

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 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

Our strategic planning efforts are driven by the data from our citizen surveys. In April 2002 we surveyed residents to obtain objective input as to what is most important to them 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.

While the 2002 survey, conducted by the UVA Center for Survey Research, revealed strong fundamental beliefs about and desires for our community’s future, the 2004 survey was expanded to also determine residents’ satisfaction with County government’s efforts in relation to our Strategic Plan goals and objectives. 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. Our next survey is scheduled to be fielded in the summer of 2006. 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 they liked most 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: 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 attending 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% of 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 strategic planning workshops each fall to review County performance, data on current and future conditions, and to discuss results of the citizen survey instruments as well as their own reactions to critical issues facing Albemarle County.

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

This is a transitional year. During the winter and spring, staff will work closely with the Board to develop specific measurable objectives for the new plan. The FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan will be finalized and staff will begin to implement it in July 2006. Until it is completed, the current FY03 - FY06 Strategic Plan guides our course.

FY04 – FY06 Strategic Plan

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

<p><i>1. Provide High Quality Educational Opportunities for Albemarle County Citizens of All Ages</i></p>	<p><i>2. Protect the County's Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources</i></p>	<p><i>3. Enhance the Quality of Life for All Albemarle County Citizens</i></p>	<p><i>4. Provide Effective and Efficient County Services to the Public in a Courteous and Equitable Manner</i></p>
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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



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.

The Life Long Learning team recommended continued collaboration efforts with schools and community agencies, businesses, and non-profits around the workforce literacy and skills training and the implementation of a Quality Recognition Award program. Staff developed a learning opportunities website. Committing to an education system that is among the best in the state and nation is still a top priority and will continue as a focus in the FY 07 – FY 10 Strategic Plan.



Strategic Direction #2

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

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. Implementation of Master Plan schedule identified by Board as priority for FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan.**

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 policies. **Implementation plan is in place. Implementation of rural area strategies identified by Board as priority for FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan.**

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. **Final approval of water supply plan, comprehensive waste water plan, and integrated water resource management plan has been identified by Board as priority for FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan.**

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



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. **Affordable housing policy established. Affordable housing and cash proffers are being provided by developers. Down Payment Assistance Program established.**

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. **Active program in place – a "Living in Albemarle County's Urban Areas" publication developed and distributed. Expanded Amail list for land use issues to keep subscribers informed about urban area development activity and active Planning Academy activities.**

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. **A cross-departmental Growth and Urbanization Team is in place and working to support the implementation of the Crozet Master Plan. General Services Director hired. Transportation Engineer position approved.**

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

3.4. Develop and implement policies, including financial, that address the County's growing transportation needs. **Transportation Policy developed. Transportation will be a focus of the FY07 – FY10 Strategic Plan. Acceleration of Transportation projects identified by Board as priority.**



Strategic Direction #4

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

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. **2004 Citizen Survey indicated 90.6% of respondents satisfied overall with services. In an employee survey completed in January 2006, 82% of employees surveyed indicate satisfaction working for the County.**

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.
Criteria defined.

Putting Our Vision to Work

As we review our activities and initiatives, we see substantial and measurable progress toward 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 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 1098 in 2005, approximately 70 points higher than the national average.**
- **60% of the County's graduates completed at least one rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) course.**
- **84% of our students pursue post-secondary education.**
- **More than half of our teachers have an advanced degree.**

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:

- **12.8% 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 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 Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) program.
- **Albemarle County received a \$10,000 donation** from an anonymous donor as the first contribution to the ACE Fund established earlier this year.
- **Albemarle's county stores were featured** in a program honoring Historic Preservation Month that discussed country stores as a unique social and architectural form in early American history, and focused on the status of country stores in the County, where 100 identified stores are still standing.
- **The Albemarle County Office Building's 10,500 square foot "green roof" is the largest green roof in the state to date**, thanks to a grant program supporting innovative water quality measures to reduce pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. The green roof improves water quality, reduces storm water runoff, and decreases 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:

- In 2005, **the region adopted the national approach** to emergency incident management NIMS (National Incident Management System) – administered through the Emergency Management Office. This system helps local governments' emergency responders work together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from critical incidents.
- **The former Whitewood Park was rededicated as Humphris Park in 2005** to honor former Albemarle County Board of Supervisors member and Chairman Charlotte Y. Humphris, who passed away in 2004. Ms. Humphris was a well known and widely respected advocate for rural preservation and a fierce champion of protected open space, natural areas, and resources in Albemarle County.
- Parks and Recreation staff is moving forward with plans to develop a partnership with the YMCA and Piedmont Virginia Community College for an **indoor recreational facility** to serve community needs.
- The County **upgraded a half-mile section of the Old Mills Greenway Trail** at Free Bridge to a Class A multi-use ADA accessible trail using a recreational trail grant along with County funding.
- **16 first-time homebuyers** received funds from the County's Homebuyers Assistance Program.
- The Sheriff's Department continued its work with **Project Lifesaver**, which was established to aid individuals with certain neurological disorders which may cause them to wander from home or safe areas. With 60 deputies now trained, this operation has had a 100% recovery rate.
- **The Department of Social Service's Family Support program was awarded a 2005 Achievement Award** by the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), which recognizes exemplary local government programs.

Quality of Life – A special focus on Quality Urban Places

The designated urban areas comprise 5% of our land area, or almost 35 square miles. About 53% of our population lives in Albemarle's urban areas. 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 activities to enhance our urban places.

- The County hired our first **Business Development Facilitator** to work with businesses in ensuring the economic success and vitality of our master planned communities.

- The County created a **General Services Department and hired a Director** to provide leadership and management for meeting the infrastructure needs of the urban areas.
- The County **increased funding for transportation projects** and began working with the Virginia Department of Transportation to identify ways to accelerate critical local projects.
- The County **revised development ordinances to allow for Neighborhood Model initiatives**, which include the types of amenities that will create attractive and livable urban environments.

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 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors approved changing the **County's vehicle decal program** from annual to permanent effective January 1, 2006 to improve customer service so that residents will no longer have to remove and reapply decals every year.
- **Several exciting features were added to the County's web site** at www.albemarle.org including the ability for citizens to make tax payments on line and to review online proffers that have received final approval from the Board of Supervisors from 1979 through 2004. Albemarle County's website recorded over 1,000,000 downloads in 2005.
- **Secure wireless access** is now available in the County Office Buildings at both McIntire Road and Fifth Street, allowing employees and building visitors the ability to use laptops and PDA's wirelessly.
- **Police, Fire Rescue, Housing, and Social Services were moved into the new County Office Building Fifth Street** during 2005, providing convenient and more comfortable access to these services for citizens.

Strategic Plan Implementation – A County Wide Effort

All County departments contribute to the implementation of our Strategic Plan. The following matrix gives an overview of which strategic directions and strategic goals departments are focusing on. For more detailed information about the departmental initiatives in each direction, see the Business Plan.

Department	1. Educational Opportunities				2. Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources			3. Quality of Life				4. Efficient and Effective Service	
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2
Community Development					X	X				X		X	
Clerk of the Court												X	
Commonwealth's Attorney								X				X	
County Attorney												X	
County Executive			X									X	X
Finance												X	X
Fire Rescue						X		X				X	
General Services						X	X			X	X	X	
Housing									X			X	
Human Resources												X	
Information Technology												X	
Parks & Recreation					X			X		X		X	
Police								X				X	
Registrar												X	
Sheriff								X				X	
School System	X	X	X	X								X	
Social Services	X							X		X		X	