

**PLANNING
COMMISSION**



AGENDA BRIEFING

Staunton, VA

Meeting Date:	November 16, 2023	Staff Members: Rodney Rhodes Tim Hartless
Item #	3-F	
Ordinance #		
Department:	Community Development – Planning and Zoning	
Subject:	Public Hearing and Consideration of a Request by the City of Staunton to Amend the City of Staunton, Virginia, Comprehensive Plan 2018-2040, to Include Changes that are Necessary to Reflect the Recently Completed Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan	

Background: In 2022, Staunton City Council appropriated funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to pay the cost associated with creating a Neighborhood Action Plan for the community of Uniontown. The planning firm of EPR, P.C was chosen as the consultant for the project and the City began working with them in February of 2023. A Steering Committee was assembled consisting of residents, property owners and other interested stakeholders to create a Neighborhood Action Plan for the historic community of Uniontown. The planning process included six steering committee meetings and a community survey that identified concerns, vetted goal statements, and asked for specific ideas for moving Uniontown forward. Additional information on the community's past and vision for the future was received at a Building Bridges event honoring Uniontown's past. Staff and the Steering Committee reviewed multiple revisions of the Neighborhood Action Plan, . The Plan was presented at the Planning Commission's August 17, 2023 meeting and City Council's August 24, 2023 meeting. Upon receiving the presentation, City Council directed the Planning

Commission to conduct a public hearing on the Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan to be included as an addendum to the City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan. Staff has also prepared an update to the Future Land Use Map and incorporated various objectives into Chapter 1 – Goals and Objectives to address the action items noted in the Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan.

The Uniontown Neighborhood Plan has a dedicated City webpage utilized for information and meeting dates, updated by the Planning & Zoning Division, where the [Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan](#) can be viewed. There are four main goals to the action plan, which were presented with actions associated with each goal.

Goal A – Reinvestment

Action 1 – Extend water and sewer infrastructure into Uniontown.

Action 2 – Improve the internal roadway network conditions and provide streetlights.

Action 3 – Develop a property owner education program to inform Uniontown's owners of their rights and opportunities.

Action 4 – Survey lots to improve property boundaries and records.

Goal B – Sense of Community

Action 1 – Update the Zoning Map to reflect Uniontown's vision for single-family residential.

Action 2 – Partner with Housing Groups to construct new, quality, affordable homes on existing lots that are comparable in size and scale to what existed previously.

Action 3 – Evaluate the condition of remaining vacant structures to determine what can be repaired and what might need to be removed.

Action 4 – Organize regular community clean-up events and beautification efforts.

Action 5 – Preserve natural habitats to maintain the rural feel.

Goal C – Preservation

Action 1 – Re-establish access to the Uniontown Chapel Cemetery.

Action 2 – Develop promotional material to communicate Uniontown's history.

Action 3 – Create an online presence that documents Uniontown's history.

Action 4 – Install historical markers and plaques that communicate Uniontown's history and the stories of its people.

Action 5 – Ensure every school library has a copy of Old Uniontown Glances Backwards and other books/references that document local history.

Goal D – Reestablished Connections

Action 1 – Examine options at the former National Avenue Bridge site.

Action 2 – Examine gateway treatments on National Avenue that makes Uniontown visible from Richmond Road.

Action 3 – Update the City of Staunton's Comprehensive Plan to show Uniontown as an essential part of the Richmond Road Corridor.

Action 4 – Redesign Uniontown's commercial properties on Richmond Road to reflect the neighborhood.

Attachments:

Attachment 1—Uniontown Future Land Use Map

Attachment 2—Uniontown Proposed Future Land Use Map

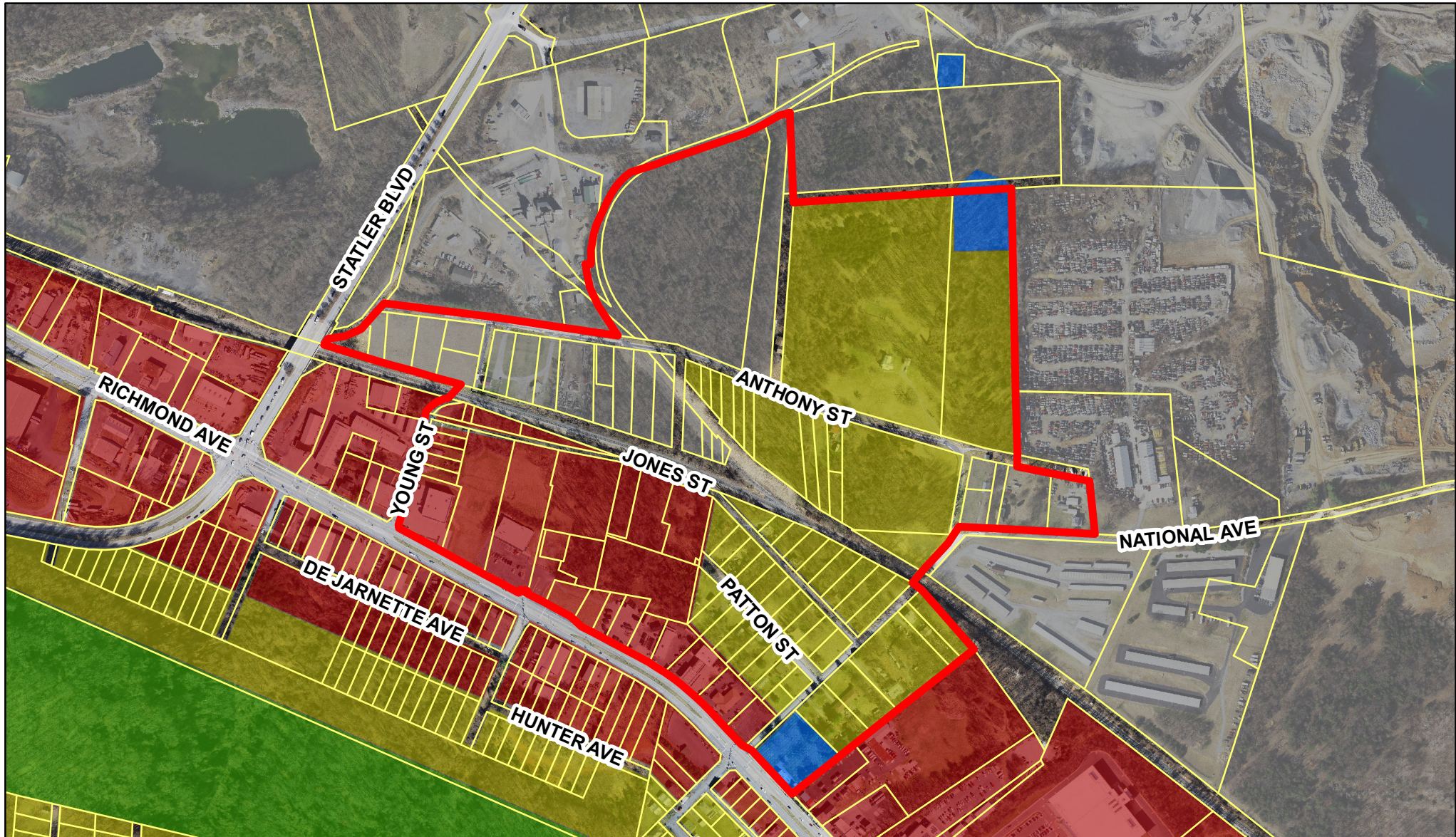
Attachment 3—Proposed Changes to the Comprehensive Plan's Objectives

Recommendation: After conducting the public hearing, staff recommends that Planning Commission endorse; the proposed Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan, the update to the Future Land Use Map and the incorporation of new objectives into the Comprehensive Plan to address action items noted in the Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan.

Suggested Motion: On the basis that it would serve the interests of public necessity, convenience, and general welfare, I move that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan as an addendum to the *City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan 2018-2040*, the proposed changes to the Future Land Use Map and the new proposed objectives under Chapter 1 – Goals and Objectives.

Uniontown Future Land Use Map

Attachment 1



Future Land Use

- CONSERVATION/RECREATION/OPEN SPACE
- PLANNED FARM DEVELOPMENT
- PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- MEDIUM DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

- TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
- LOW DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL
- PROFESSIONAL

