaurants, boutique lodging, compatible, value-added light industrial uses, and home-based businesses.

## 4.0 Partnerships and Collaboration

Collaboration is a key to the success of most public and private organizations in today's world. Important partners for the Town to collaborate with include the county, the state, adjacent towns and counties in the region, and private businesses and civic groups. By collaborating, these entities can reach the best strategic decisions, as well as share and leverage limited resources to mutual benefit.

As Charlotte Court House and Charlotte County evolve, each community directly influences the other. For example, an economic development project may influence the overall economy, but increase population and add service needs for public facilities. Likewise, new residential development can affect public facilities (schools, parks, police/fire) and infrastructure (water, sewer, roads).

In comparing the goals of The Town of Charlotte Court House expressed in this plan with the current Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan, many shared goals can be a point of initial collaboration, ongoing momentum and mutual success. Some of the shared goals include:

### Housing Affordability

The County would like to increase the availability of quality, affordable housing to benefit all citizens in all areas of the county, including specific emphasis on the elderly and disabled. They also plan to improve the condition of existing housing units by participating in housing improvement programs and pursuing grants for housing rehabilitation and modification, and for community improvements.

### Truck Route

Charlotte County recognizes the detrimental effect of truck traffic on the historic core of Charlotte Court House. Their plan proposes the construction of a truck route around the Town to alleviate this issue. Groups interested in either goal can work together to insure this priority gets included on the VDOT 6-year plan.

### Increased access to Broadband Service

Several broadband initiatives are underway in the county. Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (MBC), a non-profit cooperative established to provide technology infrastructure to assist economic revitalizations efforts in Southside Virginia, has extended their fiber network along major highways in the county. Multiple fiber-to-the-home internet service providers are constructing fiber networks in the County, with at least one of those providers indicating that they will construct new fiber optic internet in the town within three years. The availability of broadband access will provide a major boost to Charlotte County's economic development efforts.

### Promote Tourism

Tourism is significant to the local economy, and could provide much more revenue in the future if historic sites in the region are protected and promoted. New and existing tourism related businesses help attract both visitors and residents alike while providing job opportunities. Charlotte Court House and Charlotte County can also join forces to protect the rural character of this area by increasing Agritourism.

Charlotte County's plan includes a goal to construct a county welcome or visitors' center which could also assist in increasing tourism in this region.

### Partnership Between Town and County

Charlotte County supports a county-wide approach to land use planning, including joint county-town efforts in facilities and infrastructure planning, as well as historic preservation and rehabilitation. New construction should respect local character, and a clear edge should be maintained between Town and countryside.

Charlotte Court House, as one of the primary areas of economic development within the County, should be provided with adequate public facilities, infrastructure and services.

Charlotte County wants to identify historic assets that could become destinations. Key buildings in Charlotte Court House could benefit from the preparation of a historic structure report and stabilization plan for the old school buildings.

A shared goal is the protection and preservation of unique land areas by such methods as conservation easements, historic designation, scenic easements, protective zoning, etc. Both localities could work to identify these assets and act accordingly before any irreparable damage ensues.

To maintain the quality of life desired for the future, it is essential that both the county and the Town work in close partnership to coordinate development and economic activities. By jointly managing growth and change in the region, both governments can successfully enhance the economy, promote sustainable development, and protect the overall public health and well-being.

#### **4.0 Collaboration Goals:**

Work collaboratively with Charlotte County to address issues of mutual concern and to accomplish shared goals and objectives.

Work collaboratively with state agencies, adjacent towns, the regional commission, and private businesses and groups to identify shared goals, projects and programs that can be better achieved through combined efforts and shared resources.

#### **Collaboration Policy:**

Develop formal procedures for regular, ongoing Town-County communication and coordination, at both the staff and elected official levels. Maintain organizational structures and processes to ensure continued cooperation and joint efforts in all matters of public policy, at the County, regional, and state levels.

## VI. Plan Implementation Strategies

### Introduction

An essential component of the Comprehensive Plan is the strategies and actions that the Town will use to achieve the goals of its Plan. This section sets forth those strategies, organized by the same general topics as the goals and policies:

- 1.0. Preservation and Revitalization Strategies
- 2.0. Infrastructure Strategies
- 3.0. Economic Development Strategies
- 4.0. Partnership Strategies

The implementation strategies identified here are very inclusive, and yet the Town's resources and capacity for action and investment is relatively limited due to its small size. Thus, it is important for the Town to set priorities for action.

All of the proposed actions are important and desirable, but some are truly critical, which need to be identified. Further, it important to set priorities for both short term and long term actions; some actions are more likely to be achieved in a short time frame, while others may take many years, even though they may be equally or more important.

The top priorities for short and long term actions are as follows:

#### Short Term Time Frame

- Action 4.1.1: Maintain a cooperative and collaborative relationship between the Town and County (*short term and ongoing*)
- Action 2.1.3: Reconfigure on-street parking in the Court House area to facilitate turning off of Hwy40/47 onto Hwy 47 (Legrande Avenue) towards Drakes Branch.
- Action 2.4.1: Work toward full broadband access in Town

#### Long Term Time Frame

- Action 2.1.1: Create Alternative Routes for Truck Traffic
- Action 2.2.1: Extend Sewer Service throughout Town's core area

These top priorities can be pursued simultaneously and achieved independently of each other.

## 1.0. Preservation and Revitalization Strategies

### 1.1 Conserve Historic Buildings

*Policy:*

Work with the County, the state, and the public at large, to preserve and protect the historic fabric of the Town.

