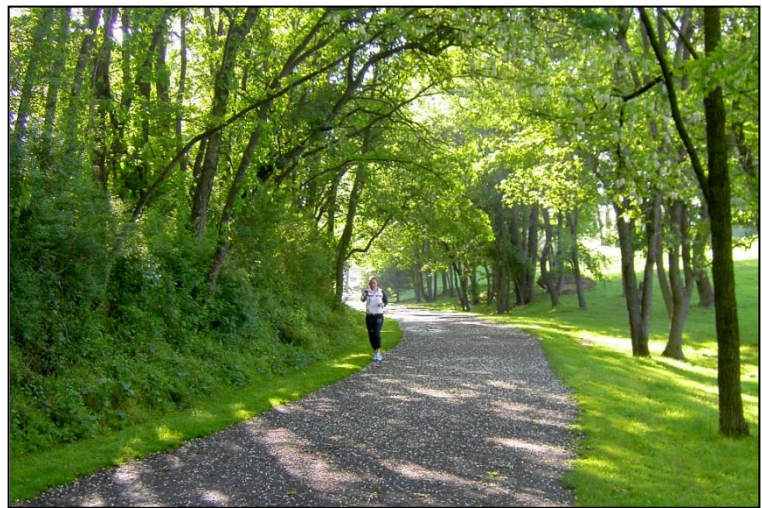


# *Town of Abingdon, Virginia*

## **Comprehensive Plan 2027**

**2013 UPDATE and REVISIONS**

*Building on Arts and Culture for a Creative, Sustainable Future*



**ADOPTED December 2, 2013**



## 2013 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR REVISIONS

Town of Abingdon, Virginia

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Mr. Rick Humphreys  
Ms. Jane Duehring

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*This revision and update was prepared cooperatively by the Abingdon Planning Commission, Town staff, and citizens.*



## 2007 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*This Plan was prepared cooperatively by members of the Abingdon Planning Commission, Town staff, citizens, and project consultants, Hill Studio.*

*The Plan was approved by the Town Planning Commission and Town Council, following a joint public hearing on August 27, 2007.*



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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of this Comprehensive Plan

In Virginia, every governing body with zoning must adopt a comprehensive plan to provide direction for the physical development of land within its jurisdiction. The plan is used as a guide for public investment and decisions, as well as to provide the legal foundation for important land-management tools like zoning and subdivision ordinances. The plan also lays the foundation for future public facilities (roads, utilities, parks, etc.). Legally, the plan controls the general location, character and extent of various features, including streets, parks, public buildings, utilities, etc.; new features must be approved by the local planning commission as being substantially in accordance with the adopted comprehensive plan. The Abingdon Planning Commission is responsible for developing the comprehensive plan and reviewing it every five years for any necessary amendments. Once endorsed by the Planning Commission, the plan is recommended to Abingdon Town Council for adoption as a guiding public document.



#### Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What is it ?

- ☐ 20 year guide for the future
- ☐ Establishes vision & goals for community's future
- ☐ Determines where & how will growth occur
- ☐ Makes recommendations for future land use & development
- ☐ Establishes master plan for location of future public utilities, facilities & transportation
- ☐ Provides information on future community needs – housing, parks, utilities, schools, etc.
- ☐ Used as a tool for public decisions (zoning, capital improvements, etc.)

This comprehensive plan is an update to the *2000 Comprehensive Plan*. It builds on that plan to provide guiding policies for various planning elements and to recommend specific implementation measures for achieving the vision and goals developed through community participation. This comprehensive plan was developed using citizen input obtained through a public survey, public workshops and a series of design work sessions, all under the guidance of the Abingdon Planning Commission. To be successful, the plan will require partnership efforts that involve a diversity of stakeholders, including elected leaders, local government administrators, citizens, business owners, community organizations, and state agencies.

### Vision 2027

*By 2027, Abingdon will be a charming, active, friendly, and healthy community with a rich history and vibrant future. Abingdon will be known as the Southwest Virginia capital for arts,*



*culture and tourism. The arts, culture, and historic significance of the town will provide an exceptional foundation for a high quality of life that offers a wide diversity of economic, social and recreational opportunities. Abingdon will be as the regional center for health, professional, government and business operations. Abingdon will be a community where residents want to stay and visitors want to return. Abingdon's downtown will reflect the hospitality and energy of the town; it will display attractive and interesting architecture, a business-friendly atmosphere, and offer unique living opportunities with pedestrian-friendly streets and a secure environment. Vibrant neighborhoods will provide residents with attractive and affordable housing that is convenient to services, and abundant with friendly neighbors.*

### **Special Community Goals and Initiatives 2027**

Broad community participation provided direction for Abingdon's future. Using citizen input, goals were developed for Abingdon's people and neighborhoods, economic development, parks and open space, arts and history, environment, and public facilities and services. Some of the more notable goals for Abingdon's future, that are particularly relevant throughout this comprehensive plan, are those related to economic development, arts and history, and the environment.

**Economic Development:** Abingdon will be known as the center for tourism, arts and culture in Southwest Virginia that celebrates the unique regional heritage, exhibits a vibrant, revitalized downtown, and maintains a diverse economy that successfully sustains the town and the region. Also, Abingdon will be recognized as the regional center for health care and for professional, government and business operations.

**Arts, Culture and History:** Abingdon will be known for its talented artisans, diverse cultural opportunities, and architectural history. Abingdon will be recognized as the Southwest Virginia capital for arts and culture.

**Environment:** Abingdon will be a clean, healthy, and environmentally appealing community that sets high environmental standards for public and private activities. The protection of natural and cultural features and utilization of "green" technologies and low-impact development methods will establish the town as a development and conservation model for other communities.

Implementing these goals, and others, is an important component of this comprehensive plan. An implementation map and matrix is provided as part of the plan to assist Abingdon in progressing with projects and celebrating accomplishments. Special action projects are identified throughout this plan that can serve as visible examples to show progress in applying and implementing the plan. Some of the more significant initiatives include:

**Gateway improvements to East and West Main Street, Cummings Street, and Porterfield Highway to enhance community entrances, encourage pride, and promote new economic investment;**





Arts and history initiatives to preserve and celebrate important community assets and raise public awareness of their value to quality of life and tourism;

Improvements to parks, trails, and pedestrian-oriented streets to enhance public recreation opportunities and to promote a healthier lifestyle.

