

Albemarle County Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2003/04 – 2005/06 Plan of Action

As of October 2004



Introduction

Albemarle County is a community in transition, with challenges and opportunities presented by our continued growth, urbanization, and diversity.

Albemarle County believes to be successful, we must respond strategically to the needs of our citizens and our changing environment while protecting our natural beauty and rural character. Over the past fourteen years, the County has engaged in organizational improvement and strategic planning activities. In 1992, The County initiated a strategic Quality Improvement Program (QulP), which focused on departmental strategic plans, employee training, and customer service initiatives. In 1994, the County, City and UVA organized their efforts around a joint "Vision" and strategic initiatives. In 1998, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's first official Strategic Plan, which combined County plans, goals and strategies into one document for clarity and focus.

In April 2002, the County Board of Supervisors focused the County's strategic directions for the next three years -2003 – 2005, which will guide the alignment of

resources and assist the County to respond effectively to the opportunities presented by our changing circumstances. (See chart on page 10 which highlights the County's achievements for the past 11 years)

Guided by the Board of Supervisors, County leadership developed the 2003 - 2005 Strategic Plan which includes timelines, objectives, strategies, and detailed action plans for seven specific goals.

This document outlines the County's Strategic Directions and the FY 2002-2003 to FY 2005/2006 Plan of Action.

How this Document is Organized

Section 1 includes a profile of Albemarle County. Section 2 includes the County's SWOT analysis, Citizen Survey results, Core Values, Leadership Philosophy, and an outline of the past 11 year's accomplishments as the County moves forward in its quest to become a High Performance Organization. Section 3 outlines the County's current Strategic Planning framework, and the FY 03/06 Plan of Action.

SECTION 1

Albemarle County Profile

Albemarle County is a community of approximately 86,700* people nestled on the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The majority of the 723 square mile County is rural in nature, with the area adjoining Charlottesville consisting of a mixture of suburban, residential, commercial, and light industrial use. The County is just 114 miles southwest of Washington, D.C. and less than 60 miles from the state capital in Richmond. It is close to scenic mountain attractions like the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive, and Shenandoah National Park. Six rivers flow through the County, as do several streams. Roughly 50 percent of the County is forested, and mineral production includes crushed stone, sand, and soapstone. (*source: Weldon Cooper's Provisional Estimate for July 1, 2002)

County Government

Albemarle County adopted the County Executive form of government and organization in 1933. Under this form of government, the Board of County supervisors is vested with all policy-making powers

and responsibilities conferred by general law on county governing bodies. The Board of Supervisors is composed of six members, one from each magisterial district in the County. Supervisors are elected for four-year terms, which are staggered at two-year intervals.

The Board of Supervisors establishes the direction for the County's strategic plan. Other functions include making land use decisions, establishing growth and development policies, setting operational policies, and reviewing and adopting the County's operational and capital budgets, which set spending priorities. The County's development is guided by a long-range Comprehensive Plan. The Board's administrative responsibilities relate generally to overseeing the implementation and administration of policies through an appointed County Executive. Each year, the Board of Supervisors updates the Plan of Action.

The County Executive is a full-time manager appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

The County Executive is the chief executive officer of the County, responsible for implementing the policies set by the Board of Supervisors, and for directing, coord-

inating, and supervising the daily activities of county government. The County's Leadership Council consists of Department Heads, and executive staff members. The Leadership Council is responsible for carrying out the County's vision of a high performance organization by thinking strategically, developing and implementing policies that reflect the County's goals and core values, and providing leadership for the development and implementation of the strategic plan.

Population Growth

The Charlottesville Metropolitan area, which includes Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Green County and Fluvanna County, has the second-fastest growth rate in Virginia. The average annual population growth rate for Albemarle County over the past fifteen years has been approximately 2%. If the County continues to grow at that rate, the County's population is expected to reach 100,000 by the year 2010.

According to the U.S. Census, the median age of Albemarle County residents was 37.4 in 2000, compared to 31.7 in 1990. Twenty-five percent of the

population was under age 18, and the fastest growing segment of the population over the past ten years is those persons in the 55 to 65 age group.

Education

Albemarle County Public Schools include 16 elementary schools, five middle schools, and four high schools. The County's newest elementary school, Baker-Butler, opened in September of 2002. In addition, the County and the City of Charlottesville jointly operate the Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Center (CATEC), which provides vocational education for local students. Albemarle County also partners with other jurisdictions to operate Ivy Creek School, which provides alternative K-12 education for individuals with special learning needs.

Enrollment in public schools has grown steadily over the past decade. School enrollment increases have begun to slow a bit recently but is expected to surpass 13,000 by FY 2006.

