

APPENDIX C HISTORY

Historic Ashland

Purchased by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company (RF&P) as a mineral springs resort in the late 1840's the original 462 acres adjacent to the tracks was used to provide the railroad with lumber and fuel. Originally named Slash Cottage, in 1855 it was renamed Ashland after Henry Clay's estate in Kentucky. The Town consisting of one square mile was incorporated in 1858. Ashland is a town of small neighborhoods. Developing over time, the neighborhoods are distinguished by their architecture. Houses of the antebellum period (1850-1860) can be found along Center and Virginia Streets. The late Victorian era (1870-1890) is in evidence on Race Course, South Center and South James Streets and in a smaller neighborhood on Henry Clay Road.

The Twentieth century brought many changes to the styles of houses in Ashland. Smaller houses in the form of bungalows and ranch houses as well as colonial revival two-story houses began to develop along Beverly Road, College Avenue, Myrtle Street, Henry Clay Road, Berkley Street and Jamestown Road. The mid-twenties to late thirties brought the Thompson Street bungalows, and additions to the England Street commercial district.

The College

At the end of the Civil War, the resort and the railroad were experiencing financial difficulties. Due in part to their own declining financial situation, Randolph-Macon College in Boydton, Virginia chose to relocate to Ashland for access to the railroad and its central location between Richmond and Washington, D.C.

During the First World War, all Randolph-Macon students were involved in the Student Army Training Corps. During the Second World War, it became a preflight training center for the US Navy. At the end of WWII, the enrollment of Randolph-Macon swelled to more than 400 students, nearly half of whom were veterans returning to school on the GI Bill. The funds for construction of the first major building on the new campus were raised almost entirely by the students. This building is Washington and Franklin Hall, now a historic landmark was completely renovated in 1987.

National Register of Historic Places

The Town recognized the significance of the architecture represented in its downtown, and through the efforts of Council, Planning Commission and interested citizens, over 200 structures, including the three original buildings erected by the College, were identified as being eligible for placement on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The Ashland Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

LAND USE

Annexations

The Town remained the same in area for 119 years. In 1977, the Town annexed land from surrounding Hanover County and grew from one square mile to 4.2 square miles. The new boundaries stretched south of Ashcake Road and just north of Jamestown Road; east to Interstate 95 (I-95) and west to Chapman Street. The most recent annexation just a short 19 years later in 1996 increased the Town to 7.12 square miles and moved the boundary lines south to Johnson Road; east to Woodside Lane and North to Ellet's Crossing. At this time, the Town sold the water and sewer facilities to Hanover County.

Previous Future Land Use Plan

The Town's previous future land use plan consisted of two plans. The 1986 plan applied to the area within the 1977 Town limits and the 1996 plan applied to the area annexed into the Town on January 1, 1996.

The 1986 plan designated approximately 50 percent of the land area of the Town for residential use. Business and industrial uses were planned at a scale to support residential development in and near the Town. Commercial uses consisted of approximately 9 percent and industrial uses consisted of approximately 24 percent of the proposed land use.

The 1996 Plan altered the land use balance and potential physical form of the Town. The plan shifted the focus from residential uses to one of predominantly industrial and commercial. Approximately 53 percent of the Town's total land area was planned for industrial or commercial uses and 38 percent for residential.

In spite of the fact that the 1986 Plan discouraged strip commercial development along Washington Highway, a commercial character had resulted over time. While some of this development occurred prior to the Plan some was created by rezonings. This pattern of development resulted in the loss of land area that was designated for residential use.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

From Railway to Highway

Ashland was, and is, a train town. Following the incorporation of the Town an accommodation train between Ashland and Richmond brought tourists as well as permanent residents to the Town. In 1965, shortly after the construction of I-95, the Richmond train station was moved to its present location in western Henrico County, making the Richmond-Ashland commute impossible.

US Route 1, the original north-south connection, runs through the Town. Commercial development grew up along Route 1 creating a retail and general business district that was car-oriented as opposed to the train and pedestrian oriented downtown. This resulted in a shift of the commercial district from the center of Town to the Route 1 corridor.