Downtown revitalization through participation in the Main Street Program, public improvements, and appropriate new in-fill development;

Inclusion of conservation development and green technologies in future land development within the town and the surrounding county; and

**Improved regional coordination, particularly as it relates to land use, development, and public facilities and services.**

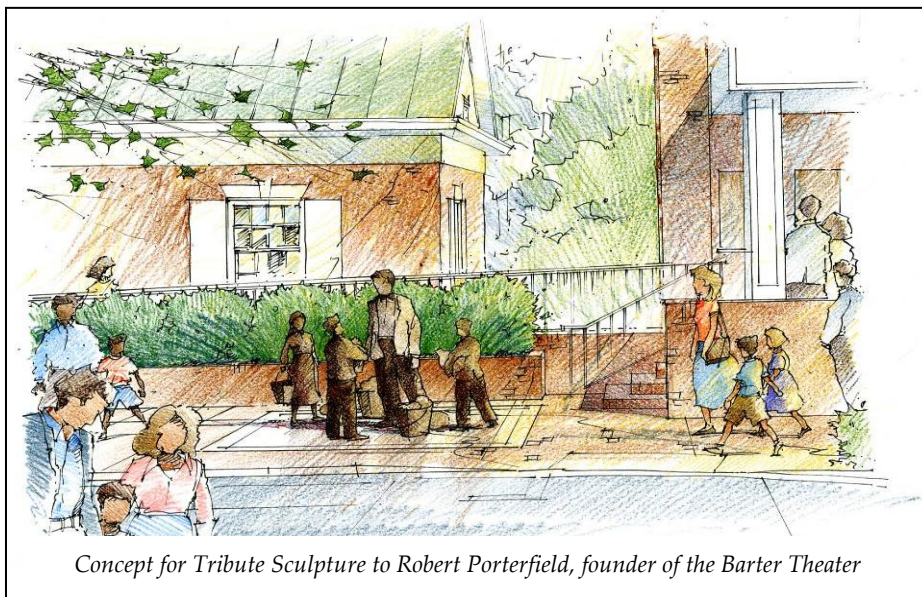


## Community Vision 2027

During the public workshops on the comprehensive plan, citizens expressed their ideas on Abingdon's special qualities and their vision for the community's future. The following vision for the town was developed:

*By 2027, Abingdon will be a charming, active, friendly, and healthy community with a rich history and vibrant future. Abingdon will be known as the Southwest Virginia capital for arts, culture and tourism. The arts, culture, and historic significance of the town will provide an exceptional foundation for a high quality of life that offers a wide diversity of economic, social and recreational opportunities. Abingdon will be recognized as the regional center for health, professional and business operations. Abingdon will be a community where residents want to stay and visitors want to return. Abingdon's downtown will reflect the hospitality and energy of the town; it will display attractive and interesting architecture, a business-friendly atmosphere, and offer unique living opportunities with pedestrian-friendly streets and a secure environment. Vibrant neighborhoods will provide residents with attractive and affordable housing that is convenient to services, and abundant with friendly neighbors.*

This comprehensive plan was developed using this vision and the values expressed by citizens. Each of the plan's elements reflects this vision in the discussion of existing conditions, opportunities for growth and change, development policies for achieving future goals, and specific actions or projects for implementation. This community vision can be achieved through creative public-private partnerships, a committed citizenry, and exemplary leadership from businesses and elected officials.





## Community Goals for 2027

The following community goals for Abingdon's future reflect comments and input received during community workshops and discussions with community leaders and civic interests:

### **People and Neighborhoods:**

Abingdon will be a community of attractive, inviting neighborhoods with an appropriate mix of housing styles and types for persons of all income levels.

### **Economic Development:**

Abingdon will be known as the center for tourism, arts and culture in Southwest Virginia that celebrates the unique regional heritage, exhibits a vibrant, revitalized downtown, and maintains a diverse economy that successfully sustains the town and the region. Also, Abingdon will be recognized as the regional center for health care, professional, government and business operations.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space:**

Abingdon will be a model community that provides outstanding park and recreation facilities to residents. The town's scenic open spaces and regional recreational facilities are special economic and social amenities that will be protected and sensitively integrated into the community's park system.

### **Arts, Culture and History:**

Abingdon will be known for its talented artisans, diverse cultural opportunities, and architectural and archaeological history. Abingdon will be recognized as the Southwest Virginia capital for arts and culture.

### **Environment:**

Abingdon will be a clean, healthy, and environmentally appealing community that sets high environmental standards for public and private activities. The protection of natural features and utilization of "green" technologies and low-impact development methods will establish the town as a development and conservation model for other communities.

### **Public Facilities and Services:**

Abingdon will provide quality, effective, and efficient public facilities and services to residents. Public buildings will be exemplary in architecture and in best practices for site development, complementing the natural features and the cultural heritage of the region.



## Regional Context and Influences

The Town of Abingdon is the county seat of Washington County, Virginia and is recognized as the oldest English speaking settlement west of the Alleghenies/Blue Ridge Mountains. Initially, the community was known as Wolf Hills (1760), in recognition of Daniel Boone's encounter with wolves from a nearby cave while hunting in the area. Later circa 1770, it became known as Black's Fort after Capt. Joseph Black erected a small fort near his residence for the protection of the neighborhood from attacks by the Natives. The fort was used until the summer of 1776. In 1776, the Assembly of Virginia created Washington County in honor of General George Washington and designated Black's Fort as the county court. , Abingdon was incorporated as a town in 1778 but was known as such anterior to this year.

Abingdon is the largest of three established towns within the County and is the most urbanized community within the county. Maps of the region and the town are found on the following pages. The region is characterized by scenic mountain views and river valleys set amid forests and farms. The county and the town are strategically located along Interstate 81 and are in close proximity to the Virginia-Tennessee-North Carolina state lines, and three major cities: Johnston City, Tennessee; Kingsport, Tennessee; and Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee, as well as Boone, North Carolina.

Washington County is part of the Mount Rogers Planning District, which includes six counties, two cities, and twelve towns in Southwest Virginia. Both Washington County and Abingdon are included as part of the Johnston City-Kingsport-Bristol Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is frequently referred to as the "Tri-Cities Area". Information on the population of the regional localities is presented in the following table.

Locality	Population 2005/2006* (Estimate)	Population 2000
Washington County	51,984*	51,103
Town of Abingdon	7,925	7,780
Town of Glade Spring	1,537	1,374
Town of Damascus	1,083	981
Scott County	22,882*	23,403
Smyth County	32,506*	33,081
Bristol, Virginia	17,496*	17,367
Bristol, Tennessee	24,994	24,821
Johnston City, Tennessee	58,718	55,469
Kingsport, Tennessee	44,130	44,905

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 and 2006 Population Estimates, 2000 Census



## **Map 1    Regional Map**





## **Map 2    Town of Abingdon**



### **Town and County Relationship - Joint Responsibility for Growth Management**

The 2002 Washington County Comprehensive Plan advocates proactive planning and growth management to ease strains on public infrastructure; protect farmland and the rural character of the region; and enhance the history, unique culture and quality of life in the county. The plan encourages growth in more developed areas of the county and economic diversity for future sustainability.

As Abingdon and Washington County grow and expand, each community directly influences the other. For example, an economic development project may influence the overall economy, but increase population and add service needs for public facilities. Likewise, new residential development can affect public facilities (schools, parks, police/fire) and infrastructure (water, sewer, roads).