The County is home to two institutions of higher learning, the University of Virginia and Piedmont Virginia Community College. University of Virginia is a nationally recognized public

university, which is comprised of the Darden Business School; the Schools of Architecture, Commerce, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Nursing, and Education; and the College of Arts and Sciences.

In FY 2001-2002, 87.5% of second graders in the County schools read at or above grade level. 57.8% of high school graduates earned an Advanced Studies diploma and 72% took the SATs compared to 46% nationally. The drop-out rate for 2001-2002 was a low 0.83%.

Land Development Trends

Rural Areas

In 2002, an estimated 49.3% of the population lived in rural areas and 50.7% in urban areas of Albemarle County.

Over the past decades, Albemarle County has seen a continuing loss of farms, both in number and acreage. This stems, in part, from declining agricultural-product revenues to support such farms.

About 690 square miles of the County are in the Rural Areas. Over 60 percent of the County is forested. There has been a relatively steady rate of residential development in the Rural Areas. Of the 1,720 new hous-

ing starts in 2002, 1,404 dwelling units (82%) were located in Designated Development Areas and 316 units (18%) were located in the Rural Areas.

Development Areas

The County encourages development to occur in designated areas of the county. In 1996, as part of the County's update of its Land-Use Plan, the Board of Supervisors decided to undertake a study about how the designated growth areas, the "Development areas," could and should provide more opportunities for new development, rather than have the boundaries expand into rural areas.

As a result of this study, Volume 1 of the Neighborhood Model was adopted on May 16, 2001. It provides direction for new land development and shows how master planning will help lay out a context for the new development. It also makes specific recommendations for integrating affordable housing into neighborhoods and will be the basis for ordinance revisions and broad policy changes related to parks, schools, and transportation.

The Crozet Development area was the first commu-

nity to be master-planned by the newly adopted Neighborhood Model.

Housing

As of July 2003, the total number of dwelling units in Albemarle County was 34,403. Of these, 22,820 were single-family detached homes, 2,172 were single-family townhouses, and 1,129 were single-family attached. There were 313 duplexes, 6,076 multi-family homes, and 1,893 mobile homes. The total value of new home construction for FY 2002 was \$161,021,250, with 1060 new dwelling units constructed. In 2002, the Board of Realtors reported a median sales price of \$226,730 for all home sales in the County. Five hundred sixty-one new families applied for rental housing assistance in 2002 and 272 of those were assisted with the obtainment of housing.

Public Safety

With over 100 sworn police officers and 17 sheriff's deputies, the County's crime rate is lower than both the state and national averages. The Albemarle County Police Department responded to approximately 66,878 calls for service in 2002, an increase from 2001. Due to

a change in the way the calls are tracked, the percentage increase from 2001 is unavailable.

Economy

Albemarle County enjoys a stable economy characterized by a relatively high-skilled and educated labor force and a very low unemployment rate. The predominant economic sectors are government, UVA, services, trade, and manufacturing.

Business Activity

Business activity in the County has steadily increased over the past decade. Sales tax revenue has increased each year, reflecting the fact that retail sales have been on the rise. Sales tax revenue for FY 2002- 03 is expected to reach \$10,100,000, and as in previous years, food and merchandise sales continue to account for nearly half of the County's retail sales.

Employment

Over the past twenty years the service and trade sectors have become increasingly important as sources of employment, while government and manufacturing have become less important. For example, service employment has increased from 14% in 1990 to 23% of all jobs in the County in

2000. Conversely, employment in manufacturing has decreased from 20% in 1990 to 10% of all jobs in 2000. (source: VEC ES 202 SIC Report) The average annual employment in all sectors in 2001 was 38,718 and 39,479 in 2002 (source: VEC ES 202 NAICS Report)

Albemarle County enjoys a very low unemployment rate, which has remained below the state and national averages for the past fifteen years. According to the VEC Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) report, in 2002, Albemarle County's unemployment rate was 2.3%, compared to the state-wide average of 4.1% and the national average of 5.8%.

Per Capita Income

Since 1990, per capita income in Albemarle County has increased from \$19,218 to \$30,947 in 2000, for a total increase of \$11,729, or 61% (not adjusted for inflation). The 1999 median family income is \$63,407, increasing 11% since 1989.

