

Chapter 2- Land Use and Development Guide

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Staunton's Comprehensive Plan 2018 through 2040 provides for future development within the City of Staunton to occur in an efficient, economically, and environmentally sound manner. The Citizens Advisory Committee developed the Plan after consideration of the population projections, plan goals, and objectives. It presents a future pattern of land use; a set of overall initiatives; and more specific recommendations for policies and programs to assist in achieving the goals of the community. The Plan, along with the accompanying Land Use and Development Guide, maps, and supporting data, will serve as a guide to City officials, the business community, and citizens in making decisions regarding future development of the City. It proposes a detailed pattern of land use and development that will result in orderly growth and a vibrant, aesthetically pleasing community for the citizens of Staunton.

DESIRES FOR STAUNTON'S FUTURE

Many factors must be taken into consideration when formulating a guide for the future development of a community. These factors help to determine the optimum pattern of development by balancing pursuit of residential, commercial, and employment opportunities with preservation of the natural environment, history, and character of the community. Over the years, an overriding concern voiced by many citizens at the public planning area meetings has been a desire to protect the "quality of life" in Staunton. Residents consistently discuss the importance of maintaining or improving their lifestyles through a variety of methods including increased business opportunities downtown, constructing additional recreational facilities, and protecting the scenic beauty and historic character of the City. Therefore, the Committee maintained the following guidelines as they conducted the update process for the Comprehensive Plan:

- a desire to conserve and/or protect the City's natural resources, historic character, and scenic qualities;
- a desire to strengthen and broaden the City's economic base;
- a desire to ensure adequate services and facilities commensurate with the City's economic base; and
- a desire to encourage appropriate development and/or redevelopment of properties within the City.

The Comprehensive Plan requires the examination of development factors on a case-by-case basis. Recommendations in this plan must be balanced against relevant considerations for the City (population projections, economic, employment and historic considerations, and housing opportunities). During a long-range time span, development proposals may be made which deviate from the Land Use and Development Guide; however, if the goals, objectives and proposed policies are utilized when reviewing such proposals, the planning objectives will still be achieved.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GROWTH

Physical Features

Staunton is 19.98 square miles. There are several types of natural features that must be taken into account in planning the future of Staunton. These include: steep slopes, drainage areas, flooding, and karst areas as presented in the Physical Features section, all of which are inhibiting factors that limit development. Steep slopes, 25 percent and greater, are usually considered unsuitable for any type of intensive development. Steeply sloping areas can be used for outdoor recreation, wildlife management, watershed protection, and forest purposes. The Uniform Statewide Building Code and the National Flood Insurance Program prohibit the construction of any structure intended for occupancy within the 100 year floodplain unless the structure is properly floodproofed. Intensive development, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, is discouraged within 100 year floodplains. Floodplains, however, offer few limitations to non-intensive uses such as recreation and open space.



Source: CSPDC

Drainage areas in some parts of Staunton can pose obstacles to development. Heavy rains can cause increased runoff in these natural drainage areas, and may cause problems such as standing water on roadways. Additionally, pollution of groundwater supplies may occur in drainage areas as oils, topsoil, and other pollutants are washed into the water supplies. Measures to control the volume of runoff from developed areas can help to solve these problems; however, increased costs of development may be associated with these measures.

Karst areas are regions of bedrock instability. These areas are characterized by caves, sinkholes, sinking creeks, and large springs. Development of these areas can cause ground surface subsidence or collapse. Therefore, intensive development on or around karst regions

should be avoided.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure must be considered in planning. Infrastructure includes streets, water, sewer, public safety facilities, libraries, schools, hospitals, transit systems, and other public buildings. Infrastructure supports the establishment of industrial, commercial, and residential development by the private sector. These private investments create employment, shopping, service, and housing opportunities essential to the needs of the community. The existing condition of Staunton's infrastructure shows that adequate facilities already exist or can be extended in developed areas. However, to provide services to undeveloped areas on the fringes of the City, major expenditures would be necessary. This Plan, therefore, strongly encourages prioritizing development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of areas where infrastructure and services already exist or could easily be made available.

Historic and Scenic Qualities

Staunton's historic character is a hallmark which has been recognized throughout the nation. The movement to preserve and protect the City's historic heritage has been a driving force for over four decades. The continued protection of historic structures is fundamental to the heritage, character and sustainability of the community. Heritage tourism is a vital component of not only Staunton's, but the region's tourism programs. Preserving the character of the City through protection of existing structures helps to support the tourism industry. The redevelopment of buildings and the development of new structures in historic districts should be done with sensitivity to the historic character and setting of the district. Also important to historic structures is the surrounding landscape elements, which need to reflect the context of the site and the structure in terms of materials and land form. Likewise, development outside historic districts should complement and support the overall character of the City, while relating to the surrounding neighborhood setting. The City's major entrance corridors should be developed in a manner that protects and enhances their scenic beauty and distinct character. Structures, landscaping, signage and overall site development can and should be designed and developed in a fashion that creates attractive corridors leading to the City's historic downtown. The use of both creative design standards and codes supports economic development while maintaining Staunton's historic and scenic fabric.

Housing

A vibrant community with a diverse population requires a wide range of housing choices. Staunton has traditionally been recognized for its historic architecture and affordable older homes, with a large part of the City's housing inventory being built before 1980. Between 2007 and 2017, the City of Staunton issued approvals for 443 residential units. Of these, 82 percent have been constructed. The types of units approved and built represent a variety of

housing types, including traditional suburban homes, downtown upper story developments, condominiums, townhouses, elderly housing and planned unit developments with small lot development, more local focused architecture and pedestrian amenities. Although residential development has traditionally cost localities more to provide services than the revenue they generate, an appreciable amount of new home activity is desirable to both upgrade the quality of the housing stock and to attract buyers who prefer newer homes.