To maintain the quality of life desired for the future, it is essential that both the county and the town work in close partnership to coordinate development and economic activities. By jointly managing growth in the region, both governments can successfully enhance the economy, promote sustainable development, and protect the overall public health and well-being.

Other communities in Virginia take advantage of several legislation provisions to enhance regional cooperation. Under Section 15.2-3400 of the Code of Virginia, any locality may enter voluntarily into an agreement with another locality to mutually make decisions on such things as zoning, subdivision, infrastructure, revenue-sharing, and economic development. Section 15.2-2231 provides that a county's plan may include planning for an incorporated town, and that any municipal plan may include planning for adjacent unincorporated territory; however, for either of these, approval of and adoption by the governing bodies is required. Finally, Section 15.2-2211 allows for planning commissions of any locality to cooperate with other planning commissions and administrative bodies to coordinate planning and development among the localities. Committees may be established and rules developed to effect cooperation.

In addition, legislation approved by the Virginia General Assembly in 2007 (HB 3202 – Code of Virginia 15.2-2223.1) requires that by 2011, a county with a growth rate of fifteen percent or more, or, a county with a population of 20,000 or more, and a growth rate of five percent or more, to designate Urban Development Areas in their comprehensive plans (i.e. Washington County). The intent of these UDAs is to coordinate transportation and land use in order to effectively manage growth and address impacts on infrastructure.

Each of the above noted sections of the Virginia Code may be considered as a mechanism to enhance communication between Washington County and the Town of Abingdon. Ultimately, land development decisions could be improved for the benefit of all citizens and the region as a whole.



## Community Planning Process

This plan was developed with citizen involvement through a series of public workshops and design sessions with residents and business and community leaders. In addition, a citizen survey was developed that was circulated in public facilities and posted on the town's website. The following paragraphs summarize the planning process and some of the major thoughts shared by citizens.

In April 2006, a series of focus group discussions were conducted at Town Hall. Citizens were invited to drop by to discuss their vision for the future of Abingdon; business, civic, and elected leaders as well as students from Abingdon High School, for the youth perspective, were interviewed on a variety of topics. Participants were asked about current initiatives and issues, the unique qualities of Abingdon, issues facing the community in the next 10-20 years, and ideas for changes or improvements to make the town a special place to live, work or visit.

In May 2006, a public workshop was held at the Coomes Recreation Center. Citizens discussed the purpose of a comprehensive plan, shared their vision for the future, and provided input on important topics and challenges for the future.



### Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....

- ☐ Improve transportation management along entry corridors, in downtown and on Valley Street
- ☐ Improve and coordinate signage in corridors and downtown
- ☐ Attract youth, as well as retirees
- ☐ Provide activities for younger persons
- ☐ Provide more parking or more accessible parking
- ☐ Depot Square is an opportunity for pedestrian improvements & activities
- ☐ Expand historic district



### Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....

- ☐ Maintain the "small town" feel; maintain sense of place and fit for new development
- ☐ Maintain the uniqueness of businesses and general community
- ☐ Expand business, arts and activity hours for tourism
- ☐ Provide more festivals, events and entertainment venues
- ☐ Celebrate the arts, especially traditional, home-grown specialties
- ☐ Encourage upper story housing in downtown buildings to increase the mix of residents and businesses
- ☐ Become a "Main Street" community



### Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....

- ☐ Encourage small, independent businesses that are unique rather than chains or "big box" retailers
- ☐ Consider public transportation to relieve parking issues (i.e., trolley)
- ☐ Coordinate development at edges with County and vice versa
- ☐ Encourage clustered development subdivisions to help preserve scenic open spaces
- ☐ Provide more viewshed protection for Creeper Trail; expand buffer
- ☐ Expand fields for sports; work with County





### Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....

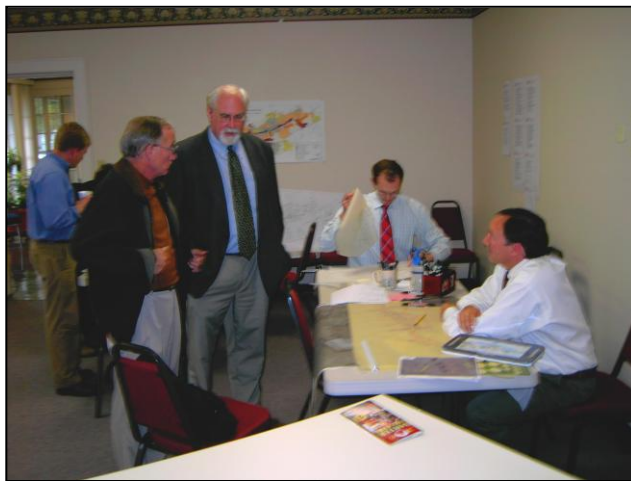
- ☐ Publicize linkages in Abingdon (Creeper Trail, Over Mountain Victory Trail, Wilderness Road, Crooked Road); complement with new facilities where possible
- ☐ Encourage walkable community
- ☐ Enhance support services and housing for regional economic development initiatives (i.e. CGAIMS)
- ☐ Encourage more affordable housing and mixed incomes within housing developments



Additional comments from citizens were obtained through a survey circulated in May and June. Challenges for Abingdon included managing growth, maintaining the “small town charm” of the town, revitalizing downtown, preserving the culture and history, and controlling the encroachment of big box and chain retailers. Citizens offered ideas for changes which included more small retail shops and restaurants, additional pedestrian and bike connections, an expanded library, traffic calming, attractive and more controlled signage, and improved parking. Citizens also identified sites that

needed improvement or had potential for redevelopment. Some of these areas included parts of South Main Street, a warehouse area near Depot Square, and a shopping center at Exit 17.

 <p>Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Minimize night lighting to protect “dark skies”</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Add more nightlife in downtown; need more than Barter Theatre and Martha Washington Inn</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide sewer to certain areas, as well as fire hydrants</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Plant more flowers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Add Arts Coordinator</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote Abingdon as “arts capital of Virginia”</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Protect the blend and balance of residential &amp; business development in downtown</li></ul>	 <p>Abingdon Comprehensive Plan What we've heard ....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide more marketing for businesses and arts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Revitalize Plumb Alley</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Add amphitheatre and farmer's market</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Protect historic and cultural resources</li></ul>
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In addition to the workshops and survey, special design sessions were conducted over a three-day period on selected topics raised by citizens and leaders. The topics studied were:  
**gateway entrances and highway corridors,**  
**traffic calming techniques, and**



**greenways and parks, with special emphasis on connections and new opportunities for facilities and open space.**

Ideas that evolved from the brainstorming and focused design efforts included specific recommendations for improving the Porterfield Highway entrance corridor, as well as recommendations for East Main Street and West Main Street. The recommendations for Porterfield Highway include: a greenway trail, realigned access for connecting streets, opportunities for new business development, and general landscape beautification along the corridor. Also, a palette of traffic calming measures was developed for primary corridors that can be applied to different types of street throughout town (e.g. Valley Street, Cummings Street, Lowry Drive, "A" Street, and Plumb Alley). For small streets recommended right-of-way improvement measures include: use of tree landscaped medians, landscaped "bump outs" with parking, and well-defined pavement markings and landscaped edges. For larger, wider streets such as East Main Street, planted medians were recommended to serve beautification and traffic calming roles. See the Transportation element of this plan for more detailed information on each of recommendations for these corridors.