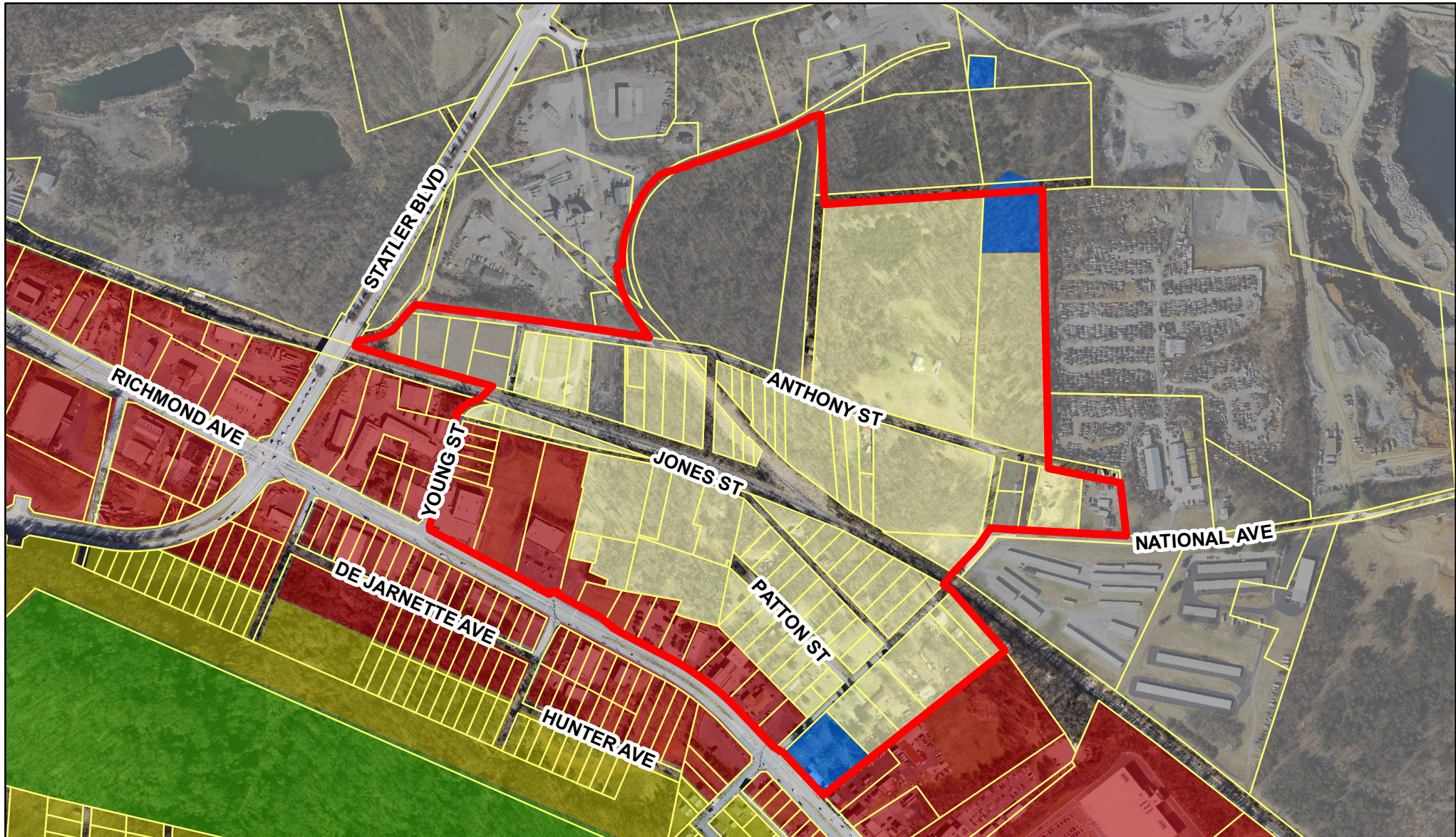
- PLANNED BUSINESS
- BUSINESS
- PLANNED INDUSTRIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

Additional Layers

- Uniontown
- Lot_Lines

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

Uniontown Proposed Future Land Use Map Attachment 2



Future Land Use

- CONSERVATION/RECREATION/OPEN SPACE
- PLANNED FARM DEVELOPMENT
- PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

- LOW DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- MEDIUM DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

- TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
- LOW DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL
- PROFESSIONAL

- PLANNED BUSINESS
- BUSINESS
- PLANNED INDUSTRIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

Additional Layers

- Uniontown
- Lot_Lines



0 250 500 1,000 Feet

Chapter 1- Goals and Objectives

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are overarching statements describing the direction that a community wants to go. Goals are general, reflect values of the community, and are visionary to lead to a desired future. Objectives are statements describing how those goals should be reached. Objectives should be measurable and achievable.

Open Space/Environment

Goal: Practice good stewardship of the environmental resources within and surrounding the City by protecting environmentally sensitive areas, preserving open space and natural habitat (including dark skies), minimizing pollution of all kinds, and encouraging sustainability and conservation practices.