Priority Actions:

- 1.1.1 Enforce the Historic District Regulations in the Town Zoning Ordinance (by the Historic District Review Board, Zoning Administrator, and Council).
- 1.1.2 Continue to review and develop Historic District Design Guidelines (by the Historic District Review Board and Council).

### 1.2 Promote Compatible Land Use through Appropriate Infill Development, Housing, Adaptive Reuse, Revitalization and Redevelopment.

*Policies:*

- Land Use: Ensure that new development is of a form, scale, and location that meets modern economic needs while also being compatible with the historic character of the Town.
- Housing: Encourage a variety of compatible infill residential development, including single family and small multi-family buildings, accessory dwellings on single-family lots, and mixed-use development on appropriate sites within the Town. New housing should include units that add to the supply of affordable rental housing for local residents.
- Encourage the rehabilitation, maintenance or demolition of substandard housing stock.

- Infill: Encourage new construction and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, particularly in the Village Center and Historic Districts, while ensuring that such construction is compatible with historic structures and streetscapes, and sensitively defines traditional open space areas.

Priority Actions:

- 1.2.1 Utilize the Town Zoning Ordinance to promote the Town's Land Use Policies (by the Town Planning Commission and Council).
- 1.2.2 Utilize the Town Subdivision Ordinance (by the Town Planning Commission and Council).
- 1.2.3 Implement the Housing Plan component of this comprehensive plan through the following actions (as presented in the housing plan section of this comprehensive plan):
  - Facilitate an enlargement of the supply of affordable rental housing to:
    - permit the development of accessory dwelling units in conjunction with single-family dwellings, and
    - permit the development of residential dwelling units on the upper stories of commercial structures [within Village Center District].

## 2.0. Infrastructure Strategies

### 2.1 Improve Transportation

Policies:

- Create one or more alternative routes for truck traffic so as to protect the historic buildings in the center of Town. Alternative routes may include existing state highways, as well as the construction of one or more new road linkages that allow trucks to by-pass the center of Town.
- Improve connectivity of streets, paths and sidewalks throughout Town, with special focus on ensuring the comfort, convenience and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Priority Actions:

- 2.1.1 Create Alternative Routes for Truck Traffic:
  - Establish a *Truck Route Task Force* to lead the effort in coordination with County, VDOT, and landowners.
  - Identify alternative corridors.
  - Evaluate and rank the feasibility of each alternative.
  - Identify funding sources for one or more top alternatives.
  - Select the preferred alternative.

- Design the improvements.
- Establish a schedule for improvements.

2.1.2 Increase sidewalk linkages:

- Establish a *Sidewalk and Streetscape Task Force* to lead the effort to improve sidewalks.
- Identify priorities for new sidewalk connections.
- Identify funding sources.
- Design the improvements.
- Establish schedule for improvements.

2.1.3 Reconfigure On-Street Parking in the area around the Court House:

- Eliminate on-street parking on Hwy 40/47 opposite the terminus of LeGrande Avenue (Hwy 47 South).
- Adjust centerline to provide greater turn radius for truck traffic.
- Consult with VDOT
- Identify funding sources.
- Design the improvements.
- Establish schedule for improvements.

## 2.2 Improve Water and Sewer Systems

*Policies:*

- Extend sewer service throughout Town.
- Extend water service throughout Town.

Priority Actions:

2.2.1 Extend Sewer Service throughout Town:

- Identify priorities for new extensions.
- Identify capacity needs.
- Identify funding sources.
- Design the improvements.
- Establish schedule for improvements.

2.2.2 Extend Water Service throughout Town:

- Identify priorities for new extensions.
- Identify capacity needs.
- Identify funding sources.
- Design the improvements.
- Establish schedule for improvements.

## 2.3 Improve Streetscapes and Designed Green Infrastructure

*Policies:*

- Streetscapes: Improve the streetscape of the major streets in Town such as adding street trees, defining on-street parking areas with striping, and relegating off-street parking to the rear of buildings. Relocate utility lines underground.
- Designed Green Infrastructure: The Town will work with State agencies, Charlotte County, and local landowners to implement a variety of voluntary and regulatory methods to design, build, expand and enhance the system of designed green spaces throughout Town, especially in and around the historic core area.

Priority Actions:

2.3.1 Prepare and implement a streetscape plan for specific improvements in the historic core of Town (Under the guidance of the *Sidewalk and Streetscape Committee*, with consulting assistance from private, regional, or state resources)

- Obtain technical assistance
- Prepare conceptual design
- Review and refine with Town citizens
- Identify priorities for implementation
- Identify funding sources
- Establish phased schedule for improvements.

2.3.2 Review the Zoning Ordinance to provide for the creation of public and private green space elements that preserve and enhance the pedestrian-oriented qualities of the historic core.

## 2.4 Improve Broadband Internet Service

*Policy:*

The Town will work with the state, county, private service providers, local businesses and residents, to provide affordable access to the fiber backbone line in Town.

Priority Actions:

- 2.4.1 Continue to work with County initiatives toward full broadband access in Town

## 3.0. Economic Development Strategies

### 3.1 Promote Compatible Economic Development

*Policy:*

- Encourage the establishment, attraction, and expansion of businesses and jobs that are appropriate for the Town, such as government agencies, institutions, restaurants, retail, boutique lodging, and compatible value-added light industrial uses and home-based businesses.