Because citizens value Abingdon's pedestrian atmosphere and recreation opportunities, linkages to greenways and parks were the focus of a second design effort. Working with citizens, the project team identified key linkages to important neighborhood or community areas and discussed additional sites for new park opportunities. Two potential park locations were identified and concepts developed for facilities – Wyndale Road Park and Trigg Street Park. See the Parks and Recreation and the Transportation Elements of this plan for more detailed information on these design efforts.

**Abingdon Design Workshop**

Please join us for a 2-day open house  
design workshop focusing on

- Town Entrances
- Traffic Calming
- Signage
- Greenways and Green Connections
- Athletic Fields

When:

**Wednesday, May 17**

**Thursday, May 18**

**10am to 2pm and 4pm to 7pm**

Where:

Abingdon Town Hall

133 East Main Street

Lower Level Conference Room

Drop in and visit during the above hours and talk with landscape architects, architects, and planners from Hill Studio to share your vision for Abingdon.





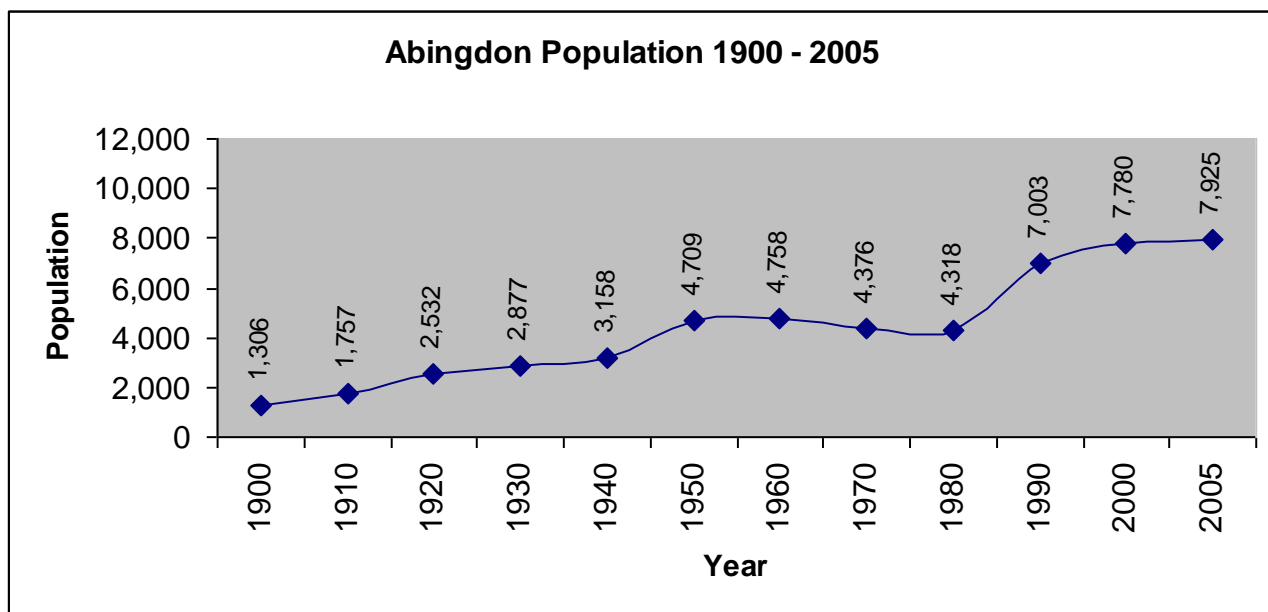


## Comprehensive Plan Elements

### People and Neighborhoods

#### Demographics 2000-2030

As the county seat of Washington County, Abingdon is the primary urban and cultural center, the regional center for health care, government and professional services, and a tourism destination for southwestern Virginia. Historic population trends for Abingdon from 1900 to 2005 are shown in the following table.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2005 population estimate is as of July 1, 2006.

As illustrated in the table, Abingdon experienced considerable growth rates between 1900 and 1950. After 1950, growth of the town slowed and decreased in the following decades. In 1988, the town's population rebounded as a result of annexation (2,700 persons). Abingdon's population grew moderately during the 1990s to a total population of 7,780 in 2000.

Abingdon's population in 2005 was estimated to be 7,925 residents, which represents an increase of 1.83 percent since 2000, or approximately one-half a percent annually. Population projections prepared by the Virginia Employment Commission for 2010, 2020, and 2030 predict continued growth. Population projections for the town and the region are presented in the following table.



Population Projections 2005 - 2030				
	2005	2010	2020	2030
Abingdon	7,925	8,041	8,273	8,505
Washington Co	52,085	52,400	53,400	54,400
Mount Rogers Planning District	189,904	194,100	199,398	204,600
Virginia	7,567,465	7,892,900	8,601,900	9,275,101
Source: U.S. Bureau of Census 2005 estimates; Virginia Employment Commission VELMA, 2010-2030, Weldon Cooper Center				

More detailed 2000 Census Population characteristics for the Town of Abingdon and Washington County are presented in the table on the following page. The trends in Abingdon closely follow those of Washington County and the region.

In general, the town has an aging population with smaller family sizes and lower income levels than found elsewhere in Virginia. Some of the notable population and housing trends for Abingdon are:

The median age of residents is 42.4, slightly higher than the average for both the county (40.3) and the state (35.7).

Twenty percent of the population is 65 years of age and over, again higher than county (15%) and the state (11%).

The median household income is \$30,976, which is slightly less than the county (\$32,742), and less than the state (\$46,677).

Almost 70 percent of the population has lived in Abingdon or Washington County since 1995.