Objectives:

- Promote only appropriate uses for open space, floodplains, environmentally sensitive areas, and agricultural-forestal districts.
- Support efforts to preserve Betsy Bell and Mary Gray Mountains by enhancing the use of public areas and exploring the possibility of conservation easements.
- Support development of greenways in and those that connect to the City.
- Encourage the implementation of Mitigation Strategies for the City included in the Central Shenandoah Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Take a watershed approach to protect water resources, through efforts such as reducing pollution and litter, encouraging stream buffers and restoration of riparian areas, increasing tree canopy, preserving open space, and educating the public.
- Continue implementation of stormwater best management practices.
- Promote energy conservation practices and the potential use of alternative energy sources.

Community Character

Goal: Preserve and capitalize on the rich historical and architectural character of the City by enhancing its physical attractiveness and implementing architecturally appropriate design standards.

Objectives:

- Enhance the physical attractiveness of the City through signage, landscaping and tree plantings, controlling litter, and reducing light pollution through “Dark Sky” techniques such as top and side shields on outdoor lighting.
- Educate citizens, especially property owners, on landscaping, beautification of neighborhoods, proper stormwater management, and the importance of maintaining long-term historic standards.
- Continue support for and cooperative efforts with the Historic Staunton Foundation.
- Support the City’s continued compliance with the historic preservation and the historic district overlay ordinances.
- Explore areas in the City for potential designation as historic districts and continue to identify properties of historical or architectural significance, especially pre- and post- WWII neighborhoods.
- Support preservation efforts of Staunton’s historic African American communities and identify properties of historical or architectural significance. [Support the preservation goals for Uniontown as noted in the Uniontown Neighborhood Action Plan.](#)
- Encourage commercial and retail structures that adjoin residential neighborhoods to utilize consistent or complimentary facades and site features to the surrounding neighborhoods when they are developed, redeveloped, or renovated.

Goal: Minimize degradation of scenic and natural resources.

Objectives:

- Use community friendly lighting policies to minimize light pollution and foster comfortable and safe nighttime environments; use smart outdoor lighting in public installations and educate citizens on appropriate lighting choices.

Planning

Goal: Encourage appropriate new development that is well-planned, compatible, incorporates mixed uses when appropriate, and contributes to the resource base of the City.

Objectives:

- Coordinate planning on corridors to promote quality of life and architectural character.
- Educate the public, development community, local officials and staff on the advantages of smart/good development.
- Encourage “living where you work” through at-home businesses in residential areas and small business owners living in commercial and transitional mixed-use zones, especially downtown buildings where businesses are at street level and upper floors are residences.
- Continue funding to complete the adopted Streetscape Plan in the Downtown Business District. Expand the Streetscape planning to include entry corridors immediately adjacent to and leading into the Downtown historic districts.
- Review zoning for the Downtown Business District and the adjoining historic districts for compatibility with the architectural character of the area.
- Review building height allowable under current zoning.
- Document the existing and historical architectural character of the Central Avenue area, adjoining historic districts, and neighborhoods.
- Revise zoning as needed to ensure new construction will relate to and be compatible with the historic architectural building and landscape character, including size, scale, and pattern of development.
- Review and update historic overlay zoning for the historic districts to ensure compatibility with the intent of the adopted design guidelines.
- Review and update Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) procedures and process. Consider consent agenda for minor changes and proposed changes clearly documented and following the adopted guidelines.

Goal: Encourage a demographically diverse and growing population.

Objectives:

- Recruit a mix of young professionals, families, and recent retirees to Staunton.
- Develop incentives for young adults to return to the City after completing college or starting a family.
- Capitalize on the financial resources and life experiences that new retirees bring to the City.
- Ensure adequate facilities and programs are available to support the City's older citizens and empower them to remain active in the community.

Goal: Actively encourage public and stakeholder participation and input for land use and development decisions.

Objectives:

- Encourage civic, service, and faith-based organizations, as well as neighborhood and community associations and the development community to play key roles in neighborhood revitalization through their participation in neighborhood “visioning” exercises.

Neighborhoods and Housing

Goal: Create walkable neighborhoods with the emphasis on pedestrian access and safety.

Objectives:

- Make rehabilitation and development of a quality pedestrian network including a maintenance and enhancement program for existing sidewalks a key priority for capital project funding and implementation.
- Require appropriately landscaped and sized sidewalks within all new developments and major redevelopments. Retrofit existing neighborhoods with appropriately landscaped and sized sidewalks as funding becomes available.
- Maximize the safety of students utilizing the school “walk zones” and by enabling and encouraging walking to school through such programs as “Safe Routes to School.”