Funding County Services

Tax Rates

Although local property taxes account for 38% of our entire County budget, property taxes, real and personal, account for 57% of our local revenues. With a real estate property tax rate of \$0.76 per \$100 of assessed value, Albemarle County has the lowest tax rate for any county in Virginia with a population over 70,000. Since 1983, Albemarle County has transferred \$0.10 per \$100 of this collected tax to the City of Charlottesville per a revenue sharing agreement between the jurisdictions, so the County funds its operations on a net property tax rate of \$0.66. This rate is below the 2002 average of \$0.71 for all counties in Virginia and is more in line with the property tax rates of much smaller and more rural counties such as Bedford, Augusta, and Frederick.

Funding Services

As the County continues to urbanize in the areas around Charlottesville and other designated development areas, we are challenged to be able to provide appropriate levels of services for these higher density areas based on a more rural-oriented tax rate. The State

currently does not allow Virginia counties to diversify revenue sources in the same ways cities can. Without the flexibility to diversify revenue sources, counties must continue to rely heavily on property taxes to fund needed services.

Revenues

Local property taxes are the largest source of revenue for the County, making up 38% of all revenues in the FY 2004 Adopted Budget. Other local revenue sources and state revenue are the two next largest sources, making up 21% and 26% of all revenues, respectively. The remaining revenues consist of federal revenue, borrowed funds, use of fund balances, and transfers.

During the last four years, the County has had to rely more heavily on real estate taxes, while other sources of income have remained flat or decreased. State and federal revenues as a percentage of the overall County budget has remained relatively constant over the last several years.

Expenditures

The largest category of expenditures for the County is school operations, comprising 47% of all expenditures

in the FY 2004 Adopted Budget. In addition to school operations, the schools receive funds for capital projects and for school self-sustaining and grant programs. General government operations account for 27% of all expenditures in the FY 2004 Adopted budget. Of this, the largest percentage is dedicated to public safety programs.

SECTION 2

SWOT Analysis

During September and October of 2001, staff throughout the organization conducted an environmental analysis, using a strategic planning tool called: Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats Analysis frequently referred to as a "SWOT Analysis."

From this analysis, staff concluded that Albemarle County is in transition from a rural county to a more complex urbanizing one. This transition presents unique internal and external challenges for the county government. SWOT analysis helps the government to identify and address the changes it needs to make in order

to continue providing adequate services for its citizens.

Some common themes that occurred throughout County departments were:

Strengths: personnel, leadership, customer service, technology, resources, support, and benefits.

Weaknesses: communication, lack of adequate resources, insufficient work processes, recruitment/training/ professional development, management/ leadership/ support/culture, interpersonal staff relations, heavy workloads, salary/staff recognition/ lack of physical space.

Opportunities: take advantage of tools/ technology development, collaborate with community/ regional cooperation/ consolidation of services/ community partnerships, population-related growth/ changes, citizens – diversity/ involvement of educated citizenry, political environment.

Threats: population growth/ changes and resulting pressures, limited resources, unstable economy, negative view of government, technology changes, increasing workload demands.

In 2004, County staff conducted a second SWOT to provide information for the Board's 2004 Retreat.

Citizen Survey 2002

The County contracted with the University of Virginia's Center for Survey Research to conduct an extensive survey of county residents in April, 2001. The Center for Survey Research conducted a similar study in 1994. The 2002 survey was conducted to receive objective and balanced feedback about what is important to our citizens as we make choices about how to move forward. These valuable responses became an important element of our strategic planning and will continue to be one of the benchmarks against which we measure our efforts.

The goals of this survey were to assess residents' perception of quality of life in the County; rank goals for the strategic plan; determine the level of satisfaction with county services; assess residents' experience with, and attitudes toward, the County; and measure citizen opinion about policies for planning for the community's future.

Findings

In the area of "goals for the strategic plan":

- 90% said that providing quality education was very important, rating it first among all the goals in importance.
- Providing fire service, protecting water quality, and providing police service were also rated very important by well over 75% of the respondents.
- Items pertaining to environmental protection were ranked relatively high by citizens. In the top half of the goals list are preserving natural resources and open space and preserving farmland and forested land.
- Promoting economic growth and supporting cultural opportunities were the two least important goals. This survey shows that promoting economic growth has decreased in its level of importance since the 1994 Citizen Survey.
- In the area of "satisfaction with services":
- Overall, 92.7% of respondents said they

were satisfied with County programs and services. This represents a significant increase from 84.3% in 1994.

- While 93% of the respondents were satisfied with County services, 41% were very satisfied and 52% were somewhat satisfied.
- Public safety items showed a very high level of satisfaction, with levels over 90%.
- The satisfaction rating for quality of County schools was 83.7%
- Satisfaction for housing efforts differs by age, those in the youngest category, 18 to 25 years old, are the most satisfied, but satisfaction declines for older citizens.
- 64% of respondents reported they are satisfied with the County's efforts to manage growth.
- In the area of "quality of life" in Albemarle County:
 - Citizens rated life in Albemarle County as 8.10 on a ten point scale.
 - 73% rated the County's quality of life an "8" or better.
 - 18% rated the County a "10."

the beauty of the landscape.