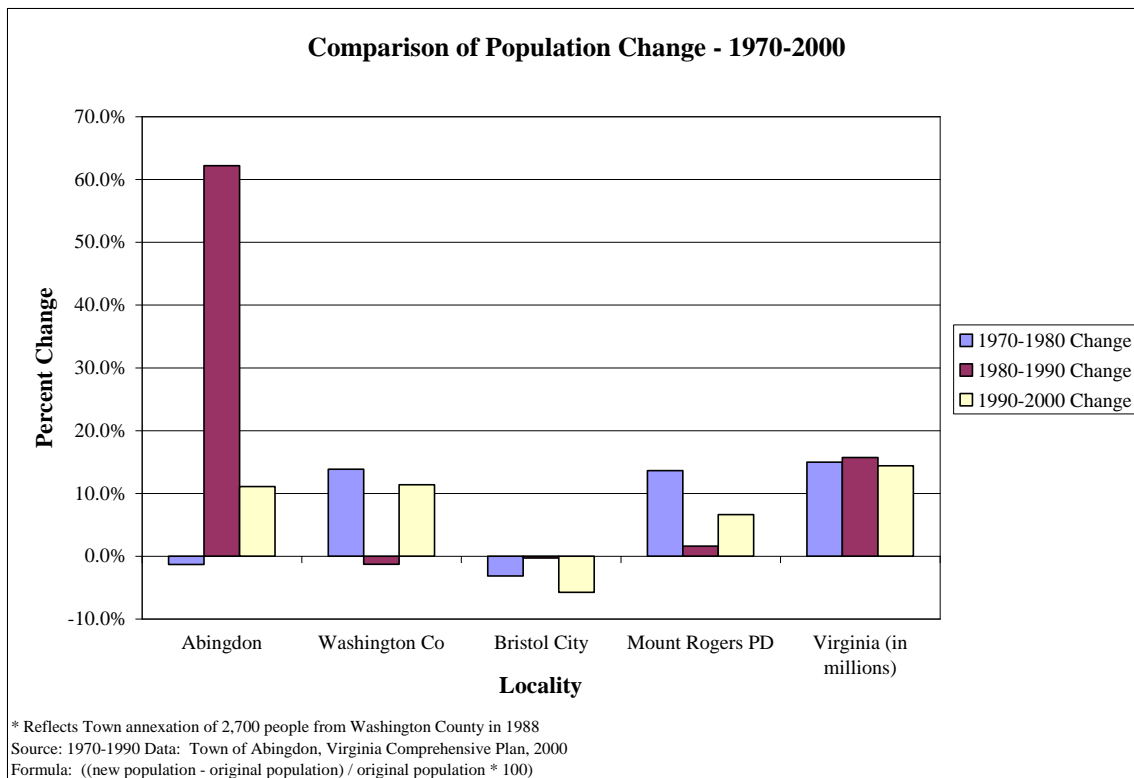
Approximately 78 percent of the population in Abingdon over 25 years of age has a high school diploma, college education or college degree. This compares with 81 percent for the state. Approximately 30 percent of the town's population over 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 16 percent for the county and 29 percent for the state.

Approximately 7 percent of families in Abingdon are below the poverty level, compared to 8 percent for the County and 7 percent for Virginia.

Some of these trends are visually depicted in charts on the following pages.



Population Characteristics Abingdon and Washington County 2000 Census					
		Abingdon	%	Washington County	%
<b>Population</b>	7,780		51,103		
Male	3,481	44.7%	24,789	48.5%	
Female	4,299	55.3%	26,314	51.5%	
<b>Age</b>					
Under 18	1,427	18.3%	10,605	20.8%	
18-64	4,753	61.1%	32,664	63.9%	
65 and Over	1,600	20.6%	7,834	15.3%	
<b>Median Age</b>	42.4		40.3		
<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>					
White	7,390	95.0%	49,854	97.6%	
Black	265	3.4%	676	1.3%	
Other	125	1.6%	573	1.1%	
<b>Total Households</b>	3,522		21,056		
Family- Households	2,091	59.4%	14,949	71.0%	
Non-Family Households	1,431	40.6%	6,107	29.0%	
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.08	NA	2.36	NA	
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$30,976	NA	\$32,742	NA	
<b>Families Below Poverty Level</b>	153	7.3%	1,214	8.1%	
<b>Residence since 1995</b>	7,511		48,518		
Same House	3,740	49.8%	29,871	61.6%	
Different House, Washington County	1,467	19.5%	9,316	19.2%	
Different House, U.S.	2,279	30.3%	9,183	18.9%	
Elsewhere	25	0.3%	148	0.3%	
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	5,755		35,958		
Less than 9th Grade	590	10.3%	4,654	12.9%	
9th-12th Grade No Diploma	652	11.3%	5,313	14.8%	
High School Graduate	1,152	20.0%	11,216	31.2%	
Some College/ Associate	1,623	28.2%	8,985	25.0%	
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1,738	30.2%	5,790	16.1%	
Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census					











## Housing Characteristics

According to the 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there were 4,141 housing units in Abingdon. Of these, approximately 89 percent were occupied with 54 percent being owner-occupied. Most housing units were single-family homes (53 percent). Duplexes and apartments comprised 42 percent of the housing units and 4.9 percent were mobile homes. In comparison, Washington County had a home ownership rate of 74.9 percent in 2011, while Virginia's rate was 68.4 percent.

Abingdon is an established community comprised of housing that consist of older homes, as well as newer ones. Approximately 36 percent of the town's housing was built before 1970.

