

Executive Summary of Policy Differences Between Existing Rural Lands Plan and 2019 Proposed Draft Version

The purpose of the draft Rural Lands Plan differs slightly from the existing one which has the stated purpose of, “address[ing] land use in rural areas of the County and to outline the County’s policies and plans to protect and preserve farmland, historic sites and open space.” This update still has a significant focus on preserving farmland, historic sites and open space, but also recognizes the importance of capitalizing on the economic incentives to preserve these features. To this end, the first part of the draft, focused on the rural character, is very similar in tone and content to the existing Chapter. The second half of the document, focused on the rural economy, represents an additional step from the prior plan. This section strives to identify the ways in which the County, and its rural property owners, can capitalize upon the bucolic character to enhance a strong rural economy that is a significant contributor to the County’s fiscal vitality. The key is to promote economic endeavors that do not compromise the community’s character. Indeed, approval of appropriate rural businesses should aid in enhancing the rural character of Fauquier County.

Policies that are proposed to be retained from the existing language:

- Retain Land Use Taxation.
- Retain residential densities and development which are compatible with the agricultural uses allowed in the Rural Agricultural (RA) and Rural Conservation (RC) Zoning Districts.
- Encourage the private assembly of prime agricultural land through private land trusts
- Maintain the Fauquier County Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- Establish the 10 year term as the standard for Agricultural & Forestal Districts.
- Adopt appropriate recommendations from the Chesapeake Bay Act Protection Ordinance.
- Map the aquifers and aquifer recharge areas and provide overlay zoning.
- Prepare a Visual Resource Management Plan.
- Establish Strict Controls Over New Development in Rural Areas
- Maintain density based on existing sliding scale zoning and a parcel’s gross acreage, which includes floodplain and steep slopes. Deductions for steep slopes and floodplain will no longer be taken. Gross densities established for the Rural Conservation (RC) and Rural Agricultural (RA) zoning districts and the major residential development special exception must be removed from the Zoning Ordinance, and would no longer apply.
- Establish common open space easements including prime agricultural soils, wetlands, floodplain and steep slopes as the principal elements. The common open space easement also needs to be organized in such a way that subdivision lots and roads do not divide, segregate and restrict parcel(s) existing or future agricultural or related uses and activities
- Prohibit septic system/drainfields which are classified by the Health Department as experimental in rural areas, unless it is the only method to correct an existing and failing system.
- Require divisions of 7 lots or greater to have potable well permits from the Health Department, as well as the permitted well locations and number identified on the final plat of subdivision before it can be County approved for recordation.

New Objectives that are proposed either to augment the preservation of the rural character or to encourage the appropriate rural economy:

- Minimize the impacts of wastewater disposal systems on groundwater resources.
- Encourage land uses that are intrinsic to the character of Fauquier’s Rural Lands.
- Limit the ability for development that is not complementary to the existing character of Fauquier’s Rural Lands.

- Expand educational opportunities to aid in the optimal utilization of rural land.
- Maintain the scenic quality of the County's traditional form and settlement pattern.
- Utilize County initiatives to support the broad variety of the County's agricultural economy.
- Encourage private investment to support the broad variety of the County's agricultural economy.
- Utilize County initiatives to support the broad variety of the County's rural tourism opportunities while protecting its authentic character.
- Encourage private investment to support the broad variety of the County's rural tourism opportunities.
- Ensure that businesses located in the rural lands do not adversely impact the intrinsic character of the area.