Priority Actions:

3.1.1. Upgrade Town Web Site

Improve the capability of the Town's web site to optimize search engine visibility, enhance social media marketing, and coordinate with regional partners.

3.1.2 Establish Jefferson Architectural Trail

Work with partners across the Commonwealth to design, establish, and promote a "Jefferson Architectural Trail" which tourists can follow as a self-guided tour to visit buildings throughout Virginia that were designed or influenced by Thomas Jefferson, including Charlotte Courthouse.

The effort to establish a Jefferson Architectural Trail relates to other heritage trails in the region, including the Lee's Retreat driving tour, the Wilson-Kautz Raid Civil War driving tour, as well as the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail.

In addition to the relevant town and county governments, the Commonwealth Regional Commission, The Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, other potential partners specific to this effort would include:

- Belle Grove, Inc. and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (*Belle Grove Plantation Manor House, Middletown, Virginia*)
- Virginia General Assembly (*Virginia State House, Richmond, Virginia*)
- University of Virginia (*The Rotunda and The Lawn, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia*)
- The Thomas Jefferson Foundation (*Monticello, Charlottesville, Virginia*)
- Farmington Country Club (*Main Portico, Jefferson Room, Charlottesville, Virginia*)
- Nelson County (*Jail, Nelson County Courthouse Grounds, Lovingston, VA*)
- The Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest (*Poplar Forest, Forest, Virginia*)

**Note** that the success of the Jefferson Architectural Trail will rely largely on the collaborative partnerships that are developed between all of the entities that are currently the stewards of those properties. The Town of Charlotte Court House is the first known initiator of this particular tourism program, and thus needs to take the lead in putting it forward.

3.1.3. Promote Tourist Related Business

In conjunction with the other implementation efforts, including update of the zoning ordinance, and infrastructure improvements, promote the expansion and establishment of businesses that serve visitors, including

restaurants, compatible lodging facilities, and tourist and recreational products and services.

## 4.0 Partnership Strategies

### 4.1 Expand Collaboration

*Policy:*

- Work collaboratively with Charlotte County, other local towns, the private sector, and regional, state, and federal agencies, to address issues of mutual concern and to accomplish shared goals and objectives. Develop formal procedures for regular, ongoing communication and coordination, at the levels of the staff, and elected and appointed officials.

*Priority Actions:*

- 4.1.1 Reach out to County and Town officials to continue a cooperative and collaborative relationship for all jointly important public sector projects and initiatives.
  - Mayor, Town manager, or designated Town officials meet with County officials.
- 4.1.2 Reach out to private sector leaders to maintain and/or upgrade a cooperative relationship and explore opportunities for joint action in pursuit of Town goals and objectives.
  - Mayor, Town manager, or designated Town officials meet with business representatives to identify recommendations for optimal ways to establish and maintain a collaborative relationship between Town, business, and County.
- 4.1.3 Reach out to Regional Agencies and other Local Jurisdictions - Maintain and/or upgrade relationships and involvement with regional agency program representatives, and officials from other counties, cities and towns to explore opportunities for joint action in pursuit of shared goals and objectives.
  - Mayor or Council representative will maintain working relationships with all parties through representation in the Virginia Municipal League (VML), and through direct contact with agency and jurisdictional representatives.
- 4.1.4 Reach out to State and Federal Government Agencies - Maintain and/or upgrade relationships and involvement with key state and federal agency representatives and explore opportunities for joint action in pursuit of Town goals and objectives.

- Mayor and Town manager establish an up to date contact list for key agencies relevant to the Town; makes initial or follow-up contact with each, and establishes mutual agreements as to how best to maintain productive contact and information sharing.

## 5.0 General Background and Survey Information

### 5.1 Charlotte County

The Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan provides demographic, economic, and environmental and other background information applicable to the Town and is available on the County's webpage ([Charlotte County \(charlottecountyva.gov\)](http://charlottecountyva.gov)) and such data was considered in the development of this plan.