Economics

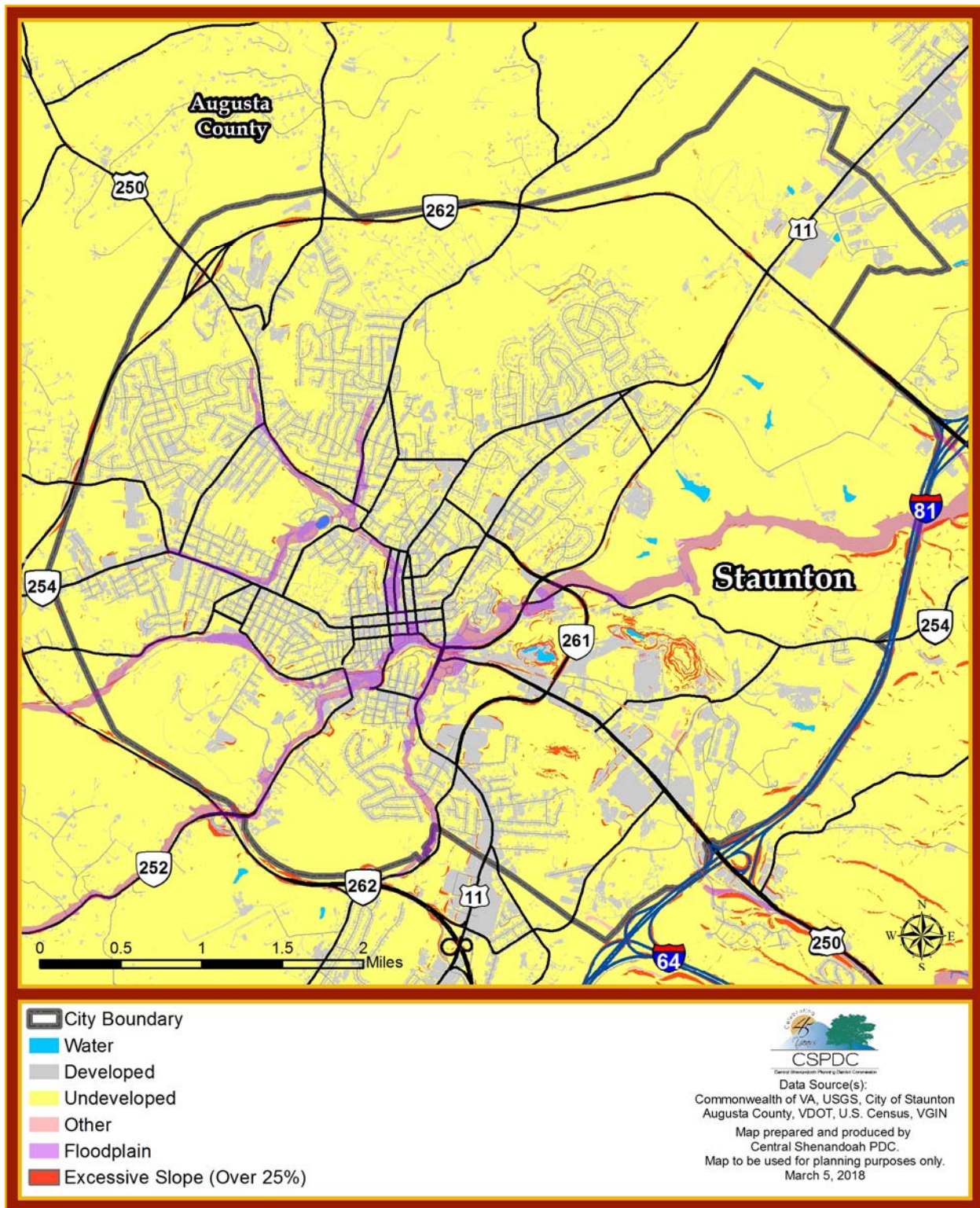
The presence of available land for economic development is not enough to ensure growth. Other factors that play a key role in this process are the availability of a skilled workforce, the infrastructure capability of the site (water, sewer, gas, electricity and roads/rail), and the overall costs of doing business. These costs include: utility cost; transportation costs; and the taxes of the jurisdiction. In terms of workforce, business prospects will evaluate the probability of it satisfying job requirements and the availability of both employed and unemployed workers. The availability of institutions of higher education including several highly noted colleges and universities, a vocational technical school, and a strong community college that helps foster a diverse labor pool are also assets of the region. When seeking locations, business and industry look at the overall community, including such factors as business viability, schools, civic pride, environmental considerations, and quality of life.

Available Land for Growth

The generalized land use patterns provide another factor to be considered in planning for Staunton. Existing land use provides some indication for future compatible development. The location of vacant land indicates where future new development can be expected to occur. In 2018, 2,813 acres of total vacant land in Staunton is zoned for residential use.

One can assume that only half of the vacant residential land is developable because of steep slopes, locations within a floodplain, or the citizens' desire to encourage appropriate conservation of certain lands. As 2020 Census figures are released, it will be important to assess available vacant and undeveloped, residentially classified land and what potential Staunton has to increase its population. Change and growth in the future must be structured to achieve the goals of the community while also maintaining or moving toward the community character desired by residents of the City.

Map 2-1 - Developed/Undeveloped Land



POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections help us to understand how a community may grow and change in the future. These projections are used to make informed decisions associated with land use, employment, public services and transportation facilities. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia produces the official annual population estimates and official statewide projections for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Citizens Advisory Committee has selected the population projections developed by the Weldon Cooper Center for 2020 through 2040 as the desired rate of growth for this planning period.

Over the next 20 years, the population of the City of Staunton is expected to increase modestly. As seen in Table 2-1, the population growth is estimated to be 6.28 percent between 2010 and 2020, 1.11 percent between 2020 and 2030, and -0.30 percent between 2030 and 2040. It is estimated that the population will grow 1,696 people between 2010 and 2040, to a new total population of 25,442 people.

Table 2-1 - Population, 2010 and Population Projections, 2020-2040, City of Staunton			
Years	Total Population	Total Growth	Percent Change
2010	23,746	-	-
2020	25,238	1,492	6.28%
2030	25,519	281	1.11%
2040	25,442	-77	-0.30%
Total Change		1,696	7.14%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Population Projections for Virginia and Its Localities, 2020-2040, March 2017.

