Albemarle County, Virginia

Strategic Plan

July 2006

Fiscal Years 2007-2010

Integrity ▪ Innovation ▪ Stewardship ▪ Learning
Strategic Plan
Fiscal Years 2007 - 2010

“To accomplish great things, we must dream as well as act.”
— Anatole France
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Dear Citizens:

On behalf of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, I am pleased to provide you with Albemarle County’s FY 2007 - 10 Strategic Plan. Albemarle County enjoys a strong economy, excellent services, an attractive setting, and is home to numerous historic attractions. We are a community in transition, with challenges and opportunities presented by our continued growth and diversifying population.

In order to be one of the best places to live and work in the country, Albemarle County must continue to respond strategically to the needs of our citizens and our changing environment while protecting our natural beauty and rural character. For the next four years, the County’s vision and goals will provide direction for our County’s strategic and organizational efforts. The Board of Supervisors identified objectives, targets and timelines for their achievement which are included in this plan, based on information gleaned from our environmental scan, citizen surveys, and staff insight.

In Albemarle County, our strategic plan is not a static document. This fall, at the Strategic Planning Retreat, the Board will focus on Goal 5: “Fund the County’s Future Needs,” and the Strategic Planning document will be updated to reflect their efforts. Annually, beginning in fall of 2007, we will review our progress and identify any new challenges and opportunities. As often as necessary, we will adjust our efforts to ensure the County reaches its goals and achieves its vision.

Robert W. Tucker, Jr.
Our Vision

Albemarle County will feature pedestrian friendly and self-sufficient communities. The Countryside will be rural. The County’s natural resources and natural beauty will be maintained. The County’s educational system will be world class and the County’s quality of life will be exceptional.

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.

Our Values

**Integrity:** We value our customers and co-workers by always providing honest and fair treatment.

**Innovation:** We embrace creativity and positive change.

**Stewardship:** We honor our role as stewards of the public trust by managing our natural, human and financial resources respectfully and responsibly.

**Learning:** We encourage and support life long learning and personal and professional growth.
Albemarle County, Virginia

Strategic Plan Development Process

Over the past 14 years, Albemarle County has engaged in organizational improvement and strategic planning activities. In 1992, the County initiated a strategic Quality Improvement Program (QuIP), which focused on departmental strategic plans, employee training, and customer service initiatives. In 1994, the County, City of Charlottesville, and the University of Virginia (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.

The County’s strategic plan process is cyclical.

In April 2001, the County Board of Supervisors held the first retreat to kick off a new annual strategic planning process. This effort resulted in the County’s FY 03-06 Strategic Plan of action. Each subsequent year, the Board has held an all day retreat to review past performance, new data and information from County employees regarding their views on the County’s changing environment and make adjustments to the plan to proactively address the changing environment. After the Board’s retreat in the fall, staff develops a Business Plan to connect the County’s priorities to the budget process. The Board receives reports on the staff’s progress throughout the year and an outcome focused performance report at the end of each year.

On September 9, 2005, the Board initiated the development of the County’s FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan. After reviewing additional analysis of the 2004 citizen survey results, County data, and information about the County’s progress toward current strategic goals/objectives, the Board directed County staff to continue its focus on enhancing quality of life, protecting natural resources, and managing growth, and to increase their focus on developing infrastructure and to develop a comprehensive funding strategy to meet the County’s future needs.

During the winter and spring of FY 06, staff held five work sessions with the Board to develop measurable objective statements for the new plan. The Board will be asked to approve the FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan in July 2006.
Goal One: 
Enhance Quality of Life for all Citizens

World Class Education System
The citizens of Albemarle identify quality education as the community’s number one priority. The County has 26 schools and over 12,000 students. 84% of County students pursue post-secondary education and all of its schools are fully accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia. While its schools continue to be widely recognized for the excellent learning environment they provide to our students, Albemarle County’s School Division desires to ensure Albemarle County provides a world-class education for all our students. The School Division adopted a Strategic Plan of its own to meet the challenges that students, families, teachers, staff and the County’s diverse communities will face over the next 3 to 5 years. The goal is for all County students to be able to enter a global community in which they will work, live, compete, and collaborate with other knowledgeable workers across the globe. To achieve world-class status, the school system, School Board members, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors members, and employees of the local government desire to collaborate more closely together and to strengthen their partnerships with youth, businesses, agencies, parents, and other members of the community.