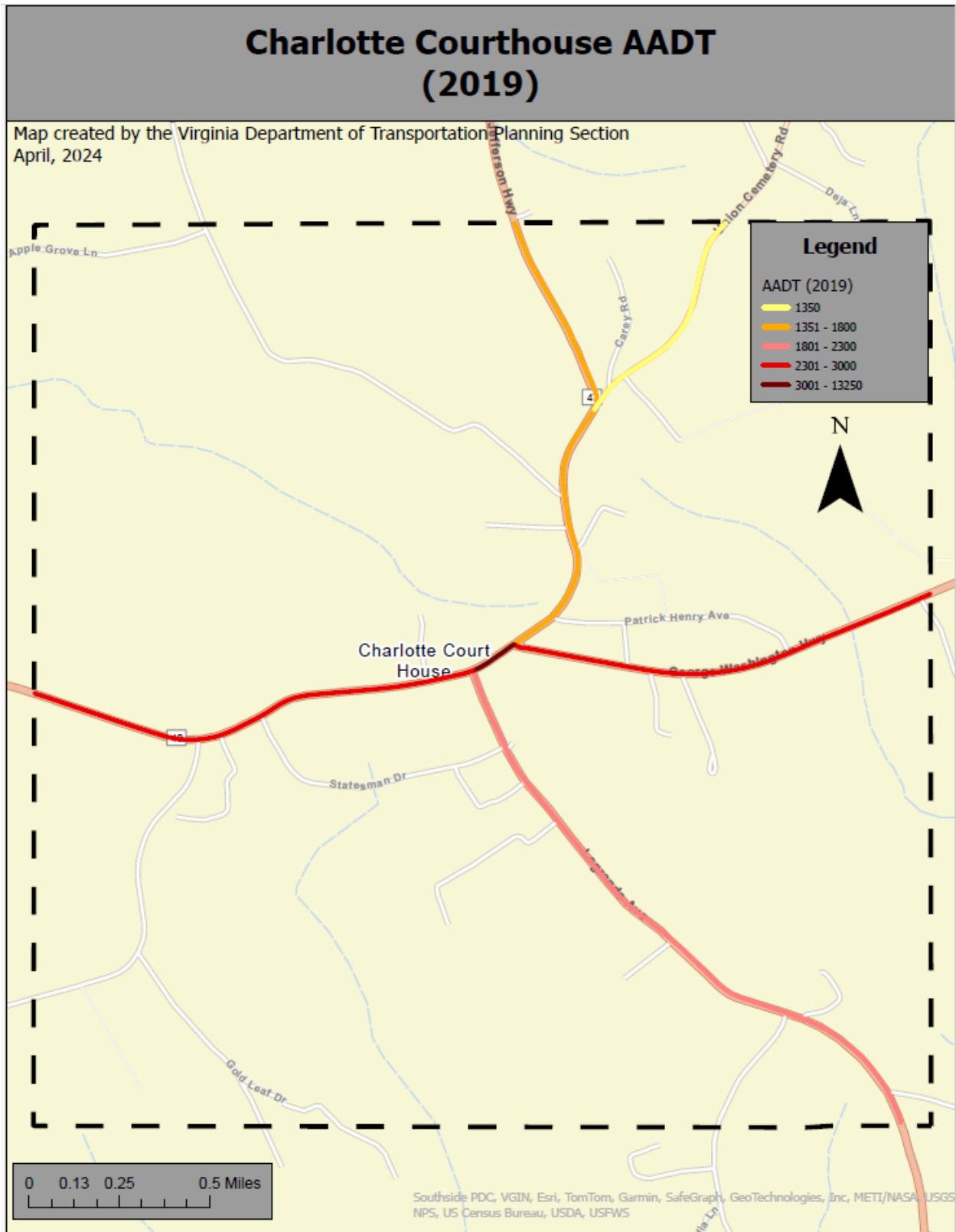
### 5.2 Town of Charlotte Court House

The Town website provides the Town's annual budget and audit, zoning and subdivision ordinances, and other relevant information about the Town ([Home \(towncch.com\)](http://towncch.com)).