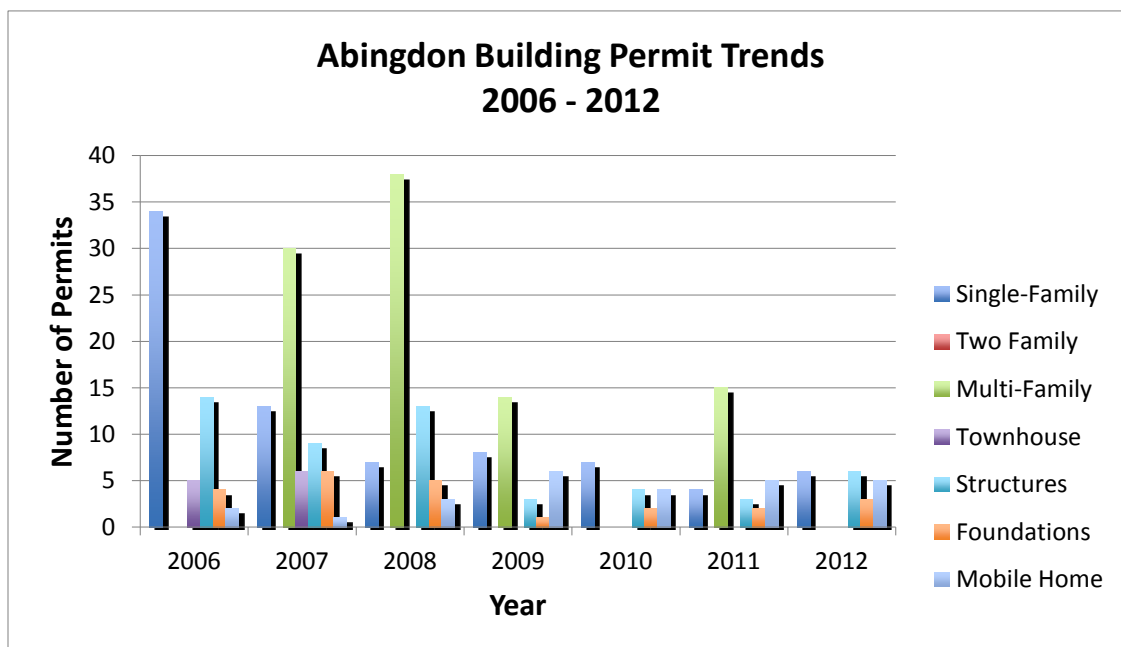
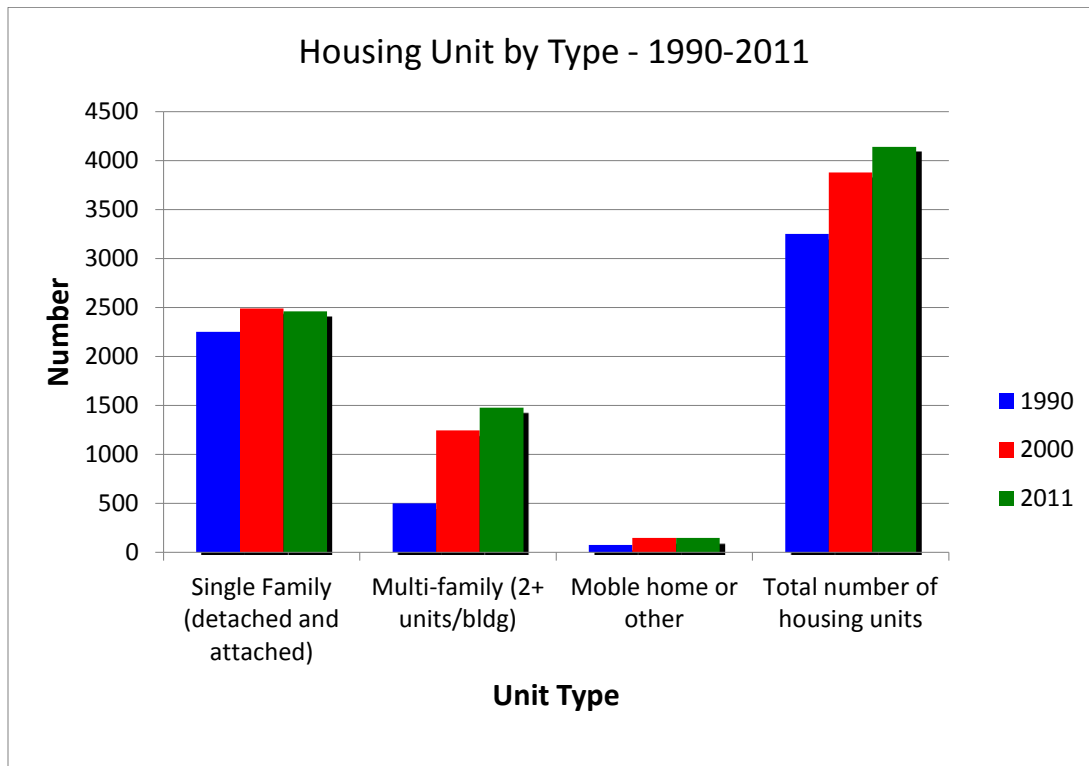
*The median value of an owner-occupied home in Abingdon in 2011 was approximately \$174,800, which compares to \$128,900 for homes in Washington County and \$254,600 in Virginia. With respect to housing affordability, most residents (76.1 percent) who own their own homes are paying less than thirty percent of their incomes for housing; however, almost one-half (46.8 percent) of the rental tenants pay more than thirty percent of their income for housing. This indicates that there is a need to provide more affordable rental housing in Abingdon to meet the needs of residents.*

Charts on the following page show information on housing types constructed between 1980 and 2011, and housing permit activity in Abingdon from 2000-2010. These show that housing units for single-family homes comprise most of the construction in recent years.

### Abingdon Housing Characteristics 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimates

<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>4,141</b>	
Occupied	3,701	89%
Vacant	440	11%
Owner Occupied Units	1,988	54%
Renter Occupied Units	1,713	46%
<b>Housing Types</b>	<b>4,141</b>	
One Unit, Detached	2,204	53%
One Unit, Attached	256	6%
Two Units	338	8%
Three or More Units	1,140	28%
Mobile Home	203	5%
<b>Housing Age (Year Built)</b>	<b>4,141</b>	
1990-2000	476	11%
1980-1989	589	14%
1970-1979	895	22%
1960-1969	728	18%
1940-1959	398	10%
1939 and Earlier	437	11%
<b>Avg. Household Size (Owner Occupied)</b>	<b>2.27</b>	
<b>Avg. Household Size (Renter Occupied)</b>	<b>1.98</b>	
<b>Median Value (Owner Occupied)</b>	<b>\$174,800</b>	
<b>Median Gross Rent (Renter Occupied)</b>	<b>\$597</b>	
<b>Median Mortgage Cost</b>	<b>\$1,313</b>	
<b>Housing Owner Costs &gt; 30% Household Income</b>	<b>24%</b>	
<b>Rental Costs &gt; 30% Household Income</b>	<b>47%</b>	

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Source: 2007-2011 American  
Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





### People and Neighborhoods 2007

The neighborhoods in Abingdon are illustrated on the map on the following page. The town's neighborhoods provide a broad diversity of housing types, styles, and settings. Historic Abingdon includes attractive, architecturally significant housing close to downtown and Courthouse Hill. Older neighborhoods like Taylor's Hill and Kings Mountain are established neighborhoods that offer a diversity of residential building styles and development patterns. Both of these neighborhoods are targeted for revitalization efforts and since 2000, have received Community Development Block Grant Funds for infrastructure improvements and housing rehabilitation. Newer subdivisions continue to develop toward the town's perimeter on former farmlands and forested areas, each with their own character and housing types. Residential development in Washington County is occurring primarily to the west and north of Abingdon along Porterfield Highway and southwest of Cummings Street; additional county residential development is occurring east of the town toward Meadowview and Glade Spring.

In 2006, the Abingdon Housing Authority adopted a goal to establish a "One Percent for Affordable Housing Program" to promote housing for low-moderate income families with incomes of 50-80% of the median (\$30,976 in 2000). As part of this initiative, the housing authority emphasized its desire to encourage attractive, well-maintained housing that was architecturally appropriate and energy efficient, financially stable with dedicated revenue streams, and neighborhoods that positively influenced the larger community. While the authority's immediate priority is housing for low-income families, they see the long-term value in establishing mixed income communities as an avenue for building successful neighborhoods that provide quality and affordable housing for all. Thus, they are actively pursuing public and private partnerships that will help implement their goal for the future.

