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Introduction

LEGAL STATUS AND PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The General Assembly has determined that every municipality in the Commonwealth shall prepare a comprehensive plan and review it every five years. The requirements for and the procedure by which a Virginia municipality shall prepare such a plan are contained in § 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia:

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 the present and probable future needs and resources best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The Code relates that the plan should be general in nature, and serve both as a guide to development as well as a survey of the locality's various assets and challenges. It should prepare the community for future changes, such as changes in population size, employment base, environmental quality, and the demand for public services and utilities. It should also identify local citizens' concerns, needs, and aspirations and use them to establish clear goals for the future. In addition, the plan should outline strategies or recommendations that can be used to accomplish such goals.

HISTORY OF STAUNTON'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

1959	Staunton's first Comprehensive Plan was completed by Garland D. Wood and Associates of Richmond, Virginia.
1972	The Comprehensive Plan was updated by Balzar and Associates of Roanoke, Virginia.
1977 – 1981	An extensive update of the Comprehensive Plan was completed utilizing a Citizens Advisory Committee. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission provided technical assistance.
1987 – 1988	Staunton annexed 11.1 square miles of land from Augusta County, resulting in another update of the Comprehensive Plan utilizing the Citizens Advisory Committee process. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission provided technical assistance.

1993 – 1996	The Comprehensive Plan was again updated extensively using the same Citizens Advisory Committee process. Technical assistance was provided by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.
2001 – 2003	The Comprehensive Plan was again updated extensively using the same Citizens Advisory Committee process. Technical assistance was provided by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.
2008- 2010	The City utilized the City Council appointed Citizens Advisory Committee, with technical assistance provided by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2012.
2016-2019	The City engaged in its most recent update of the Comprehensive Plan, utilizing the Citizens Advisory Committee with technical assistance provided by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Effective planning is a dynamic process, one that both considers and attempts to coordinate many local and regional variables at one time. The people of the community carry it out best. They must make choices, set goals, and recommend the means by which to achieve them. Generally, in determining the destiny of a locality, the planning process can be characterized by three questions: *What do we have? What do we want and why? How do we get it?*

The development of the Comprehensive Plan is a community-based effort. The planning process used to compile the *2018 - 2040 Staunton Comprehensive Plan* is summarized below:

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

On September 20, 2016, the first organizational meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was held for the update of the Comprehensive Plan. This committee was appointed by the City Manager to insure that the Comprehensive Plan accurately reflects the needs and desires of Staunton’s citizenry. Members of the CAC embodied diverse interests and concerns and represented various neighborhoods throughout the City. The CAC met from September 2016 until May 2018. During this time, they conducted extensive research on the demographics, area economy, and physical features of the City; received numerous presentations on current planning issues; held a citizen input public open house; and drafted the update to the Comprehensive Plan with the assistance of City staff and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC).

Public Input Open House

The CAC, with assistance from City staff and the CSPDC, conducted a Public Input Open House to solicit citizens' input. The Open House was held at the Gypsy Hill Park Gymnasium on May 4, 2017 from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Citizens were asked to review the Priority Initiatives included in the 2010 - 2030 Comprehensive Plan and were asked to designate which initiatives and/or sub-initiatives they would like the City to continue to emphasize in the updated Comprehensive Plan. Citizens were also given the opportunity to provide written comments regarding any other ideas, concerns, or suggestions they would like the CAC to discuss during the revision process of the Priority Initiatives. Citizens unable to attend the May 4, 2017 Public Input Open House were also given the opportunity to provide their input by contacting City or CSPDC staff.

Studies and Reviews

In addition to the Public Input Open House, the CAC received presentations on a variety of topics including local physical features, housing and land use. The CAC also studied an extensive array of statistics and information as well as reviewed GIS (Geographic Information Systems) maps of the area. Relevant data and maps from the 2010—2030 Comprehensive Plan were updated with current data when available and reviewed in detail by the Committee for trends or changes. Primary data sources included the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the Virginia Employment Commission, the Virginia Department of Health and the City of Staunton.

Development of Plan Proposals and Recommendations

After receiving input from citizens at the Public Input Open House, the CAC incorporated a revised format for the 2018 - 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Many months of discussion and study went into the development of the final proposals for the Goals and Objectives and the revisions of the Future Land Use and Phased Growth maps. The Committee recognizes that many of the recommendations and proposals included in the Plan will require significant capital or general fund investments and may take much longer to implement. However, there are many important changes and policies that can be initiated at little or no cost.