The train, however, continues to bring people to Ashland. Amtrak trains provide service from points north and south. A total of eight passenger trains stop in Ashland, four traveling in each direction, providing transportation for college students and many visitors to the area. Although not a full service train station, the Ashland stop handles between 12,000 and 15,000 passengers a year.

NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERNS

Residential Development

From the beginnings of the original resort along the railroad, the Town spread west toward the farmlands of Hanover County. Neighborhoods developed along Henry Clay Road, John Street, and Snead Street to the north and Beverly Road, North James and Snead Streets south of Thompson Street. Some of the development around the College provided housing for staff and dormitories for the students. With the 1977 annexation the residential neighborhoods spread further east. Slash Cottage was developed in the 1980's bringing almost 200 new residences to the Town. The later annexation in 1996 brought in more residential development along Vaughan and Jamestown Roads.

Commercial Development

The Town first centered its business district beside the tracks consisting of small retail and service oriented businesses. The development of the commercial district along Route 1 and the opening of Interstate 95 brought service stations, fast food restaurants and shopping centers to the area. Industrial-Business parks developed to the south of Ashland providing employment centers and excellent growth potential.

Ashland's Role within the County

Ashland's role will continue to be one of commerce. Meeting employment, retail and service needs for the western end of Hanover County. In the year 2000, job opportunities in Ashland exceeded the population of the Town by approximately 50 percent. Most of the jobs available in the Town are in the retail or service sectors.

Hanover County's plans to develop around the Town's borders will not significantly change the role of the Town. Ashland will continue to provide a core commercial district that will provide employment, and services for residents of both the Town and the County.

As the population of the Town and County ages, Ashland's role as a retirement community continues to grow. People of retirement age find the Town a convenient place to live due to the walkability of much of its downtown.

POPULATION TRENDS

Growth Rate

The onset of the Civil War stopped growth and progress in the Town. In the late 1860's the opening of the College brought people back to the area and in 1890 the population had grown to 948 residents.

The Town continued to grow at a steady rate. Following World War II, the Census registered a population increase of 51 percent, due in part to the inclusion of Randolph-Macon students in the Census numbers. There was another increase after the annexation in 1977 that brought in approximately 1,800 new residents, in 1996 the population grew again with the addition of about 800 new residents.

In comparison to the County, between 1990 and 2000 the Town only saw a 13 percent increase where the County experienced its more normal 36 percent. Over the years, the Census has reflected that the Town has accounted for approximately 7 to 12 percent of the County's population. This held true for the 2010 census. Growth rates were down between 2000 and 2010 with the county increasing by only 16 percent and the Town by 9 percent.

Age Distribution

Between 1990 and 2000, the most notable age distribution trends in the Town were the increase in population of 45 years and older and the decrease in population between 0 and 4 years of age. These trends were also reflected in the County and the State.

Ashland shows a larger population of residents over the age of 65 than what is typically reflected in the County or the State. The decrease in residents from 0-4 years of age is in proportion to the County and the State. In 1970 the percentage of the Town's population over 65 was 8.4 percent; in 1990 it was 13.3 percent. (Source: Town of Ashland, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 1997, page 4)

The school-age population, from 5-19 years of age is decreasing within the Town compared to the County.

Racial Distribution

In 2010 the non-white population (African-American and other races) totaled 2,088 or 28.9 percent of the Town. This compares to a figure of 13.3 percent for Hanover County. Over the past decade the racial composition of the Town has shown an increase in non-white residents by 2.8 percent.

Educational Attainment

Between 1990 and 2000, the Town maintained a higher percentage of persons aged 25 or older that did not complete high school than either Hanover County or the State. However, the Town also reflected a higher percentage of persons aged 25 or older that have obtained either a Bachelor's or Master's degree from a college or university.

Residence in 1985

The Census also evaluates migration patterns and compares the place of residence of the respondents. For the Town of Ashland the 1990 Census showed 37 percent of the respondents lived in the same place as they did in 1985. The statistics indicate a large in-migration as 42.3 percent or 2,311 residents living in the Town in 1990 did not live in the Town in 1985.