### Challenges and Opportunities for People and Neighborhoods 2027

To achieve the long-term community goal of attractive and inviting neighborhoods, it is essential that new development be respectful of Abingdon's architectural and cultural heritage, protective of the natural environment, and complementary to the town's quality of life. The town's neighborhoods and development patterns offer a wide diversity of housing styles and types; however, there is a need for more cluster and conservation developments, quality townhouse and small scale, multi-family developments to meet the residential housing demands of both existing and new residents. While new multi-family developments have been constructed in recent years, many do not achieve the design qualities and amenities desired for Abingdon. Also, more quality, affordable rental housing is needed, as indicated in the 2000 Census statistics. Existing mobile home parks in Abingdon are aging and may offer sites for potential multi-family housing redevelopment.

Much of the success of Abingdon's historic residential areas has been the result of historic district protection. The district now extends along Valley Street, and south toward downtown. The existing residential neighborhoods on Bradley Street and in the Stonewall Heights neighborhood also are of architectural and historic significance. Additional measures (e.g. conservation district designation) should be considered to encourage preservation and



### **Map 3    Abingdon Neighborhoods**





appropriate rehabilitation of the residential fabric in these neighborhoods. This would encourage neighborhood reinvestment and assist in protecting additional special assets of Abingdon.

Finally, as additional residential development expands throughout the town and the county, preserving community open space and vistas are becoming more challenging. These open spaces are important community assets; they should be protected and if development is eminent, conservation measures should be integrated into development planning in order to consider best land management practices and protect important environmental features.

### Planning and Development Policies 2027

To achieve the desired vision for Abingdon's residents and neighborhoods in the future, the following policies are established:

#### Planning and Development Policies for People and Neighborhoods

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| PN 1 | <u>Attractive, Safe Neighborhoods:</u> The integrity and quality of Abingdon's neighborhoods should be enhanced and maintained. New housing developments and infill structures should be designed in context with existing built neighborhoods and complement the overall character and architecture of Abingdon.   |
| PN 2 | <u>Diverse, Affordable Housing:</u> Quality, affordable housing should be available to meet the needs of all residents. There should be a diverse variety of housing types and choices (single-family, apartments, townhouses, second-story lofts, etc.). In addition, there should be an adequate supply of housing for those with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled). |
| PN 3 | <u>Environmentally Sensitive Neighborhood and Housing Development:</u> New development for housing developments and residential subdivisions should be designed to protect environmental features and preserve important scenic views, woodlands, and natural areas.  |
| PN 4 | <u>Connected, Pedestrian Friendly Neighborhoods:</u> New neighborhoods should include connected streets and pedestrian sidewalks or trail linkages, where applicable. Neighborhood streets should include landscaping and traffic calming features to effectively manage traffic and encourage attractive and safe pedestrian-friendly environments.                        |



### Action Strategies for People and Neighborhoods 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to implement the vision and recommended policies for Abingdon's residents and neighborhoods in 2027:

**PN 1** Attractive, Safe Neighborhoods: The integrity and quality of Abingdon's neighborhoods should be enhanced and maintained. New housing developments and infill structures should be designed in context with existing built neighborhoods and complement the overall character and architecture of Abingdon.

**Encourage the appropriate rehabilitation of housing through special funding programs and public education. Develop a "housing rehabilitation primer" for property owners that provides information on appropriate rehabilitation treatment, common repairs/ maintenance, available assistance programs, and contacts.**

**Expand the historic district, where appropriate to ensure preservation of Abingdon's historic residential areas and unique community character.**

**Plan and develop new neighborhoods using traditional neighborhood design principles in densely developed areas and conservation and clustered development principles in more rural areas of Abingdon.**

**Provide neighborhood support services, such as libraries, schools, and recreation centers, within easy access to residential areas. For county services, encourage facilities within the town limits.**

**Consider adopting a Conservation/Preservation Overlay District for Bradley Street and the Stonewall Heights Neighborhood to protect architectural qualities and ensure appropriate in-fill development.**

**Revise the Zoning Ordinance to relax setbacks and add to the character of new and existing neighborhoods.**

**PN 2** Diverse, Affordable Housing: Quality, affordable housing should be available to meet the needs of all residents. There should be a diverse variety of housing types and choices (single-family, apartments, townhouses, second-story lofts, etc.). In addition, there should be an adequate supply of housing for those with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled).

**Encourage well designed, diversified, affordable housing in Abingdon through public-private partnerships and close coordination with housing agencies. Key locations for such projects would be Baltimore Street, the Bradley Street Neighborhood and Rodefer Street.**



**Amend the zoning ordinance to provide for upper-story residential development in downtown. Encourage live/work spaces. Consider financial incentives such as façade improvement assistance, special housing loans, or other programs to facilitate investment in downtown buildings for mixed use.**

**PN 3**      Environmentally Sensitive Neighborhood and Housing Development: New development for housing developments and residential subdivisions should be designed to protect environmental features and preserve important scenic views, woodlands, and natural areas.

**Amend the subdivision ordinance to provide provisions for clustered residential development to conserve open space and natural features. Ensure that the provisions include appropriate guidelines for development patterns, environmental protection, community open spaces/facilities, and other appropriate measures.**

**PN 4**      Connected, Pedestrian Friendly Neighborhoods: New neighborhoods should include connected streets and pedestrian sidewalks or trail linkages, where applicable. Neighborhood streets should include landscaping and traffic calming features to effectively manage traffic and encourage attractive and safe pedestrian-friendly environments.

**Promote trail connectivity, multi-modal transportation facilities, and pedestrian improvements through public education materials, signage, and other means. Use marketing efforts to encourage incorporation of similar features in new development.**



### Special Action Projects: People and Neighborhoods

In addition to the housing revitalization efforts in the Taylor's Hill and King's Mountain neighborhoods, two additional areas were identified as opportunity areas for housing redevelopment: (1) redevelopment of the mobile home park and industrial area on East Main Street south of the railroad tracks, and (2) redevelopment of the industrial area near Depot Square between Fuller and Preston Streets, north of Elm Street. The Elm Street redevelopment area could include both residential and commercial development to complement the future revitalization efforts in Depot Square and downtown. The conceptual sketch shown below proposes single-family houses on a tree-lined street with sidewalk on Elm and two buildings with live/work spaces offering retail galleries and upper-story apartments for artisans.





## ***Parks, Recreation, and Open Space***

Park and recreation facilities in the Town of Abingdon are operated and maintained by the town. The Virginia Creeper Trail is jointly owned and operated by the Town of Abingdon, the Town of Damascus, and the Forest Service. In addition to Abingdon's neighborhood and community parks, residents have access to regional recreation areas including: the South Holston Lake, the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area, Clinch Mountain Wildlife Recreation Area, and others that are within easy access. Recreational trail facilities are prominent in the area and in addition to the Creeper Trail, include: the Appalachian Trail, Overmountain Victory Trail, and Iron Mountain Trail. A map of Abingdon's park and recreational facilities is presented on the following page. Relevant park plans and recreational facilities serving the Town of Abingdon are discussed in the following sections.