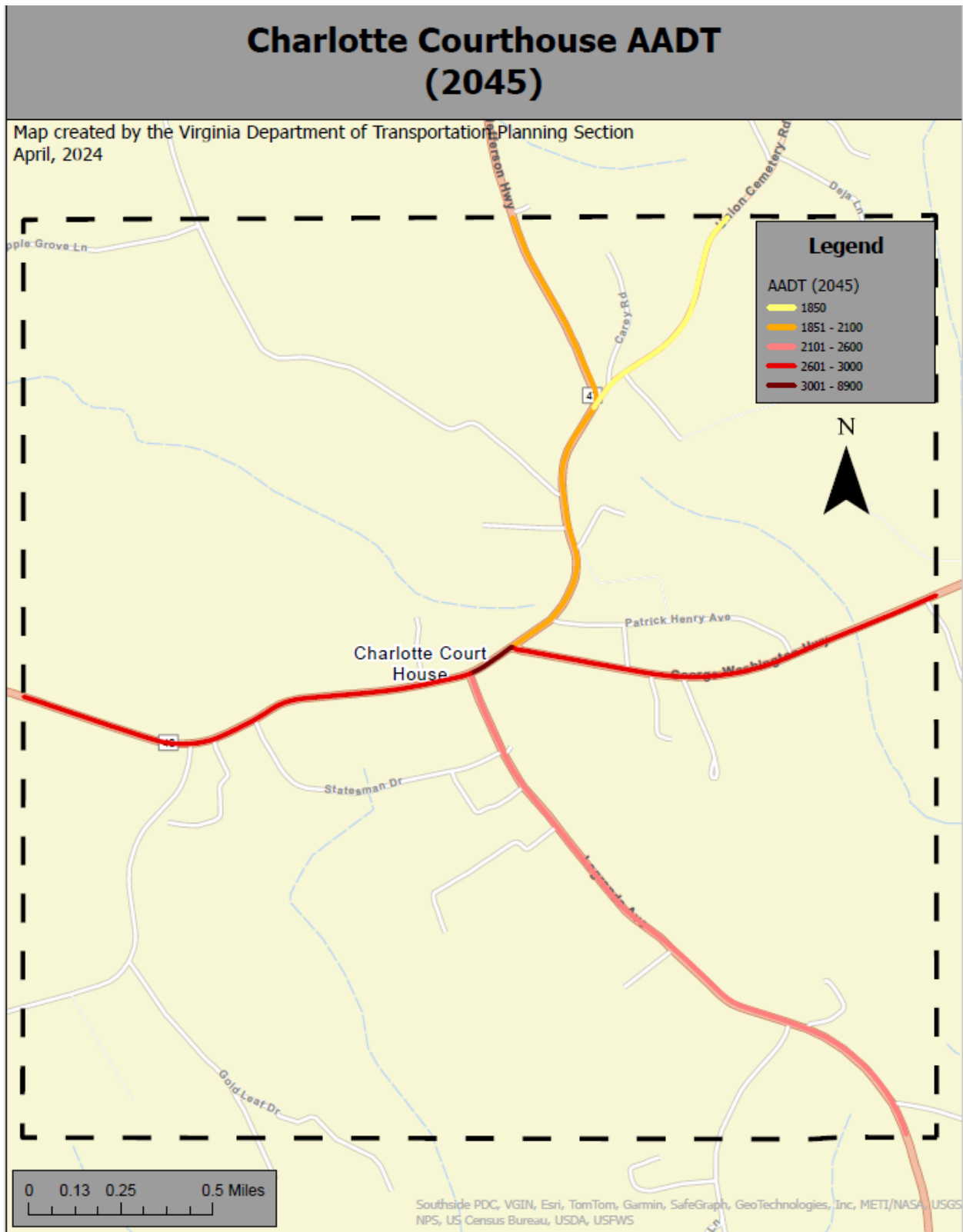
### 5.3 Supplemental VDOT Information

The following pages contain supplemental VDOT information

Map of current Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) in Charlotte Court House



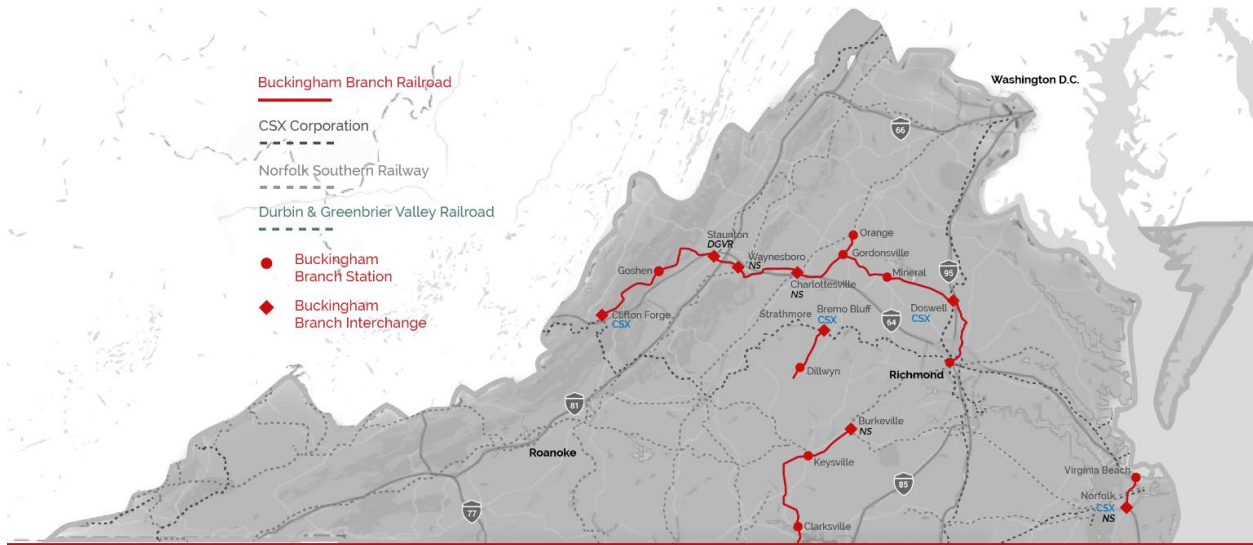
Map of future AADT in Charlotte Court House