- Complete the pedestrian corridor on Churchville Avenue to connect downtown to Gypsy Hill Park.
- Pursue safety efforts to ensure that neighborhood streets along the pedestrian network are as safe as possible from high speed traffic and crime.
- Integrate new developments into surrounding neighborhoods by connecting with existing roads and discouraging cul-de-sacs and isolating neighborhoods.

Goal: Ensure that Staunton's housing stock is an adequate mix to support the citizenry and the City's tax base.

Objectives:

- Develop a city-wide housing plan to address housing issues such as affordable housing, blighted areas, historic rehabilitation, housing for seniors and the elderly, and housing too concentrated based on income levels.
- Encourage building projects that infill existing neighborhoods.
- [Encourage the construction of quality, affordable homes on existing lots in Uniontown that are comparable in size and scale to what existed previously.](#)
- Encourage residential development of upper floors of commercial buildings in downtown.
- Promote mixed use development of housing, shops, businesses, and parks.

Rehabilitation and Re-use

Goal: Promote rehabilitation and conservation throughout the City by reuse of existing infrastructure and buildings, revitalization of blighted and vacant properties, and redevelopment in older, high-density areas with existing utilities and infrastructure.

Objectives:

- Provide tools and incentives for private rehabilitation of older structures throughout the City such as grants, low-interest loans, revolving loan funds, tax abatement, and technical assistance.
- Emphasize proactive property and structural maintenance and environmental hazard abatement through public education and volunteer support through community and faith-based organizations.

- Review the Rehab Abatement Program to see if there are any helpful revisions that could benefit homeowners.

- Continue applying for funding from state, federal, private, and non-profit programs for neighborhood improvements.
- Revitalize blighted and vacant properties by creating an inventory to evaluate if zoning changes are needed, create a partnership with public safety officials to address crime, require absent landlords to maintain deteriorating properties, and encourage the City Treasurer to auction tax delinquent and abandoned properties.
- Improve flexibility in older neighborhoods and redevelopment areas by examining lot size, set back, and parking requirements. [Investigate the possibility of creating a new zoning district to address historic neighborhoods where current zoning requirements would be impractical and would impede development/redevelopment.](#)
- Encourage continued redevelopment of commercial brownfield areas.
- Encourage compatible, in-fill development on vacant lots.

Transportation and Parking

Goal: Provide balanced design that includes use of a variety of transportation options including pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle, and public transportation within the City.

Objectives:

- Develop designs that scale roads and intersections compatible to neighborhoods.
- Evaluate the design of any new transportation project for sidewalks, safety, pedestrian and bicycle access, and the impact on existing neighborhoods.
- Develop safe, designated street crossings and ingress/egress points for pedestrians in high-density neighborhoods that adjoin primary destinations such as downtown, parks, and schools to encourage walking.
- Consider options such as traffic calming devices and traffic routing patterns to disperse traffic away from older, established neighborhoods.
- Continue to make Staunton more bike-friendly with a variety of bike infrastructure on streets as they are built, widened, or resurfaced. Link greenways and bike trails.
- Pursue safe pedestrian networks in and between all neighborhoods.

- Continue participation in a regional transit system that offers transportation options to those who cannot, or choose not, to operate motor vehicles. Expand services of the existing system, when possible, to provide a broader service area within the City.

Goal: Increase the emphasis on use and design for the City's current and future parking facilities.

Objectives:

- Implement resourceful parking strategies that promote calculating parking ratios based upon average use instead of capacity use. Examine ways to maximize utilization of downtown parking lots and garages.
- Maintain incentives for retrofitting hard surface commercial parking areas to landscaped areas.
- Create a safe, user-friendly, landscaped pedestrian network of walkways and crossings between public parking and commercial areas.
- Where appropriate, move parking from the front of public and commercial buildings to the side or rear.

Public Service and Government

Goal: Ensure quality and effective public services that meet the needs of citizens and the business community that is balanced with the City's economic base and resources.

Objectives:

Recreation

- Provide appropriate facilities and programs to adequately meet the recreational needs of the community.
- Continue to support and provide facilities for active and passive recreation activities that provide opportunities for social interaction.
- Work with the local YMCA and similar organizations to provide joint programs and to supplement resources.
- Continue to support the network of parks; small and large.