Figure 2-1 - Population, 2010 and Population Projections, 2020-2040

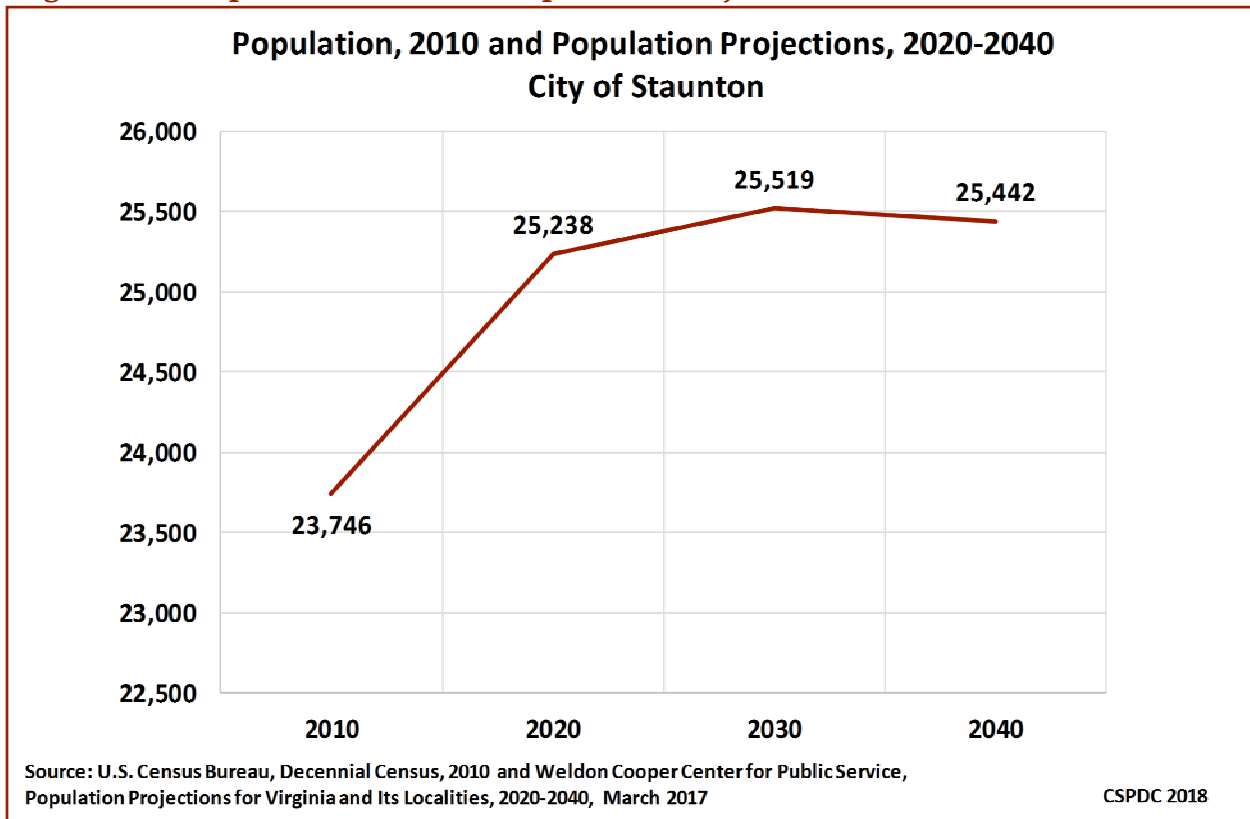


Figure 2-2 - Population Projections by Age, 2040

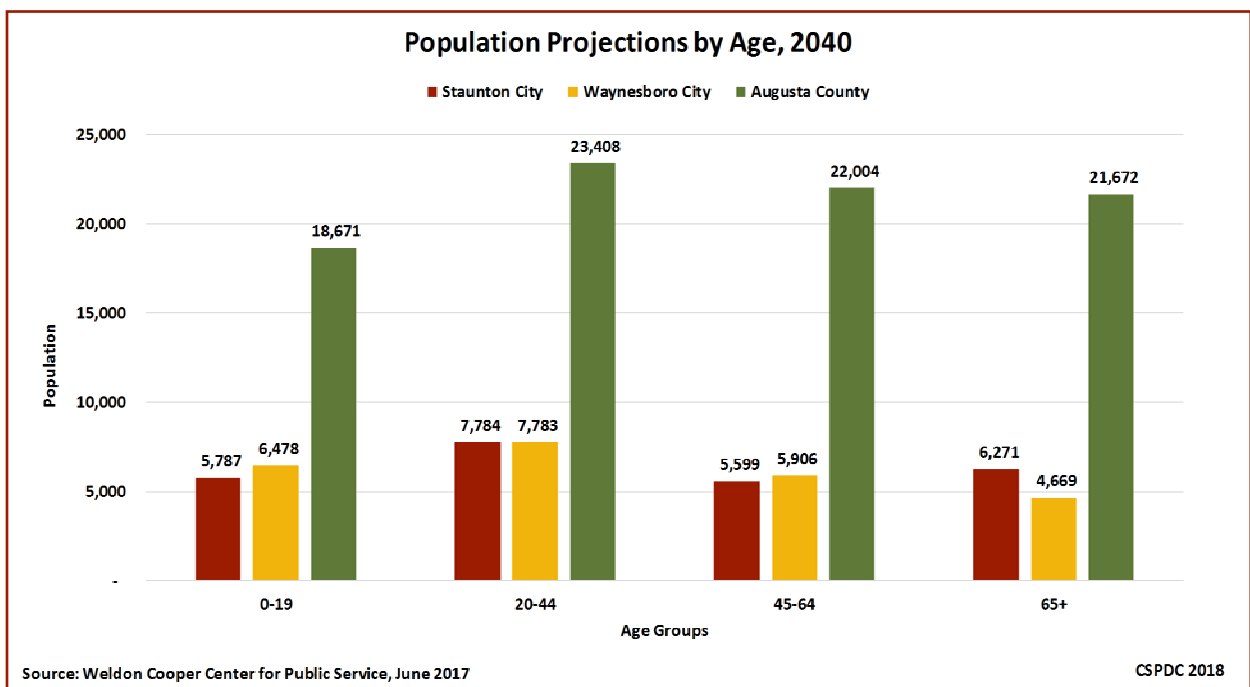


Figure 2-3 - Population Projections by Sex, 2040

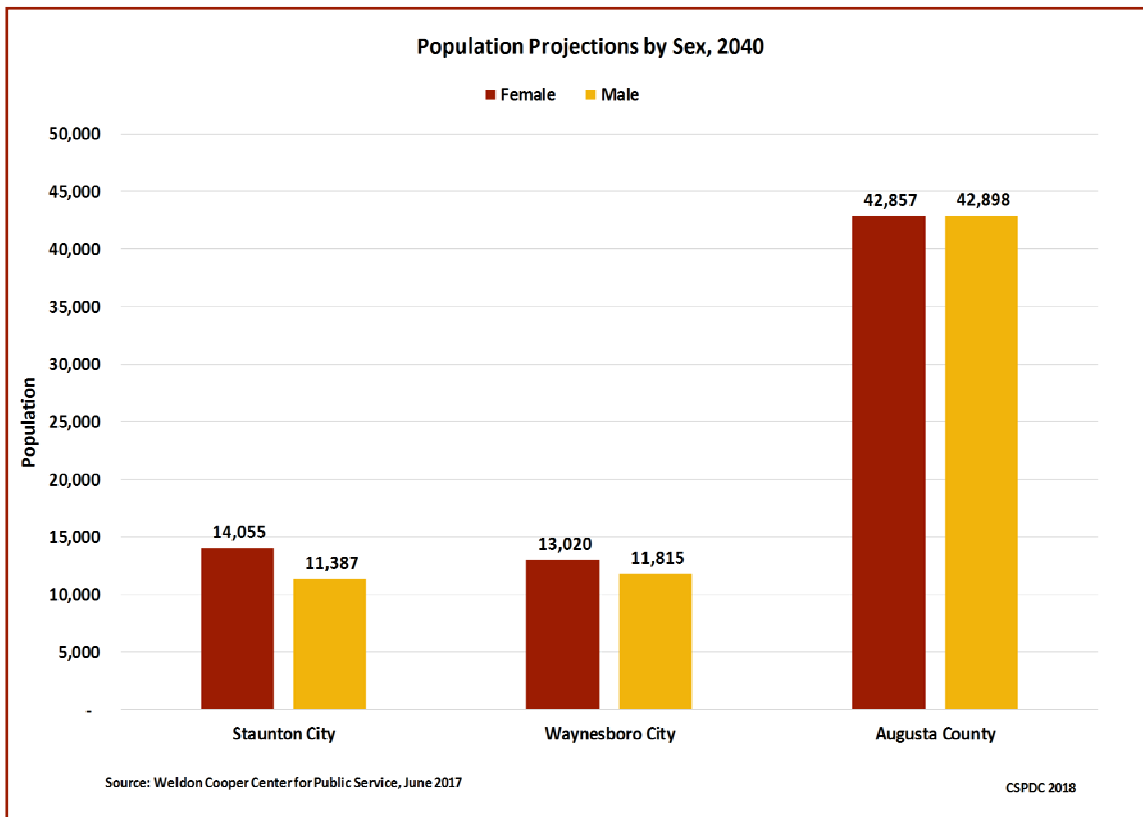
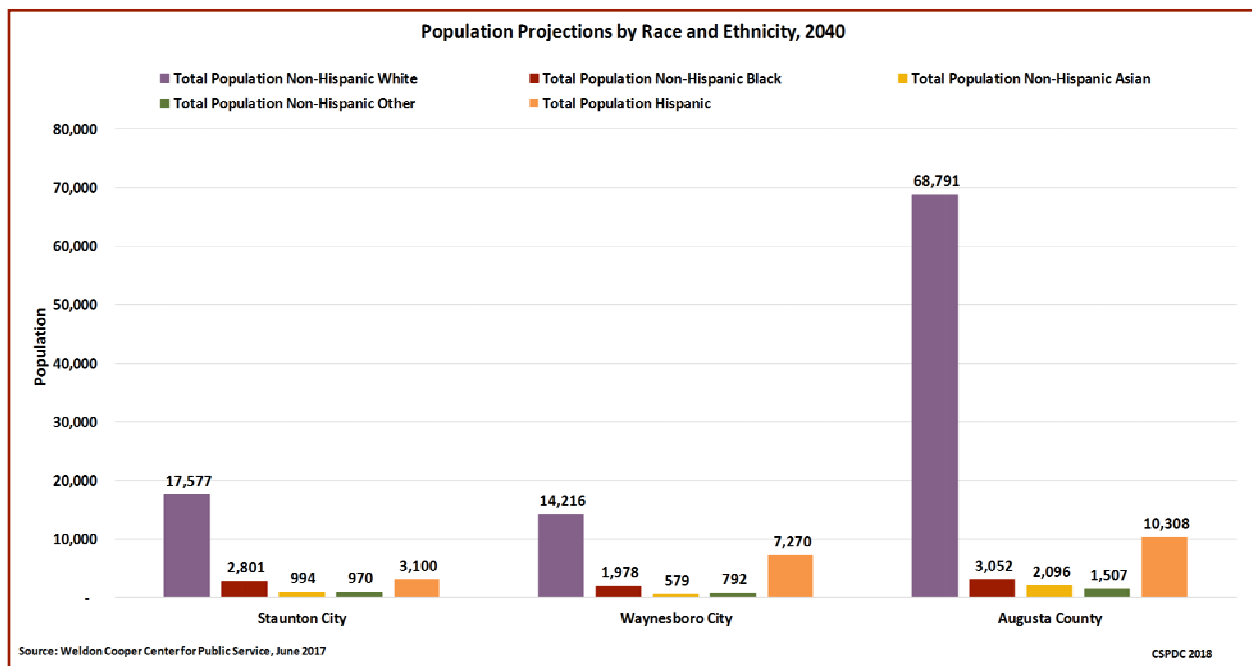


Figure 2-4 - Population Projections by Race and Ethnicity, 2040



GENERALIZED LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Neither the Land Use and Development Guide nor the Future Land Use map or the Phased Growth map should be confused with a zoning ordinance and official zoning map. The Guide and maps are policy guides and have no force of law. They have a futuristic context and focus on general areas suitable for broad use categories, whereas a zoning map shows current exact locations for specifically defined land uses. They are all related, however, in that the zoning ordinance and official zoning map are primary implementation tools for the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Citizens Advisory Committee strongly encourages the City to take immediate steps to bring the official zoning map in accordance with the land uses recommended herein.

The anticipated growth that will be coming to the Staunton area over the next 20 years will require investments by both the public and private sectors. We will need appropriate development, redevelopment, and economic growth to support the population base, as well as a transportation network that will efficiently and effectively carry the growth of the City. In addition to growth, this Plan addresses the strong desire of Staunton's citizens to conserve and protect the City's natural resources, historic character, and scenic qualities. This is accomplished by means of overlay zones. These zones, which experience a greater impact from growth, provide additional emphasis to protect the character, and scenic qualities of the area.

The Land Use and Development Guide for Staunton combines basic elements which include:

1. Low Density Residential
2. Neighborhood Residential
3. Medium Density Residential
