

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## ***Strategic Directions Define Our Future***

Albemarle County's Strategic Planning Process is the cornerstone of our service and operations delivery. We believe that before we can allocate our available resources, we must first understand the needs and desires of county residents and the factors that will affect us in the future. Working in partnership with citizens and the Board of Supervisors, we develop goals and objectives to respond to community priorities and create strategies that define actions and identify resources to attain our goals. Our Strategic Plan helps us assure that our efforts are purposefully designed and focused to meet the present and future needs of the County.

## ***Why a Strategic Plan?***

Albemarle County is a community in transition, with challenges and opportunities presented by our continued growth, urbanization, and diversity. Albemarle County government has for several years been engaged in a strategic planning process that guides the alignment of our resources with customer needs and expectations so that we can respond effectively to the opportunities presented by our changing circumstances.

With the priorities set, the operations of the County are being reviewed and redirected to bring the strategic vision to life. Specific actions, programs, capital purchases, staffing requirements and funding levels are developed in response to the needs identified in the strategic plan. Critical decisions regarding resource allocation during the budget process are evaluated for consistency with and support of the identified strategic priorities.

## ***Citizen Input is the Cornerstone***

We began our strategic planning effort with an extensive survey of county residents in April, 2002 to obtain objective input as to what is important to our citizens as we make choices about how to move forward. These valuable responses were the basis of our initial plan of action and will continue to be the benchmark against which we measure our efforts. The vision, mission and strategic directions that have emerged all build on the strengths that our citizens appreciate and value about the community in which they live. The 2002 survey, conducted by the UVA Center for Survey Research, revealed strong fundamental beliefs about and desires for our community's future.

In order to keep citizen feedback as the foundation of our strategic planning efforts, UVA's Center for Survey Research again surveyed citizens in July 2004 to ask about community needs, issues and priorities as well as satisfaction with county government services and operations. Many things we heard in the 2004 survey indicate that the County's strategic plan is still on the right track, while other insights resulted in adjustments to our direction, as it should. Some highlights of the 2004 survey are listed below:

## ***Rating Quality of Life***

**Albemarle County residents continue to be very happy with the quality of life in Albemarle County.**

When asked to rate the quality of life in Albemarle on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), the average rating was 7.96. 71% of our citizens rated the County's quality of life an 8 or better, with 16% giving a rating of 10.

Those residents who rated the County a "10" were asked what were the main things they liked about Albemarle County. Almost everyone said that they enjoyed the beauty of the landscape.

They also liked the casual lifestyle, the people, and the proximity of the University of Virginia. Many remarked about the appeal of a quiet rural area combined with cultural opportunities more typically available in urban areas.

Approximately 91% of citizens reported being satisfied with county services, a significant increase from the 84.3% who responded similarly during a 1994 survey.

**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 favor change, more citizens support increasing taxes and services (16.6%) than decreasing them (10.4%)

## ***Satisfaction with County's Progress on Strategic Goals***

Residents were most satisfied with the government's efforts to make the County a safe and healthy community (94%).

Ninety-three percent were satisfied with the County's efforts to create learning opportunities for all ages. And 90.8% were satisfied with the County's efforts to provide effective, responsive and courteous service to customers.

Residents were least satisfied with the County's efforts to promote affordable places to live (48%), to protect and preserve the County's rural character (67%) and to provide needed infrastructure (68.6%)

### ***Satisfaction with Services***

Similar to the 2002 survey results, residents are most satisfied with public safety items, with fire protection (95.9%), emergency services (94.3%), safety in business areas (92.6%), and police protection (92.4%). However, only 55.3% reported satisfaction with safety for walkers and cyclists on streets, trails and sidewalks.

Ninety-two percent of those who currently have children attend Albemarle County schools report satisfaction with the quality of education their children were getting; with 56% reporting they were very satisfied. The overall satisfaction rating for the quality of education is 85%.

**Overall, 90.6% Albemarle County residents are satisfied with County programs and services.**

The finding is significantly higher than the 84% who reported they were satisfied with County programs and services in 1994.

Items related to growth management had lower and declining satisfaction levels since the County's 2002 survey. Sixty three percent reported satisfaction with efforts to preserve open space, 56% are satisfied with efforts to support adequate housing, and 56% reported satisfaction with efforts to manage growth. Forty-six percent reported satisfaction with public transportation. In 2004, citizens report that they are less satisfied with the ease to get around by car and public transportation than they were in 2002.

### ***The Critical Role of the Board of Supervisors***

Members of the Board of Supervisors have been active and engaged partners in the development and implementation of our Strategic Plan. They hold annual strategic planning workshops to review data on current and future conditions, and to discuss results of the citizen survey and their own reactions to critical issues facing Albemarle County. While their Vision and Mission of the County remains intact, the Board of Supervisors makes adjustments to the County's FY 03/04 – FY 05/06 plan of action in response to changing data and citizen's expectations. This year, the Board has directed County staff to increase its focus on transportation and affordable housing. The Board closely monitors the progress of the plan through quarterly reports and discussions with staff. The County has developed strategic plan outcomes measures that will provide objective and quantitative measurements of our accomplishments. The Board of Supervisors will begin the development of a Plan of Action for the FY 06/07- 08/09 in fall 2005.