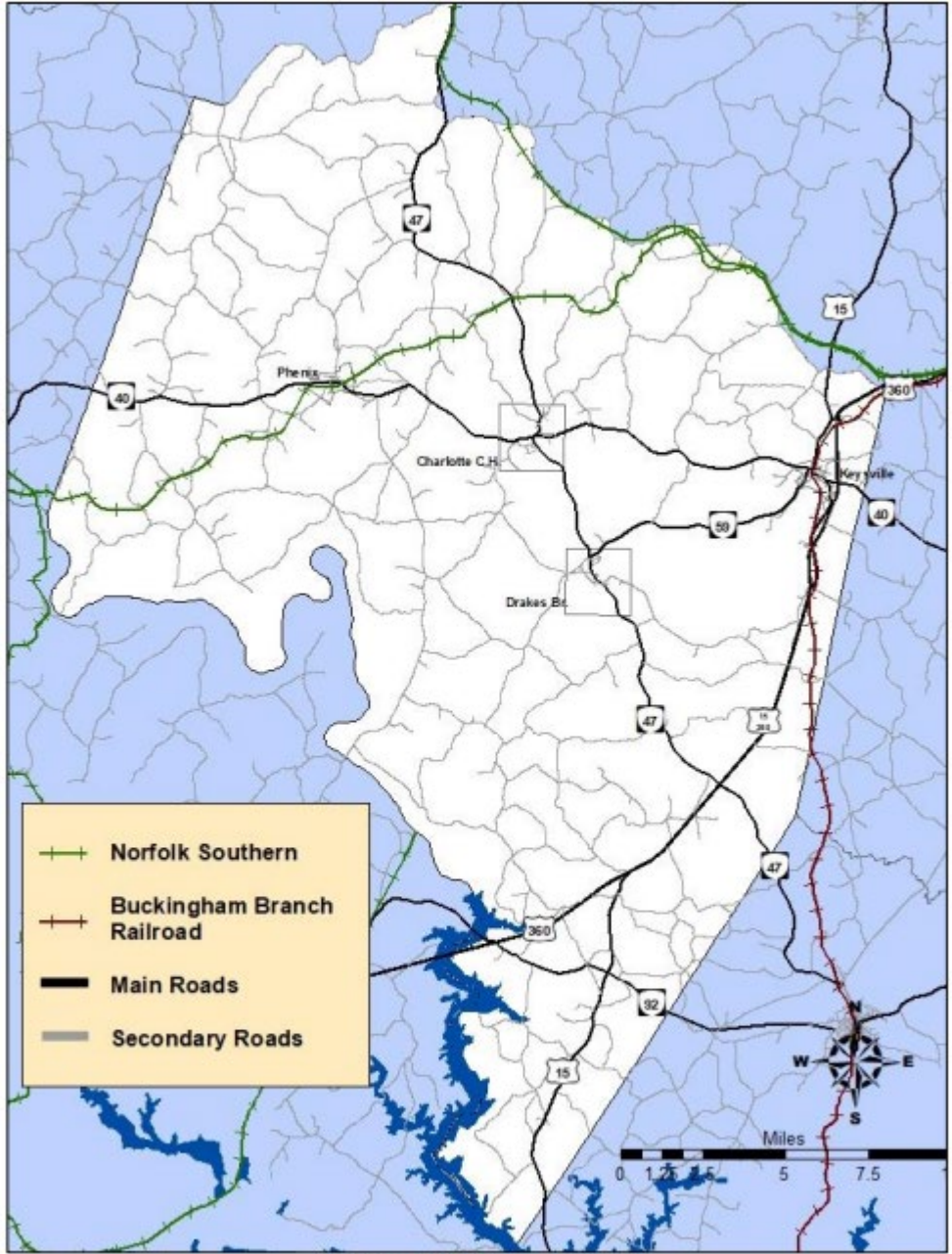


Rail Service:

There is no passenger rail service in the area. The closet passenger rail is in Richmond and Lynchburg, which both provide Amtrak services. The closet rail line that provides local freight is in Keysville, Charlotte Court House's neighboring town. (see map below)

Source: <http://buckinghambranch.com/services/>





Map created by CRC – July 2022  
Source: VDOT, Buckingham Branch Railroad, Norfolk-Southern

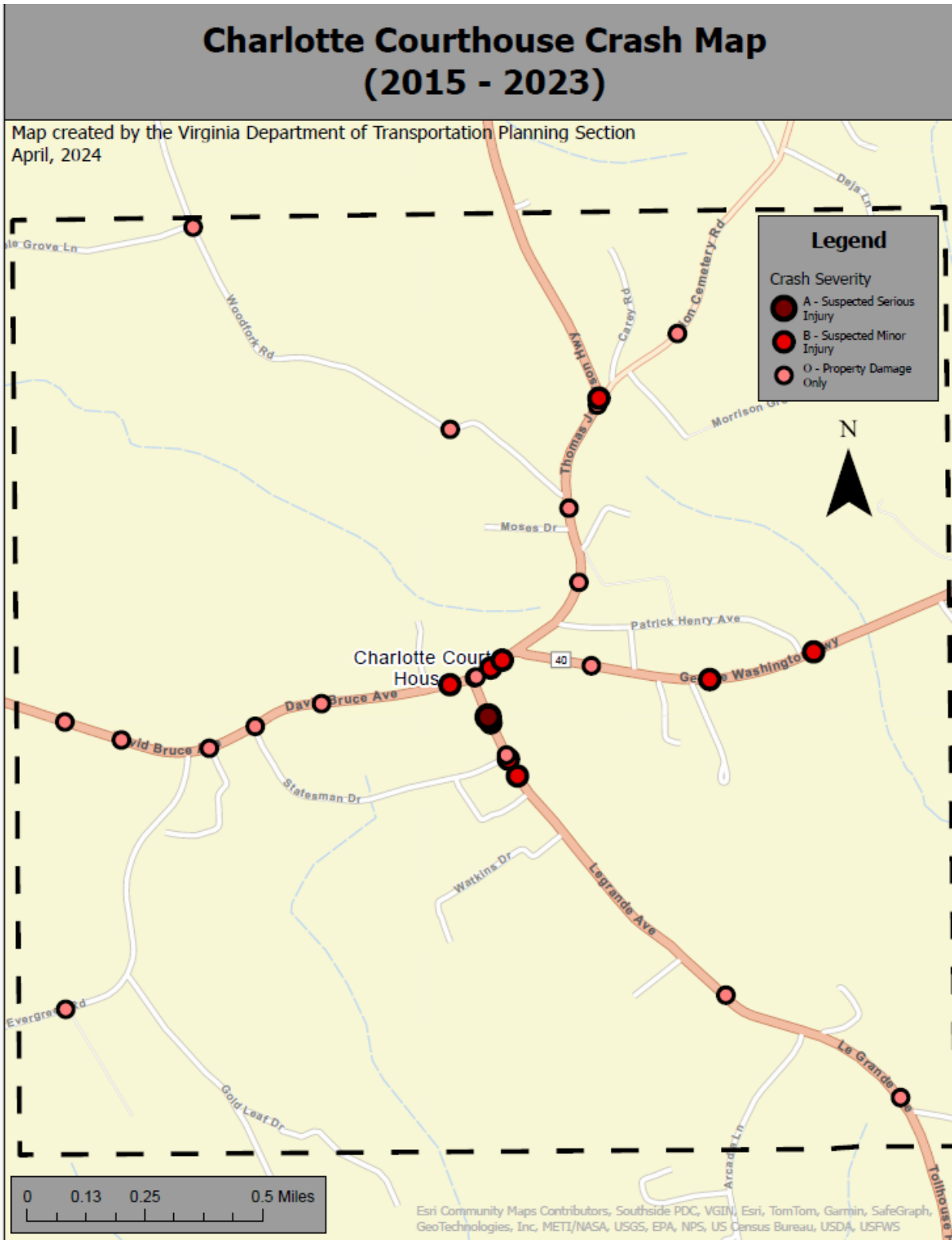
Airports:

The nearest airport with scheduled commercial air passenger service is in Lynchburg, Virginia (36 miles). The closest major regional air hubs are located at Richmond Virginia (78 miles), and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina (82 miles). There are four airports with paved runways in the regional Planning District – Farmville, Crewe, Blackstone (Fort Pickett), and Lunenburg County. Crewe Airport is classified as a *local service* facility; all other airports are basic utility facilities.

Buses:

The nearest bus company is Greyhound Bus Lines in Farmville, Virginia (22 miles) and Lynchburg, Virginia (38 miles).

Crashes, Town of Charlotte Court House Map



Crash Data, Town of Charlotte Court House

YEAR	PDO	Visible Injury	Severe Injury	Total
2015	3	0	0	3
2016	1	0	0	1
2017	2	0	0	2
2018	5	2	0	7
2019	2	2	0	4
2020	0	2	0	2
2021	2	2	1	5
2022	2	1	0	3
2023	1	0	0	1
Totals				28

Total Roadway Miles in Charlotte Court House

Total Local Roadway Miles	10.49 Miles
Rural Minor Arterial	4.57 Miles
Rural Local	5.44 Miles
Rural Major Collector	0.48 Miles

Highway Functional Classification Plan

Rural Minor Arterial- These highways link cities and large towns and provide an integrated network for intrastate and inter-county service.

Rural Local- These roads provide access to adjacent land and serve travel of short distances as compared to the higher systems.

Rural Major Collector- These highways provide service to any county seat, large towns or other major traffic generators not served by the arterial system.

[Functional Classification Web Map | Virginia Roads \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Charlotte Court House:

VA 40/VA 47 (David Bruce Ave) /VA 47 (LeGrande Ave)

Bridges:

Charlotte Court House has no bridges within town limits.

NHSA/STRAHNET:

Charlotte Court House has no NHSAs and STRAHNET designated roads in the locality.

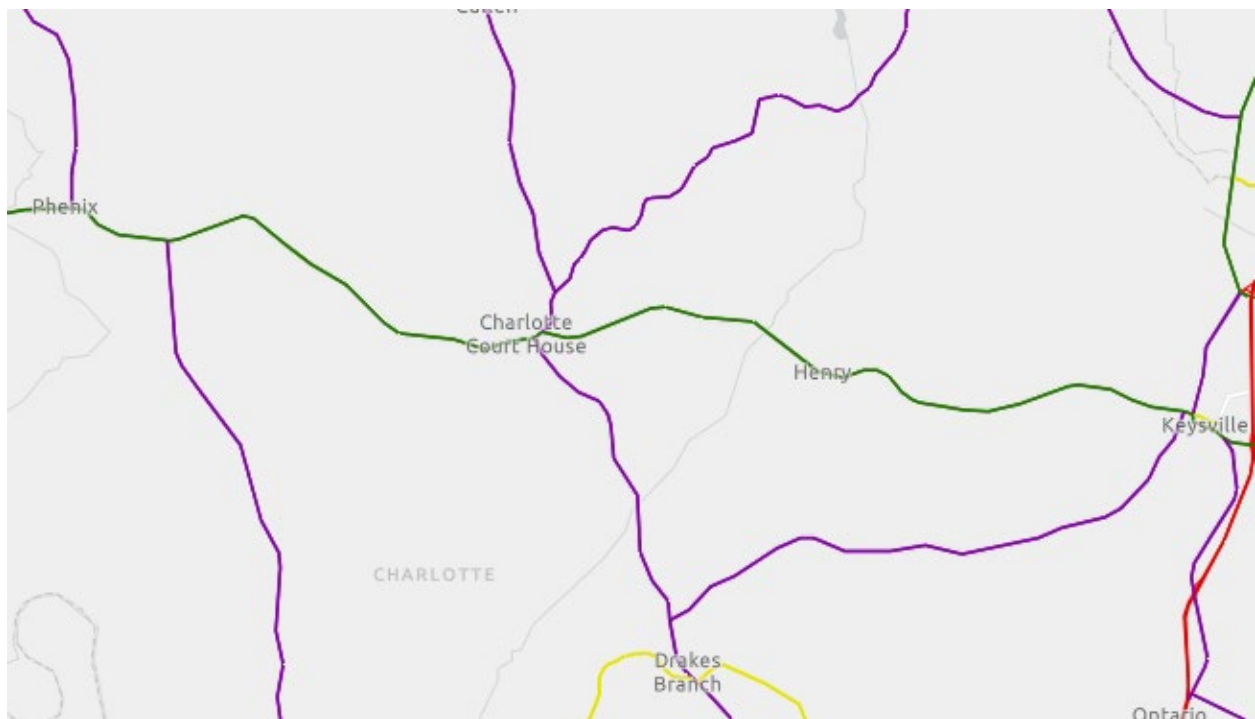
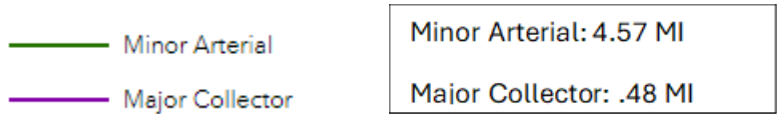
Bike/Ped:

Charlotte Court House has no PDC bike plan. Charlotte County has an adopted bicycle plan which includes the Town of Charlotte Court House. Charlotte Court House have sidewalk systems that are maintained by VDOT.