4. High Density Residential
5. Low Density Planned Residential
6. Medium Density Planned Residential
7. Traditional Neighborhood Development
8. Business
9. Planned Business
10. Professional
11. Light Industrial
12. Heavy Industrial
13. Planned Industrial
14. Public/Semi-Public
15. Conservation/Recreation/Open Space
16. Corridor, Historic and Scenic Overlay Zones
17. Planned Farm Development

These land use categories are discussed on the following pages. Listed are specific policies which will help insure that a desired land use pattern is achieved.

1. **Low Density Residential** - These areas consist of single-family detached dwellings with a maximum density of 1 to 5 units per acre. Low density sections are found mainly in well established neighborhoods. The low density residential areas are designed to maintain the existing character of neighborhoods and to provide traditional areas for home ownership.

Policies

- Maintain residential areas characterized by single-family, low density development.
 - In-fill suitable vacant land within these areas with single-family residential development that is consistent with the existing structures.
2. **Neighborhood Residential** - This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. These are older neighborhoods which can be characterized by large housing units on small lots.

Policies

- Provide flexibility in the use of a dwelling while protecting the single-family character of the area.
 - Encourage the development of in-fill housing units that are compatible with existing facilities and structures.
 - Encourage appropriate neighborhood-commercial service areas to provide essential goods and services primarily for residents living in the immediate area.
3. **Medium Density Residential** - The medium density residential areas are designated in areas near major thoroughfares or commercial areas. These areas, either vacant or already developed, contain a variety of housing types such as single-family, duplex, and two or three story apartments. Depending on the specific site characteristics, densities in these areas may range from 4 to 20 units per acre.