Plan Adoption

- The CAC's draft was completed in May 2018 and presented to the Planning Commission on June 21, 2018.
- The Planning Commission held several work sessions, including a field trip to the Uniontown community, from July 2018 to February 2019 to discuss the draft of the Plan. Revisions requested by the Planning Commission were incorporated into the Plan in April 2019.

INFORMATION FOR USERS: WHAT IS INCLUDED IN EACH CHAPTER

To assist users of this Plan, the following list outlines the material covered in each chapter. Each chapter begins with an introduction about its contents, followed by a description of the relationship of the chapter to others in the Plan. Many chapters have a summary of trends at the end. Reading this information section– along with the table of contents– will help readers find the information they need.

Chapter 1 – Goals and Objectives

A list of the goals and objectives that grow out of each of the functional areas of the Plan: Open Space/Environmental, Community Character, Planning, Neighborhoods and Housing, Rehabilitation and Re-use, Transportation and Parking, Public Service and Government, Public Safety, Schools, Library, Social Services, Utilities and Infrastructure, and Economic Development.

Chapter 2 – Land Use and Development Guide

A description of Staunton’s future development pattern, which reflects the community’s desires for its future, the factors that influence the community’s growth, and the projections on which this growth is based. The chapter includes the Future Land Use Map and a description of each of the land use designations shown on the map. It also includes information on the Phased Growth Plan and Urban Development Area.

Chapter 3 - History

An era-by-era description of Staunton’s history, followed by a list of historic districts and individual historic sites. The chapter concludes with a depiction of the areas annexed into the City.

Chapter 4 – Demographics

A description of the City’s population by household structure, age, sex, race and ethnicity, and educational level. Projections of future changes are included. In many instances, Staunton is compared with the same information from Waynesboro, Augusta County and Virginia.

Chapter 5 – Physical Features

A description of the physical features of Staunton, including climate, weather, topography, elevation, slopes, geologic formations, geology and developmental limitations, soils associations, hydrology, forested areas, and flood protection/mitigation measures.

Chapter 6 – Economy

The chapter begins with an economic profile of Staunton, including workforce and employment. It also includes statistics on household, family and per capita income. There is also a section on employment and wages by industry, with a list of Staunton's 50 largest employers. The next section describes economic opportunities, including business attraction and retention, along with downtown revitalization. The role played by education and workforce development, as well as the arts, culture and development is described.

Chapter 7 – Government Structure and Finance

This chapter includes a flowchart showing the relationships among City departments and staff, followed by a description of City structure and finance. There is also a description of intergovernmental relations among the federal, state and city agencies. City departments and constitutional offices and services are covered, accompanied by a list of state and regional offices. The finance section of the chapter begins with a description of the City's budgetary funds and is illustrated with a review of the City's Fiscal Year 2018 operating budget.

Chapter 8 – Community Services and Infrastructure

The chapter provides a list of public safety; medical, health and social services; educational services; recreation; and infrastructure (groundwater and surface water availability, utilities, trash and recycling, and street maintenance and snow removal) available in Staunton. Note, however, that transportation services are covered in Chapter 10.

Chapter 9 – Housing

The chapter describes the City's housing stock: the types of units and occupancy. Statistics on affordability are provided for both owner-occupied and rental housing. The chapter concludes with definitions of terms used in the chapter.

Chapter 10 – Transportation

The material in the chapter is coordinated with state and regional transportation plans. The chapter covers: regional transportation planning, system inventory, transportation network analysis, planning assumptions, transportation system needs assessment, project recommendations and transportation goals and objectives. Roads; bridges and culverts; parking, commuter services, and non-motorized facilities; sidewalks; public transit; and rail service (passenger and freight) are included. Both current and future levels of service are presented. The chapter concludes with a list of project recommendations and programmed improvements, along with the goals and objectives.

Chapter 11 – Existing Land Use

This chapter focuses on existing land use (rather than future land use) in the City and is based on data from the City Assessor's office. The information and statistics given provide the basis for many of the recommendations, goals and objectives in the rest of the plan.