Strategic Objective:

1.1 By June 30, 2009, the Board of Supervisors and general government employees will increase collaborative efforts with the School Board and with employees of the school system to assist the School Division to achieve recognition as a “world class education system.”

Directional Statements:

Local Government will develop specific strategies in coordination with the School Division. Strategies should include working together to ensure all Albemarle County children enter the school system ready to learn.
Goal One: 
Enhance Quality of Life for all Citizens

Affordable Housing
In general terms, the County views affordable housing to mean safe, decent housing where costs do not exceed 30% of the gross household income. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, 19% of the Albemarle County home owners paid more than 30% of their monthly income towards housing costs and 38% of the rental households in Albemarle County reported paying over 30% of their household incomes on housing. While these affordable housing rates are similar to those of Albemarle County’s comparable counties and throughout the state of Virginia and housing is significantly impacted by market forces beyond the County’s control, increasing affordable housing opportunities is one of the County’s top priorities. The County plans to expand its partnership with others, provide a range of programs, and take a multi-focused approach to maximize affordable housing opportunities.

Strategic Objective:

1.2 By June 30, 2010, working in partnership with others, increase affordable housing opportunities for those who live and/or work in Albemarle County.

Directional Statements:
- Encourage affordable housing proffers
- Expand existing partnerships and create new alliances
- Aggressively pursue state, federal, and private resources
- Promote long-term affordability
- Increase emphasis on housing rehabilitation and redevelopment
- Support low income tax credit projects
Goal One: Enhance Quality of Life for all Citizens

Economic Vitality
The County benefits from a strong economy. The County has a highly-skilled and educated workforce, low unemployment rate, taxable sales that doubled since 1992, and has added 4,000 jobs between 2000 and 2004. Even so, the County has lost 1,362 manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2004. Our Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has the 2nd highest cost of living of the eight largest urban areas in Virginia and while the number of University of Virginia students impact the percentage, the 2000 census data indicates that 20% of the County’s population lives at the lower end of the economic scale. The County desires to maintain a strong, sustainable economy, increase business activity in the urban cores of development areas, and ensure all citizens of the County are able to participate fully in a vibrant economy.

Strategic Objective:
1.3 By June 30, 2010, the County will:
- maintain a strong and sustainable economy;
- increase the economic vitality of the County’s development areas; and
- increase the ability of those individuals and families, who are living in lower income households, to become self-sufficient.

Directional Statements:
- Encourage business growth in urban cores of development areas
- Increase support for agriculture businesses
- Support the regional economy
- Increase emphasis on workforce development and career ladder jobs
- Assist residents in need to become self-sufficient
Goal Two:  
Protect the County’s Natural Resources

Increase Land in Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement in which landowners place specific restrictions on the use and development of their land. Permanent conservation easements provide lasting benefits to the public by protecting natural resources such as agricultural and forestry land, wildlife habitat, water resource buffers and historic sites. Nearly 50,000 acres of the County are currently protected by conservation easements. While the County purchases easements through the Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) program, approximately 89.8 percent of the current acreage in conservation easements has been donated to or purchased by other entities.

One way the County protects natural resources is through protected proffers for park land and greenway development and accepts donations of park lands from private entities and individuals. To permanently protect the County’s natural resources, the County, in cooperation with its partners, desires to increase the number of acres protected by conservation easements.

Strategic Objective:

2.1 By June 30, 2010, increase the total combined acreage in permanent conservation easements and qualifying public parkland by 30,000 additional acres (50%) using public and private means.