Policies

- Provide a mixture of dwelling types to include single-family, duplex, and apartment units.
 - Encourage the development of attractive medium density dwellings with adequate open space and off-street parking.
4. **High Density Residential** - This type of land use is designated for areas where a higher skyline would be acceptable. The densities in these areas can accommodate multi-story family type dwelling units of over 20 units per acre. However, these units should be limited to provide adequate light, air, usable open space for dwellings and functional space for all related facilities.

Policies

- Encourage high density residential development in designated areas.
 - Encourage developments with a diversification of dwelling types and layouts within designated areas.
 - Make provision for higher density development which is suited to the needs of the population.
5. **Low Density Planned Residential** - This category is designated for the development of single-family dwellings in suitable vacant/undeveloped areas. It is intended to provide optional methods of land development which encourage a more imaginative solution, considers adjacent uses, and better utilizes the land area.

Policies

- Encourage single family residential development in areas that have topographical and geological features which limit development.
- Encourage single family residential development with smaller lots including common open space.
- Encourage flexible and innovative designs for single family homes.
- Encourage provisions for single family residential units which are affordable to most segments of the population.

6. **Medium Density Planned Residential** - The intent of this category is the same as the low density planned residential. The difference is the intensity of land use. This category is designated for the planned development of multi-family uses. These uses would include two-family (duplex) dwellings and single-family attached dwellings (townhouses and condominiums).

Policies

- Encourage medium density residential development in areas that have physical features which limit development.
 - Encourage the development of attractive medium density dwellings such as townhouses and condominiums.
 - Encourage common open space.
7. **Traditional Neighborhood Development** - The traditional neighborhood development is intended to permit the development of a mixed-use traditional neighborhood integrated into the existing pattern of historic buildings by reuse of buildings as appropriate, the repetition of historic patterns as appropriate, the integration of parking, recreational facilities and other use elements in a manner that does not detract from historic elements but utilizes existing topographic features, and the creation of new neighborhoods and uses which are pedestrian-oriented and create streetscapes compatible with the existing buildings. These provisions are designed to achieve the following objectives: promote efficient use of land and infrastructure through high-quality urban design; promote a development pattern in harmony with existing development and the objectives of the city's comprehensive plan; permit a compatible mix of commercial, professional, and residential uses; provide safe, efficient access and traffic circulation to and within the development; create opportunities to use new technologies in managing the quality and quantity of storm water; and encourage the preservation of steep slopes, floodplains, historic structures and areas, and unique, natural, or geological formations.

8. **Business** - Commercial uses include retail, wholesale, or service functions. These areas are found along the major travel corridors, in the Central Business District of the City, and in neighborhood-commercial service areas.

Policies

- Encourage distinct business areas of diverse, but compatible uses.
 - Encourage the use of frontage roads and shared access points along major thoroughfares.
 - Consider the preservation of historic sites when reviewing proposals for development.
 - Encourage tourism-related commercial uses.
 - Encourage appropriate neighborhood-commercial service areas to provide essential goods and services primarily for residents living in the immediate area.
9. **Planned Business** - These areas are suitable for commercial development but need careful controls to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses.

Policies

- The maintenance of functional and aesthetic integrity should be emphasized in review of applications for development and should address such matters as: control of access; use of service roads or reverse frontage development; landscaping and buffering; parking; setback; signage; lighting; and aesthetics of exterior features including building mass and height, architectural facade, and site orientation.
10. **Professional** - These areas are designated for professional service oriented uses with consideration to the character of the area. These uses are found in the residential areas along major thoroughfares and adjacent to the Central Business District.

Policies

- Encourage development, reuse, and redevelopment of professional properties in a manner which is compatible with adjacent residential properties and maintains the residential character of the area in question.
- Encourage the reuse of structures and areas that are undesirable or no longer practical to maintain as housing units.

11. **Light Industrial** - These areas include land and structures used for light manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and other suitable uses where the use and its operation do not adversely affect adjacent uses.

Policies

- Encourage a variety of light industrial businesses to locate within the City.
- Locate light industrial uses near major arterial roads to avoid traffic through nearby residential neighborhoods.
- Seek firms which are compatible with the environmental, transportation, and economic objectives of the City.

12. **Heavy Industrial** - These areas are composed of land and structures used for general manufacturing and related activities.

Policies

- Locate industrial uses near major arterial roads to avoid traffic through nearby residential neighborhoods.
- Locate industrial uses adjacent to business or light industrial areas.
- Seek firms which are compatible with the environmental, transportation, and economic objectives of the City.

13. **Planned Industrial** - These areas are intended to permit industrial development where the use and its operation do not adversely affect nearby uses and are designed to allow for a wide range of industrial activities subject to limitations designed to protect nearby residential and business districts.

Policies

- No building, structure, or premises shall be used and no building or structure shall be erected or altered until and unless the same has been approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council.
- Seek firms which are compatible with the environmental, transportation, and economic objectives of the City.

14. **Public/Semi-Public** - These lands are designated for public and semi-public use. They include educational uses and lands owned or leased by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Federal government, the City of Staunton, other governmental organizations, and private educational institutions.
15. **Conservation/Recreation/Open Space** - These areas include lands with aesthetic and visual qualities, lands in the floodplain or those that pose significant limitations to development. Also included are lands owned by the City of Staunton and used for recreation.

Policies

- Discourage occupancy development in the 100 year flood plain.
 - Carefully review developments on slopes that exceed 25 percent.
 - Limit development of areas that are unsuitable for growth.
 - Provide additional greenspace and recreation for future residents.
 - Encourage appropriate viewshed protection.
 - Green Infrastructure.
16. **Corridor, Historic and Scenic Overlay Zones** - These zones, which will impose additional constraints, can be applied to any land area. However, emphasis should be placed on developed and undeveloped areas along major thoroughfares and entrance corridors, the Central Business District, Historic Districts, and other historic or scenic areas that could experience a negative impact from the adjacent development of land areas.