Public Safety

- Closely monitor personnel and equipment needs of the public safety departments (police, fire, rescue) to ensure that an optimum level of public safety and protection is maintained for Staunton's citizens, homes, properties, and businesses.
- Continue to promote public safety education and prevention programs for police, fire, and rescue services in schools, neighborhoods, and other settings.
- Develop a volunteer "Crime Watch" or "Neighborhood Watch" program for neighborhoods, parks, public areas, and along the pedestrian network leading to and from destinations.
- Develop a "Fire Watch" program for any areas of the city that border forested and grass lands and have high potential for wildfires.
- Continue support for "closest to call" joint response agreement with Augusta County Fire Department.
- Ensure that the City is prepared in the event of a natural disaster or man-made disaster here or in neighboring regions where it could significantly affect the City or its residents.

Schools

- Support efforts to maintain a quality school system.
- Encourage the continued renovation and upgrade of existing, neighborhood-based schools.
- Encourage more utilization of schools, school grounds, and playgrounds as neighborhood focal points and gathering centers for after hours and community activities when schools are not in session.
- Continue to capitalize on the excellent schools, colleges, and universities in the region to assist with the implementation of planning objectives. Utilize student interns and classes to conduct research; and seek input from professors and students.

Library

- Continue to support regional cooperation between area libraries.
- Support continued maintenance/enhancement of the library facility and encourage family-friendly programs and services.

Social Services

- Ensure that Staunton maintains its responsibility for the number of social service clients proportionate to its capabilities.

Utilities and Infrastructure

- Encourage extension of water and sewer utilities only where it is planned, and discourage extension of water and sewer utilities into areas where they might promote the development of identified environmentally critical areas.
- [Seek funding to extend water and sewer infrastructure into Uniontown.](#)
- [Improve the internal roadway network conditions in Uniontown.](#)
- Encourage the undergrounding of utilities whenever possible in private and public development, redevelopment and relocation.
- Continue to fund and seek funding for critical stormwater control facilities and flood mitigation activities.
- Encourage the use of smart outdoor lighting when new lighting is installed and transition existing street lighting to smart lighting; follow guidelines of International Dark Sky Association (IDA) and Smart Outdoor Lighting Association (SOLA).
- Continue to require sidewalks and curb and guttering for all new developments and major renovations, but allow for flexibility in design, that maintains the edge of the street and allows for controlled stormwater management.
- Encourage green and sustainable initiatives and integrate emerging technologies that promote use of efficient and renewable energy.

Goal: Ensure that the regulatory and approval processes are clear and facilitate the type of development the City desires.

Objectives:

- Work with stakeholders (including developers, contractors, investors, real

estate agents, architects, land surveyors, and bankers) to evaluate the regulatory and approval processes.

- Develop zoning regulations and design goals in a graphic / pictorial format.

Economic Development

Goal: Continue development of a vibrant, active downtown with enhanced business and residential opportunities.

Objectives:

- Continue to support the Staunton Downtown Development Association and its economic development and revitalization efforts.
- Support organizations that expand arts and cultural opportunities for Staunton's residents and visitors.
- Promote outdoor activities in the downtown area such as dining, sales by downtown businesses, festivals, and community gatherings that encourage pedestrian activity and social interaction.
- Encourage the opening of "basic service" businesses including a grocery store, laundry, and pharmacy in downtown.
- Continue to educate businesses on the benefits within enterprise zones.
- Support opportunities to attract visitors downtown who have stopped at Staunton Crossing or Frontier Center.

Goal: Aggressively pursue an economic development program that strengthens and broadens the City's economic base, with an emphasis on living wage opportunities.

Objectives:

- Support the goals of the City's Economic Development Plan, including: short-term priorities such as destination retail, tourism, white collar service businesses, and manufacturing in the industrial parks; long-term priorities such as workforce skill development, development of higher paying jobs, and small business development.
- Promote and fill the Green Hills Industry and Technology Center and the Staunton Crossing.

- Work cooperatively with Augusta County and Waynesboro to achieve joint economic development and tourism goals.
- Continue to support the Central Shenandoah Valley's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies.
- Actively participate in the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, the Shenandoah Valley Technology Council, the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board, the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, and similar organizations that promote the economic health and well-being of Central Shenandoah Valley residents and businesses.
- Support an agricultural processing plant in the area to give farmers a way to market and process farm products locally.
- Encourage medical and educational uses in the downtown area.
- Maintain support for a business incubator located in Staunton.