The following entities work with landowners to assist with and/or hold voluntary conservation easements on their properties:

- Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)
- Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD)
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Conservation Reserve Program
- County of Albemarle Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Program
- County of Albemarle Public Recreational Facilities Authority (PRFA)
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)
Goal Two: Protect the County’s Natural Resources

Water Resources

Albemarle County has long been recognized as a leader among local governments in water resource protection. For over a quarter century, it has established land use plans based on water resource protection. It remains the only county to voluntarily implement the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The County aggressively pursued stormwater management to address both water quality and water quantity impacts of land development long before it was required. Albemarle is one of the few counties in Virginia to implement an ordinance for protection of groundwater. Because the County has numerous water resource goals and objectives, there is a need to assure there is consistency among these plans and that no gaps exist. To that end, the County has sought to create an integrated water resource strategy that incorporates all of these goals. County staff believes that the development of a riparian buffer program will be a particularly important strategy for water resource protection and should be embarked on as part of this strategic plan.

Strategic Objective:

2.2 By June 30, 2010, the County, working in cooperation with Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority and others, will increase the quality, supply, and protection of the County’s water resources.

Directional Statements:

- By June 2008, develop a long-term funding strategy for the County’s stormwater management program.
- By June 2009, codify water resource strategies from the County’s Rural Area Plan.
- By June 2010, develop a riparian buffer program to support the establishment and protection of riparian buffers.
- By June 2010, amend the Natural Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate an integrated water resource plan and establish a work plan to accomplish additional water protection strategies as required.
Goal Three: Develop Policies and Infrastructure Improvements to Address the County’s Growing Needs

Transportation
Albemarle County, like all parts of Virginia, has been experiencing an increase in transportation congestion alongside a decrease in state transportation funding and construction. The County has historically relied on the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the funding and implementation of VDOT’s secondary road construction and maintenance programs. The County does not have the necessary legal authorities, staff resources, expertise and funding mechanisms to administer the County’s secondary road system adequately.

In recent years, the County has had an enhanced role in certain areas of road construction. The County has also addressed transportation needs by funding public transportation provided by Charlottesville Transit Service (CTS), serving parts of the County’s urbanized areas, and JAUNT, serving all parts of the County on a fixed route and demand response basis.

Because of the increasing transportation needs and costs and declining state funding, a gap in addressing transportation needs has developed that will only expand for the foreseeable future.

The Board desires to use transportation funds in the CIP for local projects and directed staff to engage in discussions with VDOT on possible ways to accelerate Six-Year Secondary Road Plan priority projects and local priorities not yet approved for funding by VDOT.

Strategic Objective:
3.1 By June 30, 2010, expand regional transit opportunities, while accelerating the completion of the Meadowcreek Parkway, 2 local, and 2 regional transportation projects.

The County’s current transportation strategy is as follows:

- Continue to pursue all available VDOT funding
- Maximize leveraging of state revenue sharing funds
- Pursue regional solutions for important regional projects
- Utilize local funds for studies and design, and construction in certain circumstances
- Dedicate a portion of CIP funding to accelerate priority local road projects in the VDOT Secondary 6-Year Plan and in approved master plans
- Utilize proffers as a component of funding needed improvements
- Provide funding for public transportation
Goal Four: Effectively Manage Growth & Development

Master Planning
The success of the County’s efforts to protect its rural areas depends on the County’s ability to concentrate growth, including new homes and businesses, in the County’s established development areas where these services, utilities and facilities can serve the largest number of citizens. The development areas comprise 35 square miles or 5% of the County’s land area. This limited land area must be attractive, convenient, and include vibrant places for people to live and work. The vision for these areas is for higher densities than in the past, with varied uses and design features more common to a small city or town than a typical suburban development.

Master Planning helps ensure the future of the development areas, and is based upon a shared vision of appealing and functional neighborhoods and communities. The County’s major tool for creating these livable urban communities is the Neighborhood Model, which stresses the role of master planning to guide growth in these areas. Community engagement is the cornerstone of master planning so that residents are involved in hands-on planning for their community’s best possible future. Master planning is underway in several areas, and ultimately all the development areas will be master planned according to a schedule determined by the Board of Supervisors. The County desires to master plan all development areas by 2010.