Policies

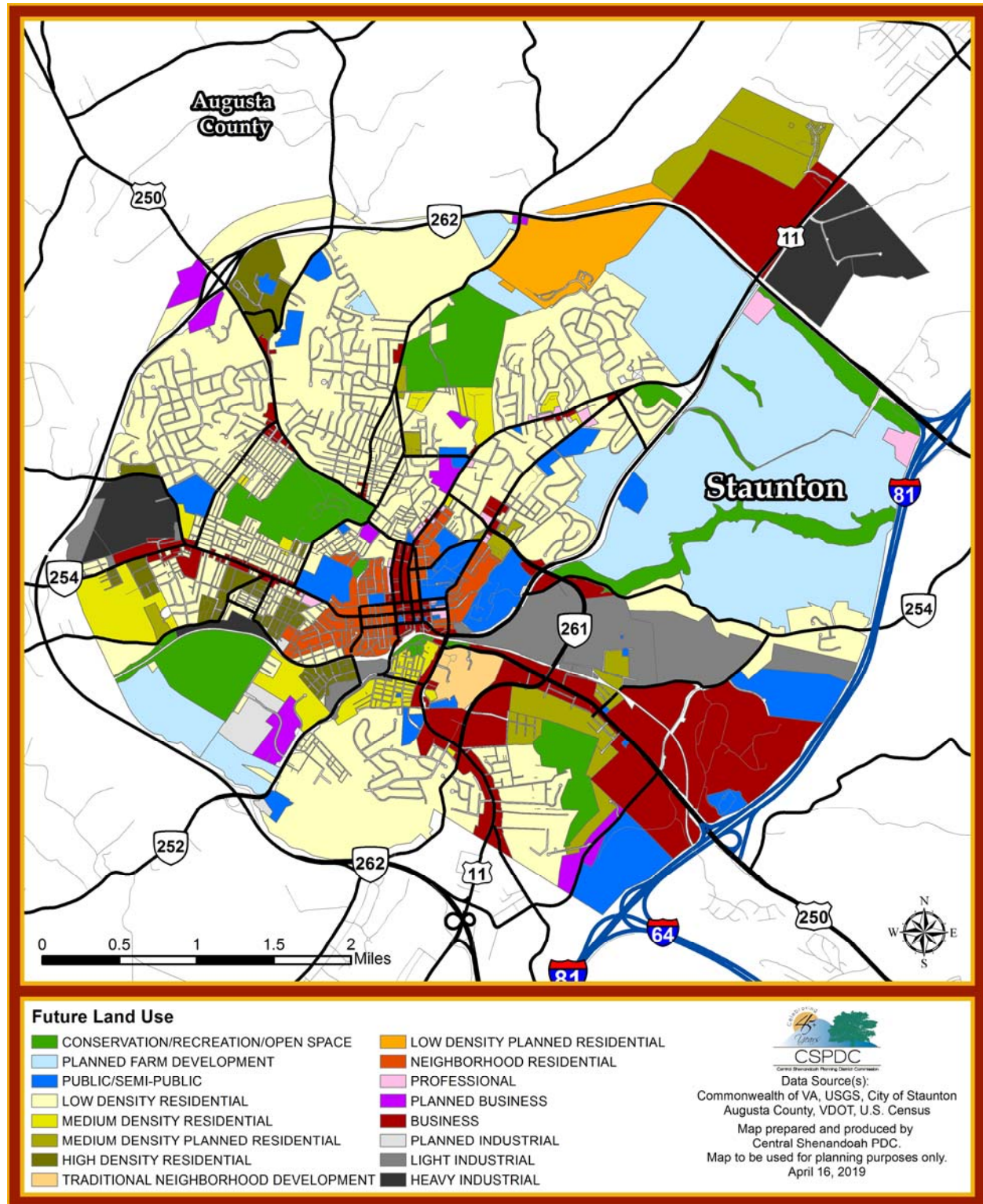
- Encourage appropriate landscaping, architectural design, signage, viewshed considerations, and buffers along major thoroughfares.
- Protect the integrity of existing historic districts.
- Protect historic structures.

17. **Planned Farm Development** - These areas of the City include farms and working farmland. Planned Farm Development is intended to support the growth of active farm, forestal, nursery, and related enterprise. These provisions are designed to achieve the following objectives: encourage farm and farm related enterprise; allow for the integration of development and farming activities; promote efficient use of land and infrastructure through design; encourage the preservation of steep slopes, floodways, and floodplains; and provide for recreational opportunities and open space integration.