### ***What We Believe***

**VISION:** *Albemarle County . . . a quality community that preserves our natural resources, rural character and visual beauty and promotes learning, safety, affordability, cultural diversity, civic engagement and economic opportunity to create a desirable place to grow up, raise a family and grow old for present and 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.*

**VALUES:** *Integrity Innovation Stewardship Learning*

*We have translated our shared vision, mission and values into four strategic priorities and are concentrating our resources and energy towards achieving results in those areas.*

# Strategic Plan Framework

## 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

**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

## Strategic Direction #1

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

*FY 03/04 – 05/06*



- 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*

- 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." **Strategy Identified**
  - 2.1.2. By spring 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 2005, 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. **Environmental management system initiated**
  - 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. **Long-term waste strategy in place**

## Strategic Direction #3

*Enhance the Quality of Life for all  
Albemarle County Citizens*

*FY 03/04 – 05/06*



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. **Strategy established**

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

3.2.1. By December 2003, the County will develop policies and ongoing programs that increase affordable home ownership options for households with incomes below 80% of median income. **Additional policies/programs developed**

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 June 2005, 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.



## Strategic Direction #4

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

*FY 03/04 – 05/06*

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. **Standards established**

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 June 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. **Defined Criteria**

## ***Putting Our Vision to Work***

*As we review our activities and initiatives, we see substantial and measurable progress towards each of these strategic themes that we believe responds to the directions established by our citizens in the survey. The following are some highlights . . .*

### ***Provide High Quality Educational Opportunities for Citizens of all Ages***

*Our citizens clearly identified quality education as the community's number one priority in our past surveys. Our schools continue to be widely recognized for the excellent learning environment they provide to our students and for the outstanding preparation they give for success in life beyond school. We also actively promote learning opportunities for citizens of all ages as part of our commitment to the overall educational environment of our County. The following are some of last year's noteworthy accomplishments:*

- **100% of Albemarle County schools are fully accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia.**
- **Combined SAT scores reached an all-time high of 1096 in 2003**, approximately 70 points higher than the national average.
- **More than half** of the County's graduates completed at least one rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) course.
- **80% of our students pursue post-secondary education.**
- Students enjoy a **student -to-computer ratio of 4:1**. The use of technology in schools greatly enhances teaching, assessment, and school management.
- The County's high school World Languages Program includes **instruction in Mandarin, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Russian.**

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

*Protecting the resources that shape our rural character is a critical issue for citizens, particularly as those resources define many of the most positive and appreciated attributes of our community. Many of the County's most visible and broad-reaching initiatives are focused on the ultimate goal of rural area protection, as demonstrated by examples of significant accomplishments in this strategic focus area:*

- During the first three years of the **Acquisition of Conservation Easements**, or ACE, program, ACE has acquired easements on 15 farms, protected 3,722 acres, eliminated 241 potential development lots, protected 872 acres of prime farmland and protected 1419 acres of land in the drinking water supply watersheds.
- **A new Groundwater Ordinance, adopted by the County in late 2004, took effect February 8, 2005.** The ordinance will help ensure that adequate groundwater quantity and quality exists to meet the long term needs of proposed land uses without hurting the quality or quantity of neighboring groundwater users.
- Citizens consistently rate issues involving preserving natural resources, open space, farmlands and forested areas as among the most important priorities of the County. **The Board of Supervisors is in the final states of adopting a Rural Area Chapter for the County's Comprehensive Plan** that will create a framework for decision making that will ensure the desired future of Albemarle's rural areas.
- **The Albemarle County Office Building on McIntire Road will feature the area's first "green roof" in 2005** thanks to a grant program supporting innovative water quality measures to reduce pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. The green roof will improve water quality, reduce storm water runoff, and decrease the load on the County Office Building's interior heating and cooling systems. The larger goal is to demonstrate to developers, students, and citizens the viability of green roof technology.

### ***Enhance the Quality of Life for all our Citizens***

*Our citizens expect and deserve the services and amenities that make the County a safe, enjoyable and caring community. We strive to provide fair and convenient access to human services within a secure and stable environment. We also seek to give our citizens meaningful and fun opportunities to enjoy their leisure. These highlights are a few of our most significant accomplishments in the quality of life area last year:*