Directional Statements:
Promote development that...

- Accommodates walkers, bikers and public transportation to reduce total dependence on cars
- Integrates open spaces
- Mixes residential and non-residential uses so residents have convenient access to work, services and entertainment
- Adapts development to site terrain
- Connects streets and pathways so that pedestrians can walk or bike easily to many destinations
- Mixes housing types and affordability so that a full range of housing choices is available
- Keeps buildings and spaces at a human scale so street views are attractive
- Adapts and reuses sites rather than abandoning them
- Establishes clear boundaries with the rural areas

Strategic Objective:

4.1 By June 30, 2010, increase citizen satisfaction with the County’s Development Areas by completing Master Plans for all of the County’s Development Areas.
Goal Four: Effectively Manage Growth & Development

Rural Areas
The County's designated Rural Areas compose about 690 square miles or 95% of the County's land area. Albemarle County has a long tradition of protecting its rural lands through its land use, resource protection and growth management policies in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Stewardship of the Rural Areas provides an opportunity to conserve and efficiently use resources, such as water, natural, scenic, and historic resources. The County's latest Comprehensive Rural Areas Plan was adopted by the Board on March 2, 2005. Staff identified and the Board approved key implementation priorities to move the plan's recommendations forward.

Strategic Objective:
4.2 By June 30, 2010, increase the protection of the County's rural areas by implementing the key strategies of the Rural Area Plan.

Directional statements:
In addition to those strategies focused on increasing land in conservation easements which is a separate strategic plan objective, implement the following Rural Area Plan priorities that would have the greatest impact on preserving the Rural Areas resources:

- Phasing of subdivisions in the Rural Areas
- Establishment of mandatory Rural Preservation Developments (clustering)
- Dedicate additional resources for rural area protection - create Rural Area Support Program Position
- Review Land Use Value Taxation Program
- Research Rural Rustic Roads as an alternative
- Research Transfer Development of Rights (TDR) Programs and support TDR legislation
- Implement the Mountain Overlay District
- Consider Crossroads Communities/Alternative Uses in Rural Areas
Goal Five: Fund the County’s Future Needs

Albemarle County is transitioning from a predominantly rural and suburban County to a locality that is beginning to face challenges and service pressures more similar to a small city. As jurisdictions evolve and grow, the costs to support this growth do not increase in a linear incremental fashion. Programs the County funds today to meet its community’s emerging needs, from paid firefighters to stormwater management to the acquisition of conservation easements, increased significantly over the last ten years. While the County has very specific land use policies to protect the natural resources and rural character of the County, the success of the County’s protection efforts depends on the County’s ability to concentrate growth, including new homes and businesses, in the established development areas. For the 35 square miles that comprise the County’s development areas to function successfully as compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use communities with effective transportation systems and adequate public safety response, Albemarle County is challenged to provide broad and diverse services.

The following are examples of the ways in which the County’s budget has evolved during the last ten years in response to the challenges that have grown at a pace significantly beyond the increasing population. These figures reflect comparisons from the FY 97 and FY 07’s budgets.

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Fund the County’s Future Needs (continued)
The County conducts budget resource planning in a variety ways. Every fiscal year the County prepares an operating budget. The County also prepares a five year Capital Improvement Program. In the CIP, every department identifies potential projects within the ten year span. For the past three years, the County has developed a Business Plan that ties the County’s resources to the Strategic Plan and the County has developed a long range five-year planning model that helps project future costs and revenues.

As the County continues to grow, so does its needs. Five Master Plans are scheduled for completion within the next five years. Other funding challenges include transportation, expansion of the fire protection system, stormwater funding, infrastructure needs, as well as funding federal and state mandates.

The County seeks to provide efficient and effective service delivery to its citizens and customers. During the next several months, the County will study and develop a comprehensive approach to address the County’s growing financial needs.

Strategic Priority:

Develop a comprehensive funding strategy/plan to address the County’s growing needs

Note: This objective is scheduled to be further discussed and finalized at the Board’s Fall Strategic Plan Retreat

Directional statements:

- Develop and recommend alternatives regarding the basis for funding guidelines to build budgets
- Consider how alternatives can integrate with the County’s 5-year financial model
- Identify any organizational and/or implementation barriers and outline how they can be overcome
Environmental Scan

Population Trends
Between 2000 and 2005, the Charlottesville metropolitan area, which includes Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Greene County, Fluvanna County, and Nelson County, in percentage terms was the third fastest growing metropolitan area in Virginia. The average annual population growth rate for Albemarle County over the past 15 years has been approximately 1.5%. If the County continues to grow at that rate, the County’s population would reach 101,600 by the year 2010. Weldon Cooper’s most recent provisional population estimate for 2005 is 90,400.

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.

Aging Population: According to the Census, the County’s population is aging, with the percentage of the population older than 65 increasing from 8% to 12% and the population ages 45 to 64 increasing from 18% to 23% between 1990 and 2000. Twenty-nine percent of the population is between the ages of 25 and 44. This is the largest portion of the population by age category.

Diversity: Sixteen percent of the County’s population is non-white, with the largest percentage growth between 1990 and 2000 in the Hispanic population. In 2000, the Asian and Hispanic populations each made up 3% of the total population. Ten percent of the population is African American.

Growth: Consistently since 1993, net migration is contributing more to Albemarle County’s population growth than natural increase. In 2003, 70.6% of the population growth was attributed to migration and 29.4% attributed to natural increase.

Economic Profile
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. Total taxable sales in Albemarle have doubled since 1992, with the largest increases taking place in 1993, 1999, 2003, and 2004. The County’s per capita taxable sales increased by about 44% between 1994 and 2004, an increase that is greater than peer counties.

Median Income Levels: In 1999, the median household income in Albemarle County was $50,749 and the median family income was $63,407. This is the 16th highest median income among Virginia’s 95 counties.

Poverty Profile: Seven percent of Albemarle’s population is living in poverty; this is below the statewide level of 10%. The percent of persons who live below poverty level income is decreasing. The percent of children below poverty has decreased and is below the state average.

Twenty percent of Albemarle’s population is at the lower end of the economic scale. The percentage of persons with earnings below 200% of poverty decreased by 1.6% between the years of 1990 and 2000.

The Hispanic population had the highest percentage of persons living in poverty in 1999.
Albemarle County, Virginia

The percent of elderly below poverty (4.7%) in Albemarle County is below the state percentage (9.5%). The number of elderly below poverty in Albemarle has declined since 1979.

Employment: Albemarle County experienced steady net job growth during the years 1993 through 1997, and witnessed a jump in net job growth in 2000. After 2000, the net growth in employment tapered off, with the total number of jobs recovering through 2004. Over the past several years, the service sector has become increasingly important as a source of employment, while manufacturing has become less important. Between 1999 and 2003, for example, state government (a category that includes jobs at the University of Virginia) grew from 20.8% to 25.6% of Albemarle’s total employment base, while manufacturing positions declined from 12.1% to 6.6% of the total.

The largest local employer is the state government (UVA and the Medical Center) with 25% of local jobs.

According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the total number of employed Albemarle County residents in 2004 was 44,529. Since 1993, Albemarle County has increased its share of total jobs located within the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by almost 9%. In 2004, 43,822 jobs were located within Albemarle County which accounted for 49% of the total jobs located within all five areas of the MSA.

Albemarle County enjoys a very low unemployment rate, which has remained below the state and national averages for the past several years. Albemarle County’s annual unemployment rate in 2004 was 2.6%.

Weekly Wages: The weighted average weekly wage in Albemarle County is high. Albemarle has witnessed a 14% increase in weekly wage since 1990 and the average weekly wage has increased by 13% between 2000 and 2004.

Workforce
The participation of males in the workforce (72%) is greater than that of females (61%). Labor participation among both males and females has increased over the last three decades.

Fourteen percent of Albemarle County’s families are female headed households. While this percentage is lower than the state’s level, Albemarle County’s female headed households with children under the age of 18 have doubled from 1990 to 2000, going from 4.7% of the population to 8.6% of the population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 78% of working mothers have children between the ages of 6 and 17.

According to the U.S. Census in 2000, 51% of jobs in Albemarle County were filled by non-residents.

Educational Attainment: The educational attainment level of the workforce is high and increasing. According to the U.S. Census in 2000, since 1990, there has been a 9% increase in the percent of the population over age 25 who have obtained a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Land Development Trends

Rural Areas: According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture 38.2% of the County is considered farmland. This is down from 86.6% of the County’s acreage in the 1920’s.

About 690 square miles (95%) of the County are designated as the County’s rural areas. According to the Department of Community Development, 72% of the County is covered in wooded areas. The majority of the County’s parks and natural

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areas are located in the rural areas. Over 14,000 acres of the northwestern edge of the County (approximately 3% of the rural areas) are included in the Shenandoah National Park.

Several tools are in place to protect the rural areas. Albemarle County offers a land use-value taxation program that reduces tax for lands in agricultural, forestal, horticultural, and open space uses. As of October 2005, the County’s voluntary agricultural and forestal districts program helped prevent intensification of use on nearly 63,400 acres of land. Another tool is the County’s voluntary Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) program, under which the County purchases conservation easements on qualifying properties. Nearly 13% of the County (approximately 60,000 acres) is protected by conservation easements. Over 10,000 acres were placed in conservation easements in 2005 due to the outstanding efforts of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, Piedmont Environmental Council, the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the County’s ACE program.

There has been a relatively steady rate of residential development in the rural areas. From 1990 to 2005, the rural area annual average population increase equaled 0.9% and development area annual average population increase equaled 2.9%.

Development Areas: The County’s rural protection and preservation strategies are complemented by the County’s efforts to create urban areas that offer attractive amenities to residents and business owners. The County encourages development in designated areas that include urban areas, communities, and villages.

In 2005, an estimated 47% of the population lived in rural areas and 53% in urban areas of Albemarle County.

In 2005, there were 831 new housing starts based on building permits issued. Of these, 296 (35%) dwelling units were located in the rural areas and 535 (64%) dwelling units were located in the development areas.

Historic Resources: More than 2,000 buildings and structures and 400 archaeological sites have been identified as potential historic resources in the County. Recently, Country Stores have been featured as important historic treasures. One hundred historic Country Stores have been identified and are still standing in Albemarle County.

Housing Profile
As of October 2005, the total number of dwelling units in Albemarle County was 39,961. Of these, 24,084 were single-family detached homes, 314 were single-family townhouses, and 2,308 were single-family attached. There were 7,681 duplexes, 1,892 multi-family homes, and 2,414 mobile homes.

In 2004, 599 new dwelling units were constructed. Median sale prices for both new and resale single family homes has remained stable since 2003. For 2004, the Charlottesville Area Association of Realtors reported a median sales price of $266,125 for all home sales in the

County compared to a median sale price of $266,000 in 2003. According to the City Assessor, City of Charlottesville, the median sales price of homes in the City of Charlottesville was $220,000. In 2004, 818 families awaited housing assistance from the County.

According to the U.S. Census, in 2000, 66% of the housing in Albemarle was owner occupied, similar to the statewide rate of 68%. Owner occupied housing has increased slightly from 60%
in 1980. According to the 2000 Census, Albemarle County has a high median gross rent cost of $712 per month, well above the state median gross rent of $650. However, when rent is viewed as a percentage of household income, Albemarle’s median rent burden is 26%, similar to the state’s rent burden, and to the rent burdens of the comparison counties of Stafford, James City, Henrico, and Hanover.

According to the 2000 Census, 19% of homeowners paid more than 30% of their monthly income towards housing costs. This is below the State average and similar to the County’s comparison counties. In 2000, 38% of renters paid more than 30% of their income for their rental unit. This is higher than the state-wide rate of 34% but is similar to the rate of the County’s peer counties.