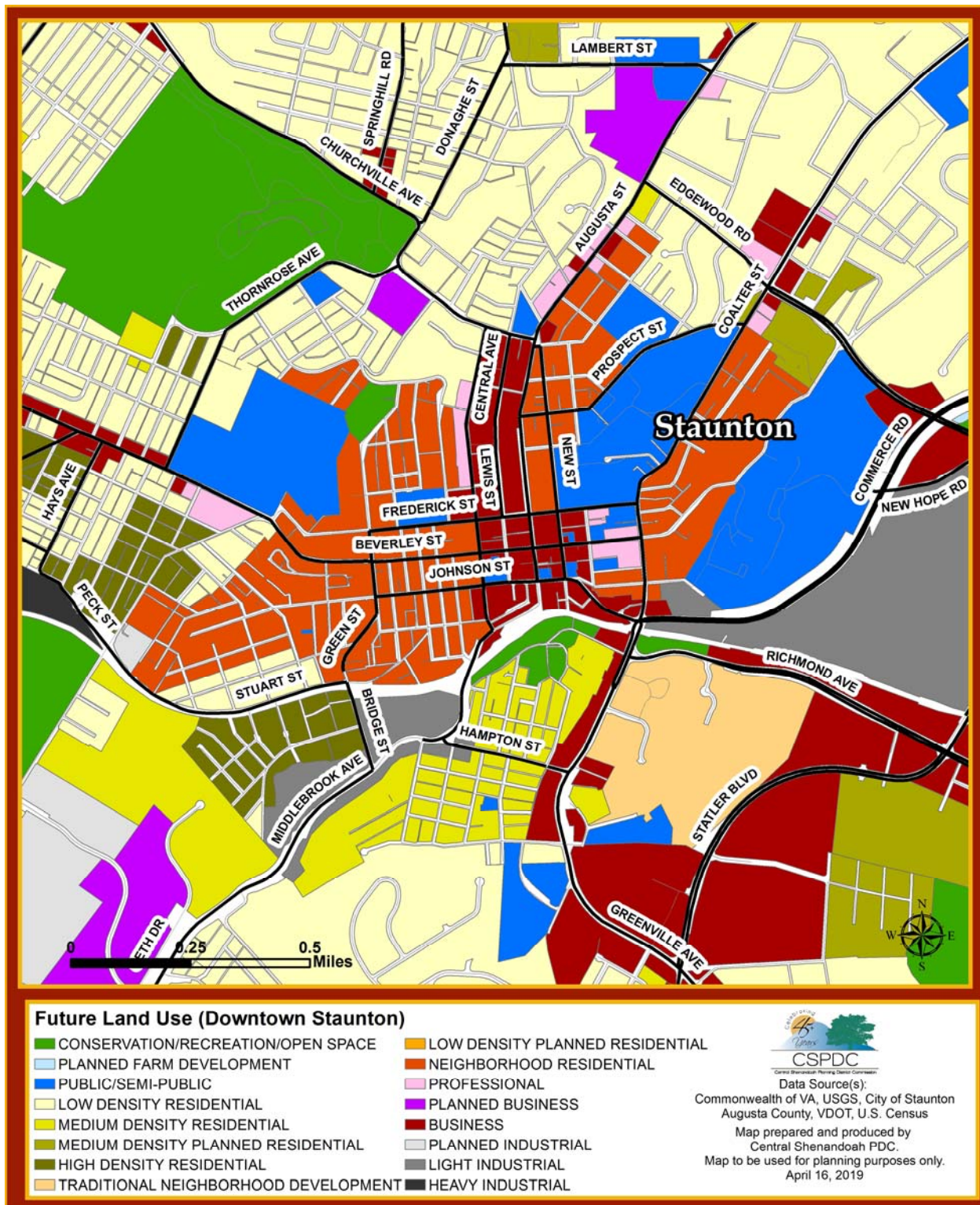
Policies

- Recognize farms are valuable to the community economically:
 - Farms are a growing focus for tourism;
 - Growing interest community wide in locally sourced business.
- Recognize our farms are predominately comprised of land with steep slopes, stream buffers, and prime agricultural soils and that these are conditions that make it difficult, inappropriate, or in some cases in conflict with the Staunton City Code to develop; therefore farming is the best and highest use of this land.
- Recognize our farm land contributes to our City in many ways that are difficult to quantify and that they are integral to a balanced urban system of green infrastructure.
- Recognize farming as an important land use within the City limits.
- Develop a zoning district with provisions supporting agricultural enterprise.
- Increase the potential for the success of farm related enterprise.
- Encourage the preservation of farm land by supporting the viability of farm enterprise.
- Promote the establishment of an integrated local food system.
- Promote the preservation of open spaces within the City, supporting development as an in-fill activity focused in areas where infrastructure already exists.
- Allow for the expansion of farm related enterprises including direct market sales of farm products, hosting farm related events and tours, and accessory enterprise supporting agri-tourism, among others.
- Allow for preservation development models that encourage the continuation of farm related enterprise while providing the potential for increased revenue for land owners; Allow for development of a scale and configuration intended to conserve prime, active farm land.

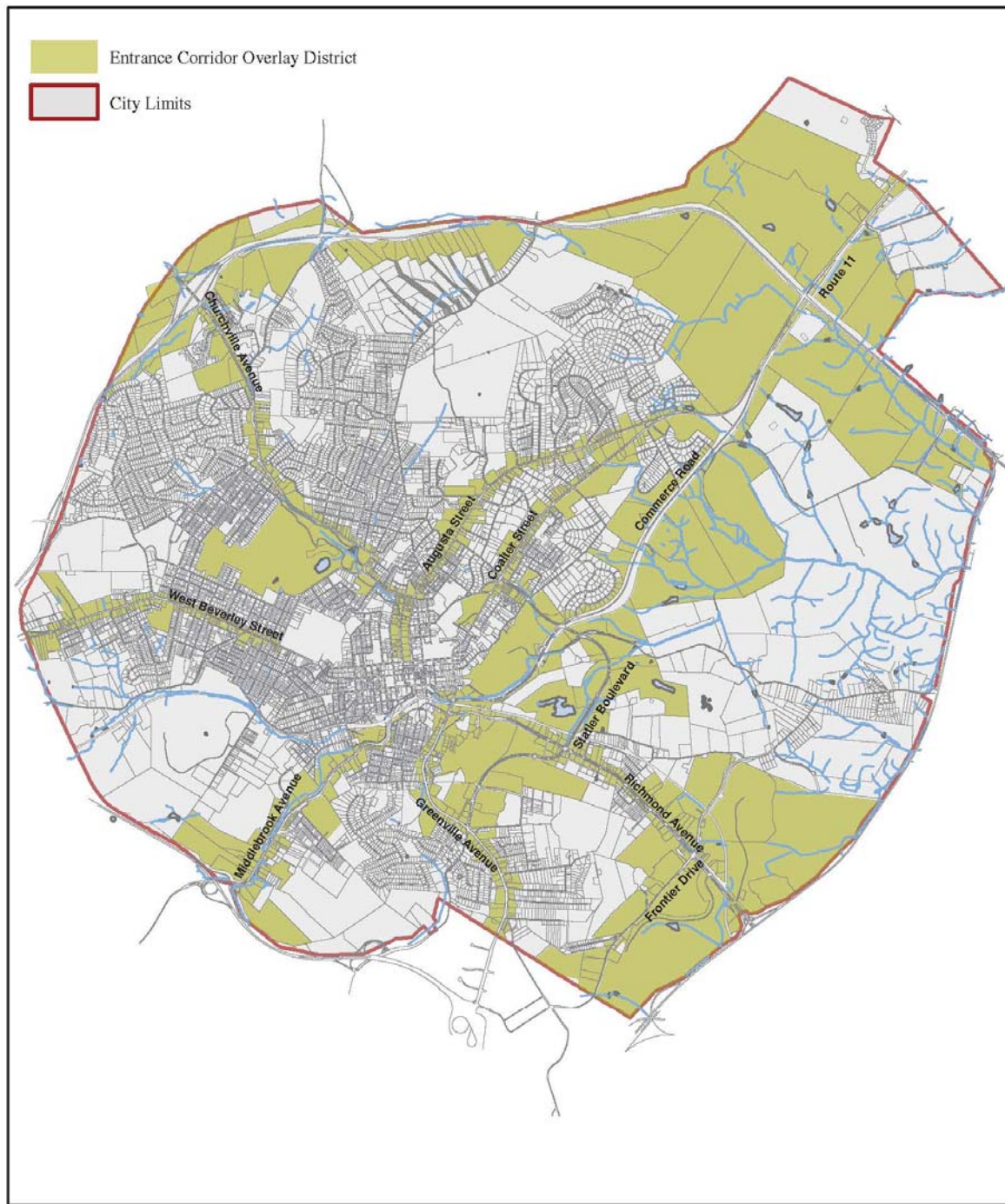
Map 2-2 - Future Land Use



Map 2-3 - Future Land Use (Downtown Staunton)



Map 2-4- Entrance Corridor Overlay District



Entrance Corridor Overlay District, established April, 2008

0 1,950 3,900 7,800 11,700 15,600 Feet



Note: map elements depicted are representations and are not to be construed or used as legal description; this map is for display purposes only

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA

In 2007, the Code of Virginia was amended to add § 15.2-2223.1, requiring high growth localities to designate Urban Development Areas (UDAs) in their comprehensive plans. In 2010, the code was amended further to establish density and design criteria for UDAs and to improve transportation and land use coordination. In 2012, amendments more broadly defined UDAs and made designation voluntary. In 2014, the General Assembly enacted, and the Governor approved, House Bill 2, now known as SMART SCALE, concerning prioritization of projects funded by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The legislation, in part, links a locality's designation of UDAs and state funding for transportation improvements, specifically according priority to improvements to promote urban development areas.

