



Living in Albemarle County's Urban Places

ALBEMARLE COUNTY, VIRGINIA



A Closer Look at
Albemarle's
Approach to
Managing Growth
and Creating
Quality Urban
Environments

www.albemarle.org

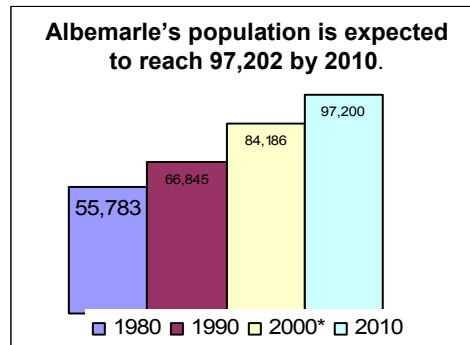


Albemarle's growth rate was a steady 1.8%, or 1600 additional residents, annually between 1990 and 2002

We Face Continued Growth and Development Pressures

Albemarle County is an attractive, desirable place for people to live for many reasons. The county enjoys a strong economy, excellent services, an attractive setting, and convenience to numerous nearby attractions.

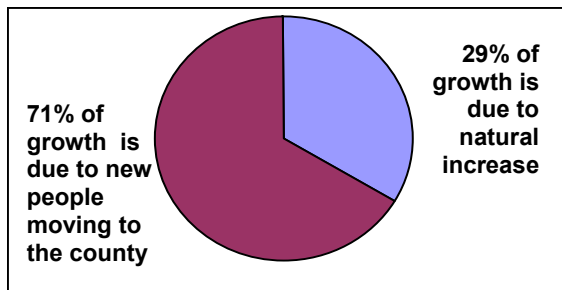
High profile rankings like the region's recent recognition as the #1 Best Place to Live in the United States keep our community very visible and in demand as we can see by Albemarle's continued growth rate of approximately 1.8%, or almost 1600 new residents, every year.



A substantial portion of our growth is due to in-migration, or new people moving into the county. Considering current and anticipated market conditions and forecast household growth, a total of 4,825 new housing units are needed in our region (Charlottesville, Albemarle, Greene and Fluvanna) over the next three years to meet this housing demand.

New people moving into the county account for almost three-quarters of our growth

These residents bring new energy and vitality to the county, but also create challenges in housing, traffic congestion and other growth impacts.



With this continuing arrival of new residents, we are striving to preserve and protect the essential character of Albemarle County that makes this such a special place for people to be. In survey after survey, citizens cite the scenic beauty, open spaces, agricultural traditions, and historic and natural

resources as the defining elements of the county's appeal and heritage.

Protecting resources and promoting agricultural and forestal uses are major themes of our growth management strategies

Our Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) Outlines Specific Growth Management Goals

Over time, the county has developed a very specific and focused approach to growth management that aims to keep development pressure from destroying the rural areas that our residents value so dearly. These growth management strategies are outlined in the Albemarle's Comprehensive Plan, which is the county's most important document regarding growth, development and change.

The Comp Plan guides public and private activities related to land use and resources and is the basis for land development regulations and decisions

(rezonings, special use permits), capital improvements (public projects such as schools, parks, libraries), transportation, environmental and historic resource protection initiatives, new county programs and decisions on the distribution of county budget dollars to a multitude of programs and agencies.

The plan outlines a clear vision of high quality urban areas accommodating most of the anticipated growth in the County and rural areas preserved for resource conservation and protection purposes. The specific growth-related goals are as follows:

- **Promote** the efficient utilization of county resources through a combination of designated development/urban areas and rural areas
- **Direct** growth into the Designated Development/Urban Areas
- **Discourage** rural residential development other than dwellings related to a bona fide agricultural/forestal use
- **Strongly support** and effectively implement the County's growth management priorities in the planning and provision of transportation and public facilities and utilities

The defined urban areas and rural areas have very distinct levels of service and development potential. Public services such as police, fire and rescue protection, public utilities such as water and sewer, and public facilities like roads and sidewalks, are provided at a much higher level in the urban areas.

Growth Management Milestones	
1960's	First zoning ordinance
1971	First Comprehensive Plan
1977	First update of Comp Plan which reduced the number and amount of development areas designated. Areas previously designated as development areas located in watersupply/watershed were eliminated or reduced in size.
1980	Comprehenisve rezoning of the County approved which made zoning more consistent with the Land Use Plan.
1982, 1989	Subsequent Comp Plan amendments
1996	Land Use Plan amended to emphasize infill development of the Urban Areas as opposed to continued expansion of the development areas.
1997	Development Areas Initiative Project begun to establish expectations for the form and character of urban development in the county
2001	Neighborhood Model Adopted
2002	Neighborhood Master Planning begins with the Crozet Master Plan- which was adopted in 2004

The Comp Plan guides decisions on land use and development activities in the county

The county is divided into rural areas and urban areas to concentrate growth and protect our rural resources

Public services, facilities and utilities are provided at a higher level in the urban areas where growth is directed



About 95% of the county's total land area is in designated rural areas

The urban areas are planned to support the county's future growth, with an emphasis on infill development and higher densities

The county's five designated development/urban areas total about 35 square miles

The success of our rural protection efforts depends on our ability to concentrate growth, including new homes and businesses, in our established urban areas where these services, utilities and facilities can serve the largest number of citizens.