- The County Police Department celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> year as the County's primary law enforcement agency. **The Police department received reaccreditation in the fall.** All operations and areas of the department were reviewed and found to be at the highest level of service before the accreditation was reissued.
- **The County Parks and Recreation Department lighted a rectangular multi-purpose athletic field at Western Albemarle High School** last fall. This makes space available for evening practices for community league youth football in the fall, and SOCA and middle school lacrosse in the spring. The field became the first such lighted athletic field in the County, and is the latest in a string of athletic field improvements undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- The Board of Supervisors adopted a policy to help address affordable housing needs in the County by **promoting the development of affordable housing units and/or contributions to affordable housing funds.** County staff, local developers, representatives from the real estate community and non-profit agencies are working together to identify options that will allow developers to meet the County's affordable housing goals with new projects being proposed for the area.
- The State Career and Education Awards Committee through the Virginia Department of Education **recognized the Albemarle County Fire Rescue Department and other community partners for exemplary projects** that promote excellence in Career and Technical Education.
- **Walnut Creek Park in Albemarle County was named the Best Outdoor Recreation Site** in our community as part of the Best of Cville 2004 award program sponsored by the Cville Weekly publication.
- The Board of Supervisors adopted a new staffing policy for rural area fire and rescue stations that will insure 12 hour a day, five day a week **career coverage at the Stony Point Fire Station and the Scottsville Rescue Squad.** This support allows the volunteer force to concentrate their efforts on weekends when more volunteers are off work and available to respond to calls.
- **The Family Support program served 175 families** at 15 County elementary schools last year. Family support workers assist families connect with health, legal, housing and human services agencies, which, in turn, results in successful school performance outcomes for their children.

### ***Quality of Life – A Special Focus on Urban Needs***

Our focus on quality of life has a critical two-pronged approach which recognizes the importance of protected rural areas as well as the need for vital, thriving urban areas to achieve our goals of a healthy and vibrant community. Our strong and active rural protection and preservation strategies are complemented by our efforts to create urban areas that offer safe and convenient lifestyle choices, and attractive amenities to residents and business owners. Here are a few examples of recent projects designed to increase the safety and pedestrian orientation of our urban neighborhoods:

- The County constructed approximately 7/10 of a mile of **sidewalk along the north and south sides of Four Seasons Drive between West Rio and Commonwealth Drive**, providing safe pedestrian access for residents of the Four Seasons community.
- The County constructed a **sidewalk along the east side of Route 20 between 250 East and the entrance to Fontana Subdivision** including a variable width grass planting strip located between the curb and sidewalk to allow for future tree planning.
- The County also constructed a **sidewalk on the west side of Commonwealth Drive between Hydraulic Road and Greenbriar Drive** to accommodate pedestrians in this busy urban location.
- **People living along the west side of Avon Street between Mill Creek Drive and Stony Creek Drive will be able to safely walk/bike/run on a new path consisting of asphalt trail and sidewalk.**
- **Projects underway in 2005** –The County will be working with a \$160,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to **reinforce and enhance the aesthetics and functional quality of Crozet's downtown pedestrian circulation system.** Improvements will include handicap ramps, protective curbs and railings under the RR bridge, gateway plaza seating walls, street trees, street furniture, and pedestrian lights and signage. A \$296,000 Virginia Department of transportation grant will fund **improvements to Hillsdale Drive area between Rio Road and Greenbriar Drive** to meet the needs of the many pedestrians, including senior citizens, who walk in that area. In addition, design is underway for the construction of a **sidewalk beginning**

just east of Carriage Hill Apartments to the intersection of State Farm Boulevard and Pantops Drive and will extend all the way to Route 250 East.

### ***Serve the Public Efficiently and Effectively***

*This priority is an on-going, organizationwide effort to transform the County into a highly-performing government that anticipates and responds to customers' needs by delivering public services better, faster, cheaper and when citizens need them. We are working to exceed citizen expectations with this committed approach to customer-focused government. The following are some of our most noteworthy achievements from last year:*

- **The new County Office Building (COB 5<sup>th</sup> Street) opened its doors in September 2004**, with the relocation of the Department of Social Services and the Housing Department into the new location. The Police Department moved there in November and the Fire/Rescue Department relocated its staff to COB 5<sup>th</sup> Street in January. This former Wachovia property was acquired by the County in 2003 to meet space needs for the next 25 years. The \$7 million acquisition provided an additional 100,000 square feet of space for County operations, eliminating the need for a new public safety building and allowing the Department of Social Services to move out of leased space at another location. **The new building offers many customer service features including a Visitors Assistance Center and public access computer terminals.**
- The County's internet site at [www.albemarle.org](http://www.albemarle.org) continues to grow as a convenient and easy alternative way of doing business with Albemarle local government. **New interactive features include an on-line job application process and on-line property records.**
- For the second year in a row, **Albemarle County was named among the top ten most technologically advanced, cutting edge county governments in the U.S.** by the Center for Digital Government.
- **The County received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and a Distinguished Budget Presentation award** from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).
- **The County reorganized the Planning, Engineering and Building Code and Zoning Services Departments into a unified Community Development Department** to improve the focus on strategic priorities, to ensure greater consistency in the review process, and to increase customer-focused service. The Department installed a new software program, CityView, that automated the permit processing system and improved service to community development customers.