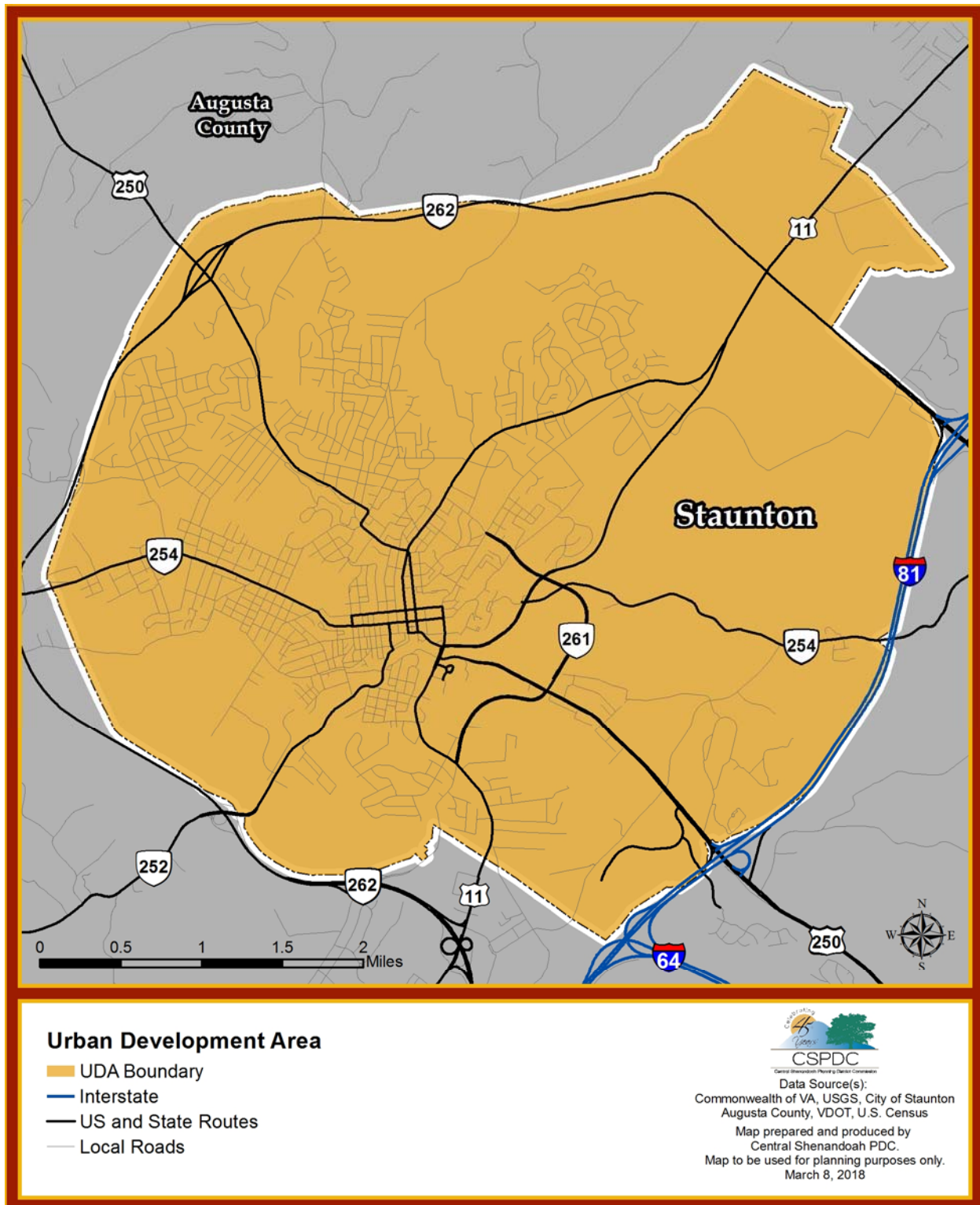
Virginia Code § 15.2-2223.1, in part, authorizes a locality to amend its comprehensive plan to address UDAs as follows:

- UDAs designated by a locality may be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 20 years.
- UDAs may be appropriate for development at a density on the developable acreage of at least four single-family residences, six townhouses, or 12 apartments, condominium units or cooperative units per acre and an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.4 per acre for commercial development, any proportional combination thereof, or any other combination or arrangement that is adopted by a locality in meeting the intent of this section.
- UDAs, if designated, shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design (TND).

As a compact city with comprehensive transportation needs throughout the locality, and with the presence of a multi-modal transportation system, including rail and intercity transit, the City of Staunton designates the entire City as an Urban Development Area for purposes of improving transportation and land use coordination. In 2015, City Council approved an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to designate the Urban Development Area.

Transportation improvements that support UDAs shall be consistent with the needs assessment contained in VTrans 2040, as well as to be considered in the SMART SCALE statewide prioritization process for project selection. The needs associated with the UDA boundary can be found in Chapter 10, Transportation. The designated growth area as discussed herein have been found to meet the intent of the Code of Virginia, section §15.2-2223.1.

Map 2-5- Urban Development Area



PHASED GROWTH

The Land Use and Development Guide shown herein is a reflection of the pattern of land use necessary for maintaining Staunton's projected development for the next twenty years. However, limited financial resources make it impossible to make all necessary infrastructure improvements to undeveloped areas. This level of implementation would require a major increase in revenues from commercial and industrial development or a substantial increase in real estate taxes, placing the burden on homeowners.

Therefore, this process proposes that change be phased. The Plan has grouped development into five priority areas. The intent is to insure that change takes place in a manageable fashion. All properties have a land use designation stating the recommended usage and community goal. Since the State Code requires all localities to review their comprehensive plan once every five years, the phased growth process can then be reevaluated and new priorities set at that time. The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) will be a key vehicle for implementing this controlled change. Services/facilities that are listed will be given a higher priority in the CIP if located in areas with a greater emphasis on development. The five priority areas are defined as follows:

Priority 1- Growth Stimulation Areas: The intent of this priority area is to encourage development. Services and facilities will be extended to or upgraded in these areas. The recommendations of the Capital Investment Plan should address infrastructure improvements in these areas.

Priority 2 - Service Maintenance Areas: The intent of this priority area is to maintain the present density and usage. Upgrades will be undertaken to improve existing services and protect the City's infrastructure investments from deterioration.

Priority 3 - Future Growth Areas: The intent of this priority area is to reserve properties for future development. These areas will be slated for development after properties in Priority 1 and 2 Areas have reached desired capacities.

Priority 4 - Preservation Areas: The intent of this priority area is to protect and conserve land areas. Factors such as scenic beauty, potential flood areas, recreation, and environmentally sensitive features will define these areas.

Priority 5 - Agricultural and Forestal Districts: The intent of this priority area is to protect designated agricultural and forestal districts, which currently includes the Bell's Lane Agricultural District, the Merrifield Agricultural District, the M.O. Carr Agricultural District and the Middlebrook Agricultural and Forestal District.

Map 2-6- Phased Growth Plan