Sixty-four percent of the homes in Albemarle County were assessed for over $200,000 in 2005. The maximum “affordable” mortgage value is estimated to be $192,050 in 2005. This maximum affordability value is calculated using 80% of the area median income published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Housing is considered affordable if a household pays 30% or less of household income for housing costs.

Using this affordability criteria, 21% of all 2004 new sales (both new and resales) in Albemarle County were in the “affordable” range.

According to the U. S. Census, households earning less than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) face the greatest shortage of affordable housing, with 87% of these households not living in affordable housing. Based on observations of the County’s Housing Office staff, most of the affordable rental opportunities are in properties that are five years or older.

**Financial Condition**

**Financial Information:** Albemarle County received a AAA bond rating in February, 2003 based on “strong financial operations characterized by healthy reserve levels and ample operating flexibility. Moody's believes that the County's financial operations, characterized by ample reserve levels, will remain strong given conservative management practices and healthy revenue streams.” According to Moody’s, “the County’s debt burden, 1.4% of assessed value, is modest, reflecting the county’s policy of financing a significant portion of its capital needs with pay-as-you-go sources.”

The County’s debt service remains well within its debt policy guidelines of less than 2% of assessed value and less than 10% of general and school fund revenues.

Business, professional, and occupational license (BPOL) nominal tax revenue increased steadily from 1997 through 2001, declined slightly in 2002 and 2003, but rebounded in 2004. Per-capita nominal BPOL tax revenue provides a rough estimate regarding the intensity of business activity in a community. The higher the value of BPOL revenue per resident, the higher the level of business activity that each resident “supports.” The per-capita BPOL tax revenue increased by roughly $30 (or 60%) between 1994 and 2001 and increased by 12.2% in 2004 from 2003.

**Tax Rates:** Local property taxes account for 41% of our entire County budget. Currently, the real estate property tax rate is $0.74 per $100 of assessed value. 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 $0.64. This rate is below the 2004 average of $0.70 for all counties in Virginia and is more in line with the property tax rates of much smaller and more rural counties such as Rockingham and Frederick.

**Funding Services:** As the County continues to urbanize in the areas around Charlottesville and other designated development areas, we are
challenged 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 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. Other local revenue sources and state revenue are the two next largest sources, making up 17% and 25% of all revenues, respectively. The remaining revenues consist of federal revenue, borrowed funds, use of fund balances, and transfers.

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

Expenditures: The largest category of expenditures for the County is School Fund operations, comprising 46% of all expenditures in the FY 06/07 Adopted Budget. Adding capital and debt funding and school self-sustaining funds, the School Division’s share of the FY 06/07 Adopted Budget would be 60% of the total County budget. General government operations account for 24% of all expenditures in the FY 06/07 Adopted Budget. Of this, the largest percentage is dedicated to public safety programs.

Customer Expectations
As an important part of the County’s ongoing strategic management system, the County contracted with the University of Virginia’s Center for Survey Research to conduct a survey of County residents in June and July 2004. Since the Center for Survey Research conducted a similar study in 1994 and 2002, the County is able to track data trends and better understand citizens’ changing expectations and perceptions.

The goals of the 2004 survey were to determine residents’ opinions about quality of life in Albemarle County, to determine their satisfaction with the government’s efforts to achieve its strategic planning goals, to determine residents’ level of satisfaction with a number of services the County provides, and to measure citizen opinion about the way in which the County is managing growth.

Findings
In the area of “satisfaction with the government’s efforts to achieve strategic planning goals”:

- Residents were most satisfied with the government’s efforts to make the County a safe and healthy community (94%).
- 93% were satisfied with the County’s efforts in creating learning opportunities for all ages.
- 90.8% were satisfied with the County’s efforts to provide effective, responsive, and courteous service to customers.
- Residents were least satisfied with the local government’s efforts to promote the development of affordable places to live (48%), to protect and preserve the County’s rural character (67%), and to provide needed infrastructure (68.6%).