Public Transportation: Citizens of Charlotte Court House have no access to public transportation and this is a common characteristic for the entire county.

SYIP: Charlotte Court House has no SYIP projects in the locality. (maps N/A)

Functional Classification of Roadways:

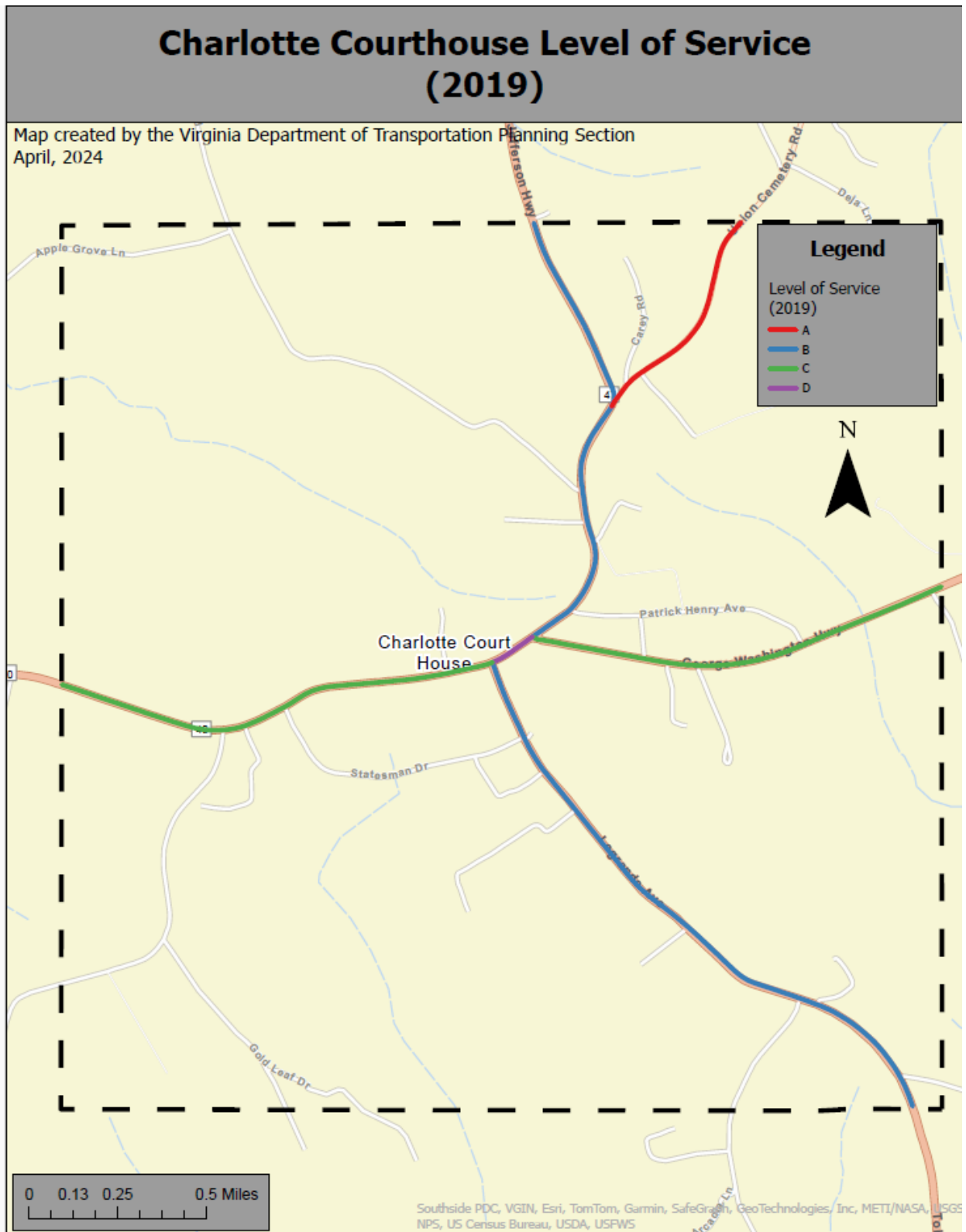


Traffic Volumes/Level of Service/Volume-to-Capacity Ratio

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) compiles data to assess the condition of roads, highways, bridges, and large culverts. VDOT conducts a program where traffic count data is gathered from sensors in or along roads and highways. From these data, estimates of the average number of vehicles that traveled each segment of road are calculated. Annual data going back to 2001 can be seen at <http://www.virginiadot.org/info/ct-TrafficCounts.asp> (Traffic Volumes Maps). Level of Service is defined as follows:

- Level of Service A: Free-flow traffic with individual users virtually unaffected by the presence of others in the traffic stream.
- Level of Service B: Stable traffic flow with a high degree of freedom to select speed and operating conditions but with some influence from other users.
- Level of Service C: Restricted flow that remains stable but with significant interactions with others in the traffic stream. The general level of comfort and convenience declines noticeably at this level.
- Level of Service D: High-density flow in which speed and freedom to maneuver are severely restricted and comfort and convenience have declined even though flow remains stable.

Current



Future:

