

I. INTRODUCTION

A. THIS IS SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY

1. History and Culture

The history of Southampton County is closely tied to the products of its soils, its transportation facilities, and its water. Good soils and the availability of water have made farm and industrial production possible. Transportation facilities have enabled the collection and distribution of raw materials and products and, from time to time, have encouraged changing patterns of development. These same factors, which have contributed so much to Southampton County's past, may well continue as the factors which most influence the County in the future.

Earliest explorations of the area began a few years after the settlement at Jamestown.¹ The inhabitants were then members of several small Indian tribes, mainly the Nottoways and Meherrins, with settlements along the rivers that now bear their names. In 1634 the western limit of English colonization was established at the so-called "Blackwater Line" which extended southeast from Fort Henry (now Petersburg) through the Blackwater Swamp. Increasing pressure from colonists resulted in lifting of the line in 1705, and in following years the County lay in the path of the general southwesterly migration from the James River settlements. The soils were good for farming and there were forests for timber. In earlier times the soils supported a somewhat greater variety of crops than at present. More and more settlers were attracted, and later their slaves, as the Indians were gradually collected in reservations before they finally dispersed. There was a remnant of the Nottoway reservation still in existence in 1856 and probably for some years thereafter.

Water commerce to the south on the Blackwater and Nottoway Rivers was prominent in the early history of the County during both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Efforts to maintain or interrupt these routes for military supplies resulted in skirmishes on several occasions, but no major battles. South Quay, on the Blackwater River about where crossed by present Route 189, was an established port from the early years of the 18th century. A most dramatic event of the County's history between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars was the slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in 1831. This bloody revolt and its aftermath resulted in the deaths of approximately 100 blacks and whites and drew national and international attention from both pro- and anti-slavery factions, hardening attitudes on both sides.

¹ Source: The Comprehensive Plan, Southampton County, Virginia, August, 1989. Historical notes were summarized from Southampton County, Virginia by Thomas C. Parramore, published for the Southampton County Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1978.

In order to establish a more convenient administrative center, the present County was split off from Isle of Wight County in 1749. The County seat was Jerusalem, renamed and incorporated as Courtland in 1888. The new County is believed to have been named for Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, who was active in promoting colonization of Virginia under the English King James I.

In Colonial times, education was derived mainly from the family and from tutors engaged by wealthier planters. The first known school was a boarding school operated by Samuel Nelson at Broadwater in 1771 and perhaps earlier. Millfield Academy, located between Berlin and Ivor, gained a wide reputation for educational excellence in the 1780's and 90's. Virginia legislation led to establishment of the first Board of School Commissioners in 1818. Paul D. Camp Community College was opened in 1971.

The isolation of Southampton County diminished with the coming of the first railroad in 1834 as the first leg of the Portsmouth and Roanoke Railroad (now CSX) extended to the Nottoway River on its way to western Virginia and made connection with water travel to the south on the river. The Petersburg Railroad (now also CSX) had gone into operation west of the Meherrin only a year before. With the coming of the Portsmouth and Roanoke line, Southampton farmers now had access to both Petersburg and Norfolk markets. In 1858, the Petersburg and Norfolk Railroad was completed, crossing the northeastern section of the County. Courtland eventually gained rail service with the coming of the Atlantic and Danville Railroad in 1888, about the same time the Surry, Sussex and Southampton Railway (now abandoned) provided service from the north central County to Scotland Wharf on the James River in Surry County. The Virginian Railroad (also abandoned) was built through Sebrell and Sedley in 1906.

Over the years, the economic life of the County became centered on the railroad depots which were established at road crossings. Towns and villages gradually formed at these points: Newsoms, Boykins, and Branchville; Courtland, Capron, and Drewryville; and Sedley and Sebrell. Ivor to the northeast, perhaps somewhat more associated with the other towns along its railroad (Waverly, Wakefield and Zuni) also formed.

Franklin developed considerable steamboat commerce along the Blackwater River southward to North Carolina ports in the late 1800's and early 1900's up until the 1920's. The combination of rail and water transportation led to more rapid growth here than in the other towns. The steady growth of the Camp family's lumber business after the Civil War accelerated this growth. Franklin also became a major collection point for peanuts, which had become popular nationwide during the same period, and is now the major center of commerce and industry for the County. For somewhat similar reasons, a junction of major transportation facilities and growth of farm and forest products industries, Emporia, just west of the County line, has grown more rapidly than the Southampton towns.

In more recent times the County's highways have assumed an increasing share of the responsibility for transporting farm products, timber, and manufactured products. In addition, improved roads and widespread automobile ownership have enabled the same kind of widely dispersed residential pattern once maintained by farming, but now maintained by community to centers of trade, services, and manufacturing employment.

The history of the County, while varied and punctuated with a number of exciting events, has several major continuing influencing factors which will no doubt carry into its future: dependence on products from the land and preparation of these products for export; dependence on water, either for transportation or manufacturing; and continued development of improved transportation facilities for movement of people and goods. The provision of public services, from education and health care to utilities and fire protection, will be necessary to enable the local economy to function and expand. Planning should emphasize the advantages of these historical factors and reduce disadvantages when possible.

2. Geographic Setting

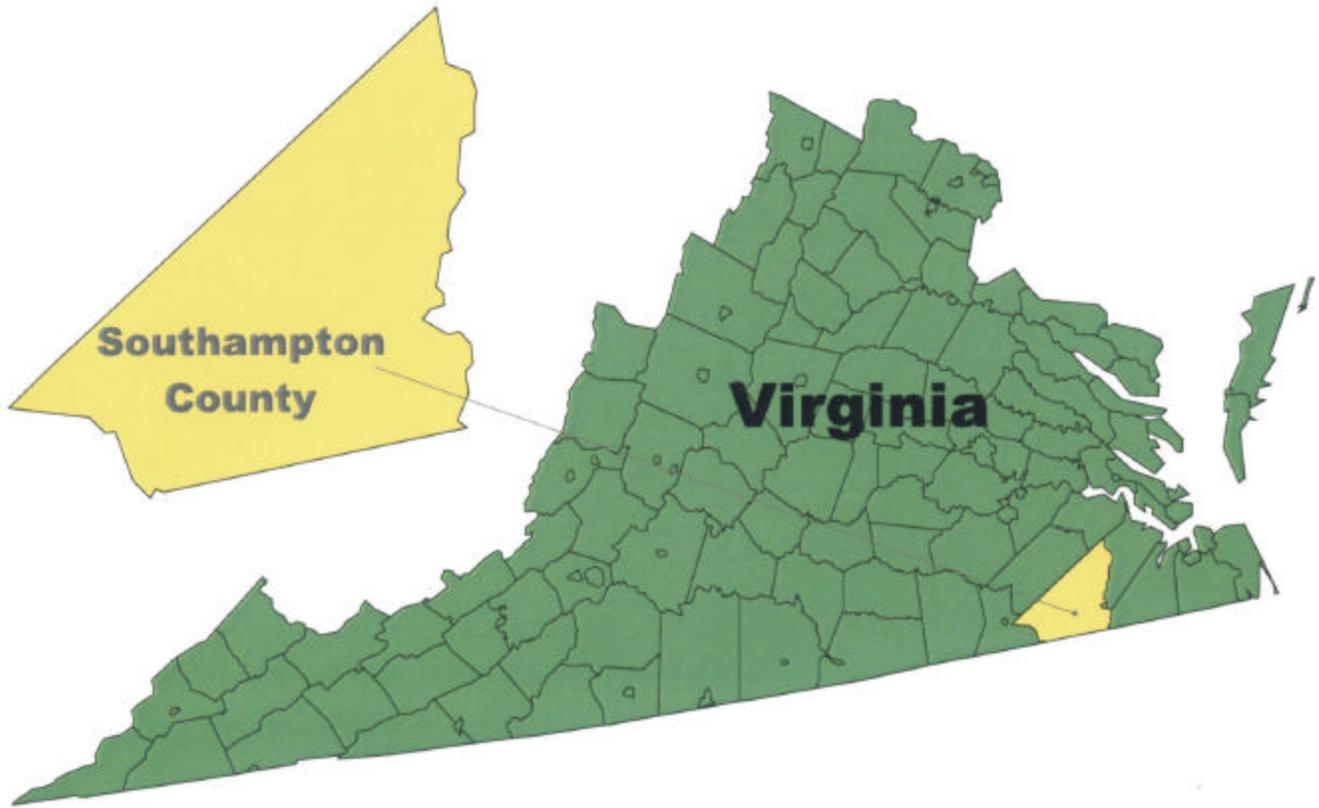
Southampton is one of 135 counties and independent cities in Virginia. The County lies in southeast Virginia, on the North Carolina border. It is bound by the Virginia Counties of Sussex and Surry to the north; Isle of Wight County and the Cities of Franklin and Suffolk to the east; Greensville County to the west; and, the North Carolina counties of Hertford and Northampton to the south. See EXHIBIT I-A.

Southampton County consists of 600 square miles of generally flat or level land with some sloping at the rivers. Elevations range from 8 to 100 feet above sea level. Drainage is provided by the Blackwater, Nottoway, and Meherrin Rivers and their tributaries.

The County seat, Courtland, is 65 miles southeast of Richmond and 45 miles east of Hampton Roads. The County is connected to other Virginia localities and other states by an excellent transportation network consisting of highway, rail, and air transportation systems.

The County government is centered in the traditional Board of Supervisors, augmented by the Board's appointed administrative officer, the County Administrator. The Board is composed of seven members with one from each of the County's election districts, elected by citizens for a term of four years.

EXHIBIT I-A
SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
REGIONAL SETTING



B. COUNTY PLANNING

1. Purpose and Authority to Plan

A comprehensive plan is a statement of long-range policy made by the governing body of a community concerning its future physical development. Comprehensive planning is one process available to local government for addressing current issues, anticipating need, and scheduling public improvements. If growth and development are occurring, and if public funds must be spent to provide facilities, it is logical to assume that the two should be coordinated, that community values be preserved, and public funds be spent prudently. It is the purpose of Southampton County Comprehensive Plan to provide a sound basis for the preparation of detailed functional plans which will serve as a general guide in the day-to-day decisions of the County government. It establishes goals and implementation strategies for managing the future growth and development of the County. It contains an inventory and analysis of existing land use, growth trends, natural resources, population and economic factors, and public facilities, as well as the need for housing, preservation of agricultural and forestal land, and protection of the environment and natural resources. It contains recommendations for the general development of the County.

This document was prepared by under the supervision of the Planning Commission with the assistance of County staff and consultants. This plan will assist the present and future Boards of Supervisors in making land use and fiscal management decisions. As an official statement of public policy, it will also be of value to other governmental agencies, the business community, and private citizens.

The goal of this plan is not to chart a rigid course for the future. This is neither possible nor desirable. First, the conditions upon which the plan is based will change, making even the most careful forecasts appear somewhat unjustified. Second, policies and attitudes change; consequently, so should the plans and programs upon which they are based.

This plan is based upon the target date of 2020. However, the Southampton County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors must not lose sight of the fact that the achievement of the goals identified herein will require a continuous effort during the next five-year period. Such a continuous effort will be required to obtain governmental savings in the provision of services during the planning period. All groups concerned with comprehensive planning can greatly increase the efficiency, adequacy, and quality of governmental services if reliable information is available upon which to base decisions. This planning document contains much of the information essential to making decisions intelligently and should thereby reduce or prevent duplication of effort and investment.

Although this plan focuses on the future, it is based upon present conditions within

Southampton County. As time passes, new data, unforeseen development in the County, and the development of innovative planning techniques may necessitate updates of this document. Therefore, the planning process should be considered a continuous task, demanding periodic re-evaluation as well as updates of economic, demographic, and land use projections. This plan should be considered a flexible guide which may be revised as changing conditions warrant a revision. However, as prescribed by Virginia law, at least once every five years the plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.

The general purpose of the comprehensive plan is also found in the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, Section 15.2-2223 through 15.2-2232, which states:

In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, and prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.

The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be.

Such plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, shall show the commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan...

The comprehensive plan may also be considered a guide to managing resources wherever a balance is sought between competing needs – for example, protecting the environment's aesthetic or cultural qualities versus providing the population and its interests with needs such as shopping areas, housing, and industrial employment.

2. Planning Methodology

In the preparation of the comprehensive plan update, account was taken of the physical, economic, social, and population factors which affect the County. After data relating to these factors was collected and analyzed, projections for future growth patterns were developed. Following analysis of data and development of projections based thereon, detailed recommendations were prepared to provide guidelines for the future

development of the County.

Upon completion, plan updates must undergo the same adoption procedure as prescribed for original plans in Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia (the Code). This legislation requires that the citizens of the County be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the plan update. The Code specifies that at least one public hearing be held before the Planning Commission may recommend the plan to the County Board of Supervisors. Prior to holding a public hearing, the Planning Commission must publish a notice specifying the time and place of the hearing. This notice must be published once a week for two (2) successive weeks, and not more than twenty-one (21) days or less than six (6) days prior to the public hearing, in a newspaper having general circulation in the County. The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors may hold a joint public hearing on the plan. If a joint hearing is held, only the Board of Supervisors need publish a notice of the joint hearing.

The comprehensive plan is only a statement of policy for future growth. After this plan is adopted by the Board of Supervisors, they should consider the adoption of ordinances as needed to implement the recommendations set forth. Such ordinances and programs will have to be prepared and implemented if the County is to have a continuing planning program that reflects County policy and orderly growth.

3. Plan Format

The comprehensive plan provides findings and analyses for the County as a whole with respect to: natural conditions, population and demographics, economy, housing, transportation, utilities, and community facilities and services.

In Chapter VIII, GROWTH MANAGEMENT, existing land use and development conditions in the County are described and analyzed. Projected future conditions with respect to land use and utilities and services needs are also analyzed.

The goals and implementation strategies of the comprehensive plan (Chapter IX, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES) presents the needs and findings outlined in the plan elements noted above. The implementation strategies of this element, in particular, set forth the directions being recommended for the current as well as future Boards of Supervisors to take in continuing efforts to solve problems, meet needs as set forth in the goals, and make best use of the County's advantages and resources. This chapter of the plan is concluded with general measures that must be carried out to implement the plan. These measures are primarily enforcement, administrative, promotional, or community development-type actions.

4. Plan Development

A significant requirement in the development of any comprehensive plan is the collection and evaluation of adequate information relative to the geographic, demographic, and economic conditions of the study area. Geographic data reveals the

various physiographic advantages and limitations characteristic of the locality, including water, mineral, timber, and agricultural resources as well as slopes and soil types. Equally important is the evaluation for the growth potential of the area in terms of population it can be expected to sustain. The factors of probable future size, composition, basic characteristics, and spatial distribution of the population are significant in their effects on the extent and types of possible future land development. Proper land use planning also requires an economic analysis of the area as a basis for its potential for continued economic growth. In addition, a survey of existing land use patterns is needed in order to establish historical trends in the physical utilization of the land and to formulate general conclusions concerning each land use activity's magnitude and distribution within Southampton County.

The data sources used in the preparation of this plan included statistical reports such as United States Bureau of Census documents, State and local plans dealing with specific work elements of functional plans for the County, interviews with citizens of the area, and the 1989 and 1995 Southampton County Comprehensive Plans. The SOURCES CONSULTED section of this plan contains a listing of individual source material. A variety of field surveys were also performed as information vital to the preparation of the existing land use map.

5. Citizen Participation

Although public hearings are required prior to plan adoption, this planning effort went well beyond this requirement and began to solicit citizen participation at the beginning of the process. Prior to having a series of four public meetings in various areas of the County, a scoping workshop was conducted which included the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, County staff, and consultants. In addition, the Planning Commission discussed the comprehensive plan update at its regular monthly meetings throughout the process.

A listing of the meetings and public forums held during the development of this update are found in the Workshops and Meetings section.

Prior to adoption of this update or future amendments thereto, by the Board of Supervisors, public hearings must be conducted.

6. Planning in Southampton County

On August 23, 1989, following two years of study and research, the Southampton County Board of Supervisors adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. In adopting the plan, the Board noted that the Plan was not so much a vehicle to generate change; rather, the plan was considered a policy guide to offer suggestions, alternatives, and possible ways of dealing with change that naturally occurs for the benefit of the citizens of the County.

It was understood that, in adopting the Plan, there was no way to anticipate all the changes that may occur and that the Plan would have to be reviewed periodically in accordance with new conditions, comments and suggestions from County citizens, and provisions of State Law.

In 1995, the County updated the 1989 Plan. The purpose of the update was to note the many changes that occurred since 1989, to update the socio-economic data contained in the 1989 Plan with that published in the 1990 Census and to serve as a supplement to the 1989 Plan in aiding the Board in the decision making process.

In 1999, the County again undertook the update of its comprehensive plan to better position itself as it enters the new millennium. The County's Planning Commission again spearheaded the planning process. The Commission relied on the assistance and expertise of the County's professional staff and a variety of elected and appointed officials and local, State, and Federal agencies.