In the area of “satisfaction with services”:

- Overall, 90.6% of respondents said they were satisfied with County programs and services. This finding is not significantly different from 92.8% in 2002, but is significantly higher than the 84.0% who reported they were satisfied in 1994.
- Similarly to 2002, residents were most satisfied with public safety items, with fire protection (95.9%), emergency services (94.3%), safety in business areas (92.6%) and police
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protection (92.4%). However, only 55.3% reported satisfaction with safety for walkers and cyclists on streets, trails, and sidewalks.

- Library services were the second most highly rated service (95.0%).

- The overall satisfaction rating for quality of education in the County schools was 85%. However, 92.3% of those who currently had children attending Albemarle County Public Schools reported they were satisfied with the quality of education their children are getting, with 56% being very satisfied.

- Items related to growth management had lower satisfaction ratings. Sixty-three percent were satisfied with efforts to preserve open space, 56% were satisfied with efforts to support adequate housing, 56.4% were satisfied with efforts to manage growth, and 45.8% were satisfied with public transportation.

- Statistically significant decreases in satisfaction since the 2002 survey were in the area of keeping citizens informed about County government programs and services, efforts to manage growth, ease of getting around by car and public transportation, efforts to protect natural resources and the environment, efforts to preserve open space, emergency rescue services, safety for walkers and cyclists on streets, trails and sidewalks, and efforts to support adequate housing.

In the area of “quality of life” in Albemarle County:

- Citizens continue to indicate that they are happy with the quality of life in Albemarle County. Citizens rated quality of life in Albemarle County as 7.96 on a ten point scale which is not statistically different from the mean rating of 7.92 in 1994 or the mean of 8.10 in the 2002 survey.

- 71% rated the County’s quality of life an “8” or better.

- 16% rated the County a “10.”

- Those most likely to give a high rating to the County were those who lived in Albemarle County longer, older residents, females, homemakers, those with higher household incomes, homeowners, those living in single family homes, and those who live in the rural areas, especially in the southwest and southeast areas of the County.

In the area of “government spending”:

- About 8 in 10 residents (80.4%) are satisfied with the job the County is doing in giving them value for their tax dollars.

- Almost 2/3 of County residents (64%) favor keeping taxes and services about where they are. Of those who favored change, more citizens support increasing taxes and services (16.6%) than decreasing them (10.4%).
Potential Performance Measures

Enhance the Quality of Life for all of our Citizens

- Citizens report satisfaction with public education
- County schools obtain world class status in accordance with school's strategic outcome measure
- Number of housing units rehabbed
- Reduce housing units ranked in substandard to poor condition
- Number of housing-related tax credit projects increased
- Number of affordable housing opportunities increased
- Increase the number of affordable new homes
- Citizens report that Albemarle is a safe community in which to live
- Economic indicators
- Response times

Protect the County’s Natural Resources

- Reduce the rate of loss of wooded areas in rural areas
- 7,500 additional acres of land put in permanent conservation easements and qualifying County parks each year
- Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) obtains Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) approval for the water supply plan by June 2007
- RWSA obtains wastewater permit by June 2007
- RWSA develops a drought management plan by June 2007
- A long-term stormwater management funding strategy is developed by June 2008
- Water resource strategies are codified in the Rural Area Plan by June 2009
- Miles of riparian buffers increased by June 2010
Potential Performance Measures

Develop Policies and Infrastructure Improvements to Address the County’s Growing Needs

- Number of Regional transit opportunities expanded
- Meadowcreek Parkway project accelerated
- Two local transportation projects accelerated
- Two regional projects accelerated

Effectively Manage Growth and Development

- Citizens agree that Albemarle County offers planning for growth and development necessary to maintain a high quality of life
- Rural Plan’s "key" strategies are implemented
- Citizen feedback data reflect that the residents support the County’s approach to balancing preservation and development.
- Decrease in the absolute number of new residential permits approved in rural areas

Fund the County’s Future Needs

- County residents report their financial burden for government is fair
- Economic indicators