In general the longer the length of residence in Albemarle, the higher the rating of quality of life.

Residents in the rural area ranked the County higher than residents in the development areas.

In the area of "attitudes toward government":

Overall, citizens of Albemarle County display a positive attitude toward their government, with 68% saying they trust the County government to do what is right always or most of the time. This is much higher than the national average of 49%.

85% were satisfied with the value they received from the County for their tax dollar.

67.5% favored keeping taxes and services at their current level.

To increase the convenience of interacting with the County, respondents favored expanding the County website, creating branch offices, and extending the hours of availability of ser-

vices.

In 2004, the County conducted another citizen survey to provide updated information for the Board of Supervisor's Retreat. Results of the 2004 Citizen Survey is available on the County's website.

Based on the County's understanding of data and trends, the County's past goals and achievements, and the results of the Citizen Survey, the County focused on four strategic directions, which serve as a foundation for the County's 2003- 2006 plan of action. Each year, the Plan of Action is updated to meet the challenges of our changing environment.

Strategic Management System

The County's Leadership Council is responsible for implementation of the strategic plan and specific members are responsible for the achievement of each priority objective.

Using web-based technology, the County has developed a Strategic Planning Management and Reporting System to track progress on action items and to assist with the communication of the

Strategic Plan across the departments.

The Leadership Council will continue to lead these efforts, report their progress to the Board of Supervisors on a Quarterly Basis and work to tie the strategic plan with the County's budgeting process.

Acknowledgements

This strategic plan and management system could not have been developed without the hard work and efforts by a number of County staff members. Significant contributions were made by:

Leadership Council
Management Team
"Strategic Theme" Teams
Office of Management and Budget
County Executive staff
IT Department

County of Albemarle's Eleven Year History – Albemarle's Quest to become a High Performance Organization and Strategic Planning Timeline

1992	1994	1995	1996	1998	2001	2002	2003
County begins High Performance and Quality Improvement Program (QuIP)	Organizational Development Team (ODT) Formed to Guide County's QuIP Initiative	Six QuIP Goal Teams Established to Develop QuIP Action Plans	Organizational Development Team holds celebration for 350 employees that graduated from QuIP training	Departments Develop Departmental Improvement Plans	County renews focus on Strategic Planning and Performance	Leadership Council Redefines Role and Develops Charter	Leadership Council Reviews and Redefines Organizational Values
County Develops Vision, Mission and Goals	Citizen Survey conducted on Planning Needs	County Conducts Employee Quality Improvement Survey	County forms Quality Council	County prepares first Organizational-wide Strategic Plan	Departments Identify Departmental Performance Outcomes	Board Holds Retreat to Identify Vision, Mission and Goals and timeline for 2003-2005 Strategic Plan	County establishes Strategic Management System
County Establishes Organizational Development Team	The City of Charlottesville, the County of Albemarle, and UVA developed a Community Vision Statement	Employees obtain formal QuIP training	Quality Council Identifies Organizational Values and Leadership Philosophy			County prepares Objectives, Strategies and Action Plans	

VISION

To maintain Albemarle County's stature as a quality community by promoting the values of education and lifelong learning, historic and scenic preservation, safety, affordability, cultural diversity, citizen participation and economic opportunity that make the County a desirable place in which to grow up, raise a family and grow old while preserving our natural resources, rural character and visual beauty for future generations.

MISSION

To Enhance the well-being and quality of life for all citizens through the provision of the highest level of public service consistent with the prudent use of public funds

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Provide High Quality Educational Opportunities for Albemarle County Citizens of all ages

2. Protect the County's Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources

3. Enhance the Quality of Life for all Albemarle County Citizens

4. Provide Effective and Efficient County services to the public in a courteous and equitable manner

GOALS

Create accessible opportunities for everyone in the community to learn, ensuring all educational services meet the needs of the changing demographics within the community

Meet the teaching and learning needs of all citizens along an appropriate continuum of ages and stages of development

Ensure the education system meets the workforce preparation needs of current and future employees and employers.

Position the County as a recognized leader in educational excellence

GOALS

Protect and/or preserve the County's rural character

Protect and/or preserve the County's natural resources

Provide for environmentally sensitive government operations at the local and regional level

GOALS

Make the County a safe and healthy community in which citizens feel secure to live, work and play

Promote a variety of safe, sanitary & affordable housing types

Develop and implement policies that address the county's growth and urbanization while continuing to enhance the factors that contribute to the quality of life in the county.

