EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Town of Ashland 2011 comprehensive Plan

Reviewed 2016

The Town of Ashland Comprehensive Plan is designed and published to provide information and to serve as a valuable resource to plan for the future of Ashland. This Plan will be used as a steering mechanism to provide guidance and continuity among our Town government, our citizens, and the business community. Through the solicitation and involvement of the Town's citizens, this Plan was created by encompassing values and identifying characteristics we hope to preserve for years to come. Within the 10 chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, a detailed description is provided of the future plans and growth for the Town of Ashland while striving to insure its economic vitality, to maintain its valuable character, to preserve its history and to engage all who live in our great community.

Ashland and Its Small Town Setting

Former Mayor Richard Gillis fondly nicknamed Ashland "The Center of the Universe" because of its central location within Hanover County and its convenient location in central Virginia and along the eastern seaboard. To the residents of Ashland, this term took on a new meaning as it truly is a center of activity to all who live here. The rich history of its railroad, historic homes and quaint residential streets provide a strong foundation apparent to residents and visitors alike. With the railroad that bisects its historic downtown area still used by freight and passenger trains daily and with Randolph-Macon College located within the Town limits providing educational and cultural activities for students and residents, Ashland is unique in this region.

2.0 Guiding Principles

At the beginning of this planning process, six guiding principles were chosen that best reflect the Planning Commission, the Town Council and the participating resident's most basic beliefs about Ashland. Each principle is described by the supporting details that best answer the question "What makes Ashland Ashland?". These guiding principles are the basis for this Comprehensive Plan.

1. **Preserve Ashland's Small Town Character**
2. **Protect Ashland's Unique Features**
3. **Manage and Enhance Our Green Town**
4. **Encourage Continued Variety**
5. **Promote Continued Economic Development**
6. **Provide a High Level of Government Services**

3.0 Community Character & Design

Ashland has always maintained a small-town character with a tradition of walkable neighborhoods and a unique sense of place. The look of our small town and the feeling it gives residents is part of what makes Ashland unique in the region. The Town seeks to draw from this foundation as the new development occurs.

The Community Character & Design chapter of the Plan strives to enhance the form, character, and aesthetic appeal of the community by:

- Ensuring that a high level of design and quality construction is maintained on all projects within the Town borders.
- Promoting design characteristics that are consistent with the current architecture and nature of the Town.
- Encouraging sustainable development that utilizes eco-friendly construction materials that are high quality.
- Encouraging sensitive infill and redevelopment to create a cohesive Downtown area and preserve the historical nature of the Town.
- Maintaining and enhancing the Town's relationship with Randolph-Macon College.
- Enhancing the identity of Downtown through the promotion of the arts.
- Providing for the maintenance and replanting of the Town's trees to ensure the green quality of the Town in the future.

4.0 Land Use

Land use decisions are a balancing act: encouraging quality new development while diminishing impacts on existing areas. As Ashland progresses into the future it will be necessary to accommodate new growth and respond to change while maintaining aspects of the Town that are valued by its residents, workers and businesses. Decisions made regarding land use will guide the future organization of transportation and open space systems and work towards ensuring the economic health of the Town.

With the Land Use chapter, the Town endeavors to maintain the Town's character and ensure orderly growth by:

- Ensuring that growth does not outpace the availability of community facilities and services.
- Guiding well-planned, coordinated, and sustainable development. Quality of life is given high priority and outweighs the value of unnecessary growth.
- Ensuring that the housing needs of present and future residents of the Town are met through a variety of high-quality housing options that reflect the different ages, family types and income levels of our neighborhoods.
- Introducing the Mixed-Use designation within the Downtown to allow for more comprehensive, flexible and creative uses as new development and redevelopment occurs.

5.0 Housing & Neighborhoods

The long-term intention of this housing chapter is to guide new development to a higher quality standard and toward an increase in middle and upper income housing. Achieving the right balance of housing will positively affect the Town's economy by raising the median income, increasing local retail opportunities and growing the tax base, all beneficial to the whole Town.

Within the Housing & Neighborhoods chapter, the Town works toward creating the right balance of housing by:

- Capturing a larger population of the metro region's executive, middle and upper income housing.
- Preserving the distinctive, historical and attractive character in both the infill and new developments within the Town.
- Raising the quality standard of new and replacement construction in the Town.
- Encouraging a mix of housing options to meet the needs of a diverse population that includes higher end, middle class, working class and affordable housing options.

6.0 Economy

Ashland recognizes that a healthy, sustainable economy depends on the creation of conditions for business development, growth and retention across all sectors. The Economy chapter is intended to guide public and private decisions that foster the stabilization and strengthening of the local Ashland economy while enhancing community and social development.

The Economy chapter works to enhance Ashland's economic development and long-term economic health and sustainability by:

- Fostering a strong and diverse economy which provides a full range of employment choices for present and future residents.
- Supporting business development activities to retain, expand and recruit businesses.
- Mobilizing public and private resources to encourage new business development through the Technology Zone and the Green-Tech Incubator.

7.0 Transportation

A successful and efficient transportation system enhances the livability of the whole community by increasing accessibility to employment, shopping, recreation, and other amenities, while reducing vehicle trips and promoting pedestrian interest. The construction of new roadways allows increased access to land influencing the location of new development. For this reason, it is critical that the Town and County work together to ensure that appropriate connections occur across Town boundaries. The Transportation chapter considers the needs of Town residents including public transportation, interstate and regional travel, pedestrians, cyclists and daily vehicle trips.

The Transportation chapter is intended to maintain a high level of service for the various modes of transportation by:

- Promoting the safe and efficient movement of people and goods for the residents, businesses, and visitors to the Town.
- Participating in regional planning efforts with Hanover County to enhance transportation for all areas surrounding the Town.
- Promoting safe and efficient travel by all modes of transportation including automobile, transit, walking, and bicycling by continuing the pedestrian-scale, well-connected network of streets.
- Maintaining a high level of service on all Town roads. New development shall address all negative impacts to local roads.

8.0 Environment

Environmental stewardship plays an integral role in guiding how the Town accommodates growth and provides services. Recognizing the private sector as an equal partner in environmental stewardship, the Town can lead by its own behavior in delivering services, operating its facilities and managing its land in an environmentally sustainable manner.
With the Environment chapter, the Town seeks to ensure the protection, preservation, and improvement of the natural environment by:

- Protecting and enhancing Ashland's tree canopy through installation, replacement, and maintenance of trees.
- Continuing the Town's high standard of environmental quality.
- Maintaining the compact, walkable form of Ashland to reduce vehicle trips, improve air quality and preserve open spaces.

9.0 Parks & Recreation

The Town sees the value of open space and recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life for Town residents. Parks & Recreation provides the framework for a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces and recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse and changing population and takes advantage of the natural beauty of Ashland.

In Parks & Recreation chapter, the Town works to effectively provide recreational opportunities for the present and future residents by:

- Providing a balanced and varied system of parks, open spaces and recreational facilities which keep pace with community growth and changing community needs.
- Planning for a diversity of active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Ensuring that a level of service is maintained within the park system to meet the needs of the ever-changing population.
- Provide recreational facilities that are accessible to all members of the public regardless of age or disability.

10.0 Community Facilities

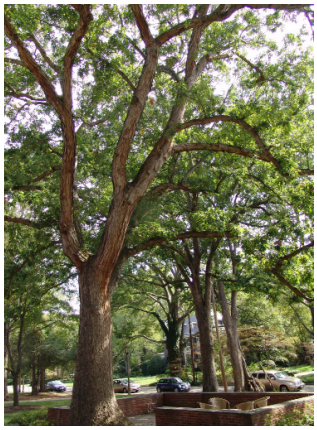
Well maintained public services and facilities promote health, safety and an enhanced quality of life for all members of this community. Community facilities, such as schools, are integral parts of the physical and social structure of our community.

Through the Community Facilities chapter, the Town works to continue the quality of public facilities that contribute to the quality of life in the Town by:

- Ensuring community safety through the provision of efficient and effective emergency services.
- Working with the School Board and County to enable our schools to remain an integral part of our unique community and a source of public pride.

Implementation

These policies will be implemented in part through adoption of a new future land use map for the Town, a revised Zoning Ordinance and updated design guidelines. The plan will be linked to the Town's Capital



Improvement Program, which prioritizes and schedules all capital investments in Ashland.

The Ashland Comprehensive Plan is the plan that will provide a framework for all other planning initiatives in the town including the Downtown Street Design Overlay District, Route 1 Overlay District, a downtown parking plan and the neighborhood plans to be created as part 2 of this process.

With its review and adoption by the Planning Commission and Town Council, Ashland will have a truly comprehensive and authoritative plan to guide investments in the future for the Town. This will be a powerful tool to stimulate growth, shape development, and measure our progress toward meeting our goals.