What We Envision for our Rural Spaces

The rural areas comprise 95% of our land area, or almost 690 square miles.

About 47% of the population lives in the rural areas. Our goals for these areas:

- Preservation of agricultural and forestal lands and activities
- Protection of water supplies
- Conservation of natural, scenic and historic resources



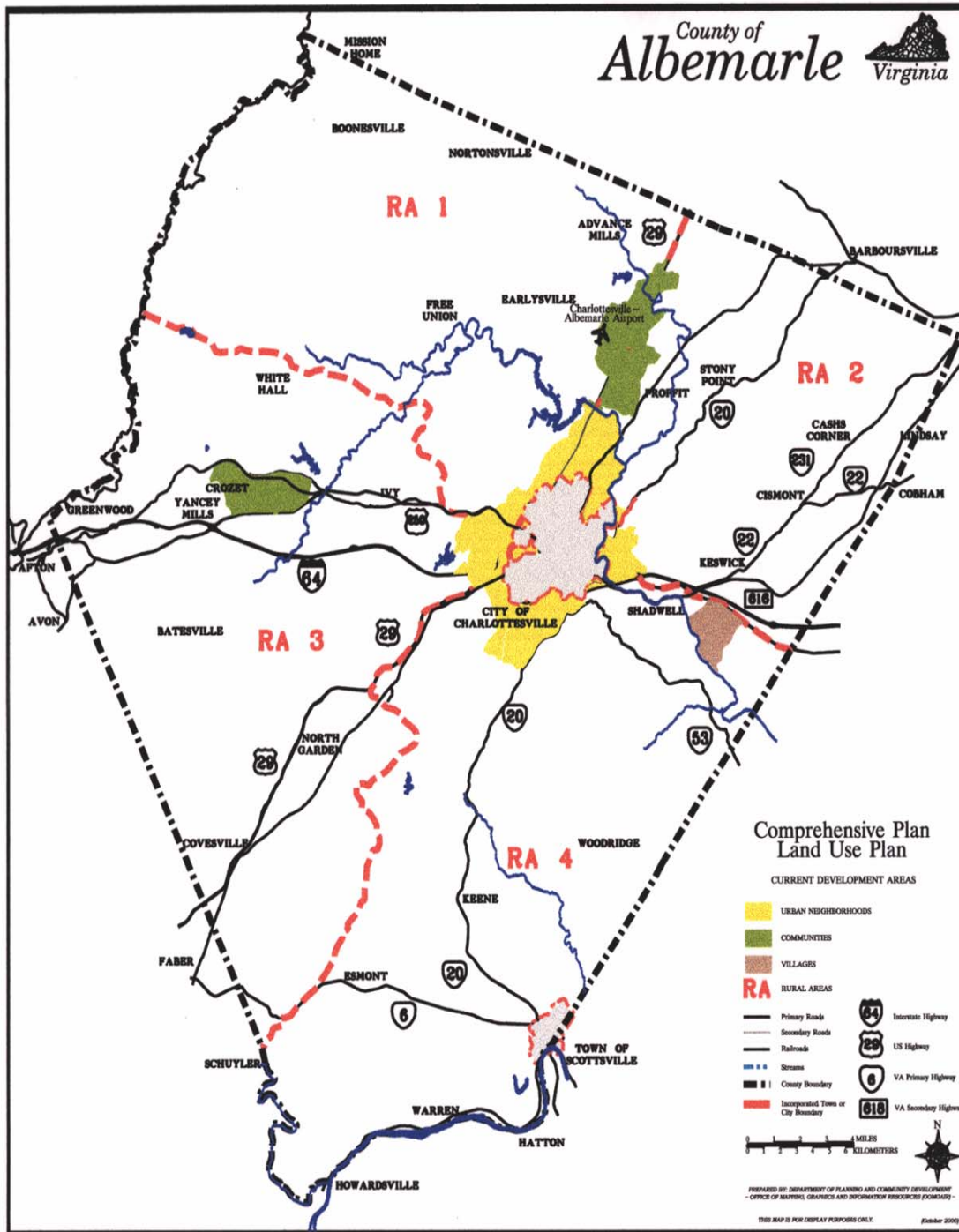
What We Envision for our Urban Places

The urban areas comprise 5% of our land area, or almost 35 square miles.