Develop and implement policies, including financial, that address the County's growing transportation needs. **NEW**

GOALS

Provide effective, responsive and courteous service to our customers

Fund County services in a fair, efficient manner and provide needed public facilities and infrastructure



_____ **OUR VISION** _____

To maintain Albemarle County's stature as a quality community by promoting the values of education and lifelong learning, historic and scenic preservation, safety, affordability, cultural diversity, citizen participation and economic opportunity that make the County a desirable place in which to grow up, raise a family and grow old while preserving our natural resources, rural character and visual beauty for future generations.

_____ **OUR MISSION** _____

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

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



1. Provide High Quality Educational Opportunities for Albemarle County Citizens of all Ages



2. Protect the County's Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources



3. Enhance the Quality of Life for all our Citizens



4. Provide Effective and Efficient County Services to the Public in a Courteous and Equitable Manner

Strategic Direction #1

*Provide High Quality
Educational
Opportunities for
Albemarle County
Citizens of all Ages*

*FY 03/04 - 05/06
Plan of Action
Goals and Objectives*



Action Plans for these goals are currently under development.

1.1 Create accessible opportunities for everyone in the community to learn, ensuring all educational services meet the needs of the changing demographics within the community.

1.2 Meet the teaching and learning needs of all citizens along an appropriate continuum of ages and stages of development.

1.3 Ensure the education system meets the workforce preparation needs of current and future employees and employers.

1.4 Position the County as a recognized leader in educational excellence.

Strategic Direction #2

*Protect the County's
Natural, Scenic and
Historic Resources*

**FY 03/04 - 05/06
Plan of Action
Goals and Objectives**



2.1 Protect and/or preserve the County's rural character

2.1.1. By December 2003, the County will have a strategy in place to ensure the implementation of completed "neighborhood master plans."

2.1.2. By February 2005, the County will have an implementation plan in place that identifies the actions and resources necessary to carry out the County's newly revised rural area polices.

2.2 Protect and/or preserve the natural resources

2.2.1. By December 2004, the County, working in cooperation with Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, will have an integrated water resource plan in place that directs the County's efforts to address water quality and water supply.

2.3 Provide for environmentally sensitive government operations at the local and regional level

2.3.1. By July 2003, the County will have an environmental management system in place that ensures environmentally sensitive County government operations.

2.3.2. By July 2004, the County, working in cooperation with Rivanna Solid Waste Authority, will have a long-term solid waste strategy in place that emphasizes the importance of waste reduction, reuse of materials and recycling and provides reasonable solid waste disposal options for county citizens and businesses.

Strategic Direction #3

Enhance the Quality of Life for all Albemarle County Citizens

**FY 03/04 – 05/06
Plan of Action
Goals and Objectives**



3.1 Make the County a Safe and Healthy Community in which citizens feel secure to live, work and play

3.1.1. By June 2004, the County will establish a strategy to insure that its public safety systems meet the demands of the growing County.

3.2 Promote a variety of safe, sanitary and affordable housing types

3.2.1. By March 2004, the County will develop policies and ongoing programs that increase affordable home ownership options for households with incomes below 80% of median income.

3.3 Develop and implement policies that address the County's growth and urbanization while continuing to enhance the factors that contribute to the quality of life in the County

3.3.1 By December 2004, the County will have an active program which promotes the visibility and viability of the County's urban areas as distinct and attractive living and working environments.

3.3.2. By June 2005, the County will investigate, identify, and recommend effective ways to organize our County government to provide appropriate support to the urban areas.

3.3.3. By June 2005, the County will complete identified objectives and strategies that address urban needs.

3.4 Develop and implement policies, including financial, that address the County's growing transportation needs. New

Strategic Direction #4

Provide Effective and Efficient County Services to the Public in a Courteous and Equitable Manner

**FY 03/04 - 05/06
Plan of Action
Goals and Objectives**



4.1 Provide effective, responsive and courteous service to our customers

4.1.1. *By July 2004, each County department will establish, revise, and implement standards for superior customer service which will include implementation of additional customer-friendly ways to deliver services.*

4.1.2. *By June 2005, the County will be recognized as a quality place of employment with a workforce of employees who continuously provide high quality, customer-focused service to its citizens.*

4.2 Fund County services in a fair, efficient manner and provide needed public facilities and infrastructure

4.2.1. *By December 2004, the County will establish criteria defining fair and efficient revenue sources, recovery of the costs of services, and fee schedules for beneficiaries of special enhanced or targeted County services.*