About 53% of the population lives in the urban areas. Our goals for these five designated development/urban areas – the urban ring around Charlottesville, the village area of Rivanna, and the communities of Crozet, Piney Mountain and Hollymead— are:

- Infill rather than sprawl
- New construction that respects its surroundings
- Redevelopment of underutilized spaces
- Full range of jobs, incomes and housing
- Opportunities for self-sufficiency within neighborhoods – residences, employment, shopping, recreation
- Places where people want to congregate, recreate, and enjoy pockets of natural beauty





Yellow indicates the urban area around the City of Charlottesville

Green indicates the communities of Hollymead, Piney Mountain and Crozet

Brown indicates the village of Rivanna

This map shows the boundaries of the county's five urban areas as they currently exist and the four rural areas indicated as RA 1, RA 2, RA 3 and RA 4.



Creating Attractive, Livable Urban Places

The Neighborhood Model guides new development towards more compact, efficient land use

For our growth management strategies to work, the county's urban areas must be attractive, convenient, vibrant places for people to live and work. Also, the limited land available within the defined urban areas must be used efficiently if we are truly going to prevent sprawl. The Comp Plan vision for urban 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.

The county's major tool for creating these livable urban communities is the Neighborhood Model, which guides new development away from sprawling, isolated buildings towards a more compact, pedestrian friendly design of interconnected neighborhoods and centers.



The Neighborhood Model is based on the recommendations of a 23-member citizen committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors in 1997 to determine the best way to manage the future of the county's urban areas. The committee consisted of representatives of neighborhood groups, homebuilders and the Chamber of Commerce, land use and design professionals, environmental interest groups, and citizens.

The Neighborhood Model was adopted as part of the county's Comprehensive Plan following a lengthy public involvement and engagement process that involved numerous work sessions and public hearings by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

The Model was recommended by a broad-based citizen committee following extensive public meetings over three years

The Neighborhood Model Promotes Urban Areas that . . .

Attractive, walkable, enjoyable urban places are the goal of the Neighborhood Model

- Accommodate walkers, bikers and public transportation so that mobility is possible for all residents without total dependence on cars
- Integrate open spaces so that residents and workers can walk to public parks, experience preserved natural areas, and enjoy public gathering spaces
- Mix residential and non-residential uses so that residents have convenient access to work, to services, and to entertainment

- Adapt development to site terrain so that natural topography and resources can be preserved or if disturbed, resulting terrains are safe, functional, and attractive
- Connect streets and pathways so that pedestrians can walk or bike easily to many destinations, traffic has alternative routes, and car trips are reduced in number and length
- Mix housing types and affordability levels so that a full range of housing choices is offered within neighborhoods
- Keep buildings and spaces at a human scale so that street views are attractive and pedestrian-friendly
- Adapt and reuse sites rather than abandoning them
- Have clear boundaries with the rural areas so that there is a real distinction between urban and rural areas



The Neighborhood Model also stresses the role of master planning to guide growth in the urban areas. Master planning helps ensure that the future of the urban areas is based on a shared vision of appealing and functional neighborhoods and communities.

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 county urban areas, and ultimately all the urban areas will be master planned according to a schedule determined by the Board of Supervisors.

Looking Towards the Future of Albemarle's Urban Places

The County recognizes local government's critical role in creating and supporting quality urban environments. Albemarle's current Strategic Plan, which is endorsed by the Board of Supervisors, has a goal focused on protecting and preserving the county's rural character and a goal focused on addressing growth and urbanization in a way that contributes to quality of life.

Better pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle connections will provide easier access to a variety of destinations

Master planning for all the county's urban areas will guide the pattern of future development

Rural protection and quality urban places are critical priorities in Albemarle's Strategic Plan



We are committing staff and resources to help provide services and infrastructure improvements to the more densely developed, mixed use communities that will be created by the Neighborhood Model and master planning.

Many of the functions and activities that will be required to support our evolving urban areas are not traditional roles for our local government, which until recently has been geared towards a more rural level of service delivery.



We are in the midst of transforming our departments and our operations to handle new responsibilities in public works, engineering, construction, transportation and business development. The following are some recent examples of how we are transitioning as a local government:

- Created a Business Development Facilitator position to work with businesses in insuring the economic success and vitality of our master planned communities
- Created a General Services Department and hired a Director to provide leadership and management for meeting the infrastructure needs of the urban areas
- Invested significant Capital Improvement (CIP) funding towards a variety of infrastructure projects and neighborhood improvements
- Increased funding for transportation projects and began working with the Virginia Department of Transportation to identify ways to accelerate critical local projects
- Adopted an affordable housing policy that will help produce the full range of housing choices in urban areas
- Revised our development ordinances to implement Neighborhood Model initiatives, including requiring the type of amenities that will create attractive and livable urban environments