### **Parks and Recreation 2007**

In 2000, Washington County developed a countywide recreation facility needs assessment<sup>1</sup> which included assessment of the facilities and needs of the Town of Abingdon. Following a public survey, recreation facilities were inventoried and state and national standards applied to determine deficiencies in facilities. At that time, the County had a total of approximately 57 recreational facilities and 560 acres of park and recreation land. While the total available parkland met the overall recommendation for each 1,000 persons, the county did not meet the recommended standards for various park classifications. Specifically, the study noted that additional neighborhood parks, community parks, and district parks were needed, as well as additional trail facilities. Abingdon was noted as one of the fastest growing areas in the county (specifically census tracts 104, 105 and 106). Among other recommendations, the plan advised that (1) town governments should be encouraged to provide new playground and neighborhood parks near population centers and (2) playgrounds and neighborhood park features should be expanded on County school properties to meet recreational needs. Also, the plan recommended development of a greenway master plan and expanded greenway connections and multi-purpose trails to link population centers. Based on recreational needs and public comments received, a multi-sports complex was identified as the number one priority for the County. In close proximity to the Abingdon is the Washington County Park on South Holston Lake. This reservoir, owned and operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority, provides many opportunities for water sport and outdoor recreation.

The 2002 *Virginia Outdoors Plan*, developed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, discusses regional park facilities in the Mount Rogers Planning District (Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe, and the Cities of Bristol and Galax). The plan noted that the supply of recreational areas and facilities in the region is adequate to

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<sup>1</sup>Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc., *Washington County Recreation Department, Countywide Recreation Facility Needs Assessment, Washington County, Virginia*, October 2000.



## **Map 4   Parks and Recreation Facilities**





meet the demand in many activities, but there are shortages in tennis courts, basketball goals, golf courses, and football and soccer fields. The plan recommended that recreational facilities be considered at the Virginia Highlands Community College in Abingdon where there is a 100-acre tract potentially available. Also, the plan advocated promotion of scenic highways and byways, as well as various thematic trails for recreation such as Virginia Civil War Trail, Wilderness Road Trail, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trails, and others.

In 2007, the Town of Abingdon maintained five neighborhood parks (Munchkin Park, Highlands Street Park, Main Street Park, Park Street Park, and Church Street Park) and three community parks (Latture Field, Veterans Memorial Park, and Foster-DeBose Field), as well as one central recreation center, Coomes Recreation Center. A table listing the town's parks and the facilities at each are shown on the following page.

Park/Facility	Type	Park Acreage	Play ground	Picnic	Restrooms	Trails	Base ball/ Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Soccer	Volleyball	Skating	Swimming Pool	Other
Harry L Coomes Recreation Center	Community Center	19.00	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	
Veterans Memorial Park	Community Park	12.72	■	■										War Monuments, Bronze Ribbon Memorial, Sculpture
Little League Field (Foster-DeBose Field) & Little League Field (Petty Field)	Community Park	4.78	■	■	■		■							Batting Cages, Concession Stand
Latture Field	Community Park	4.70		■	■		■							Concession Stand, Special Community Events
Munchkin Park	Neighborhood Park	4.15	■	■		■								
Eberhart Park	Neighborhood Park	1.05	■	■				■						
Church Street Tennis Courts	Neighborhood Park	0.98		■					■					
Main Street Park	Neighborhood Park	0.43		■										Gazebo
Highlands Street Park	Neighborhood Park	0.39	■	■										Shelter
Landon Boyd Park	Neighborhood Park	2	■	■				■						Shelter
Muster Grounds	Community Park	8.85			X	X								Shelters





The Coomes Recreation Center was opened in 1994 as a state of the art recreation facility. It offers 48,000 square feet of space for a diversity of activities and continues to be expanded to meet recreational needs of Abingdon. In 2007, the indoor facility included a multi-purpose gym, track, fitness areas, regulation-size pool, kitchen, meeting rooms, and specialized rooms for games, computers, etc. Outdoors, the facility also includes an Olympic-size outdoor pool, indoor pool, picnic areas, a skate park, tennis courts, amphitheatre, volleyball courts, walking trail and an outdoor play station, modeled after one in Central Park, New York, NY.



*Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center*

The town provides more funding per capita for recreational facilities and programming than most communities of its size. As part of this comprehensive plan update, a study was conducted to identify open space and greenway opportunities, determine possible identify trail connections, identify important pedestrian connections between public spaces, determine neighborhoods where park facilities are needed, and prepare conceptual designs for two potential new park facilities. In addition, discussions with citizens and recreation staff identified those areas that needed neighborhood park facilities. This study, *Abingdon Open Space, Parks and Greenways Plan: 2006 Design Area Workshop Results*, is included as an appendix to this plan. Public participants during the workshop gave valuable input that helped to prepare the recommendations found in this plan. Discussions concluded that there is a need to provide additional sidewalk and bike connections throughout the town, as well as a need to provide additional sports and neighborhood park facilities in some areas. Based on National Recreation and Park Association guidelines for park facilities which have been endorsed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation<sup>2</sup>, Abingdon (population 7,780 in 2000) has a shortfall of neighborhood parks. A map showing the service areas of the parks within Abingdon are presented on the following page. The map indicates optimal service areas for neighborhood parks (0.5 mile), community parks (1.0 mile), and recreation centers (2.0 miles). As can be seen from this map, most of the Town of Abingdon is well served by various parks and recreation facilities. Small neighborhood/specialty parks are centrally located in the most densely developed areas of town where services should be provided, and community parks with sports fields and facilities serve most of the extended reaches of the town. Potentially, there is a need for additional park and recreation facilities in the far eastern and western regions of town. Neighborhood parks in Southview and near the Highland Subdivision could help fulfill recreational needs in the eastern part of town. Additional needs for active sports facilities could be addressed through implementation of two additional facilities discussed in the following sections and through a regional soccer complex.

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, *Virginia Outdoors Plan*, 2002.



## **Map 5    Park Service Areas**



### **Pedestrian/Greenway Connection Opportunities 2027**

During the comprehensive planning workshops, a number of citizens expressed a need for additional bikeways and sidewalks throughout town. The Virginia Creeper Trail is the primary greenway connection used by most citizens and visitors. Other than this primary facility, there are few non-motorized connections in town. Specific connections recommended for future consideration included:

**Connection to the Barter Campus,,**

**Connection from the Farmers Market to Veterans Memorial Park,**

**Connection linking William King Regional Arts Center and Dubose-Foster Fields by Academy Drive,**

**Connection to William King Regional Arts Center from downtown and Depot Square,**

**Connection to Main Street Park and William King Regional Arts Center, and sidewalks/trails connections that are designated as “safe routes to schools” for the middle and high school campus.**



*Virginia Creeper Trail*

A map of the proposed connections that should be considered for additional planning is presented on the following page. These connections were studied in conjunction with the recreation and greenway planning undertaken as part of this comprehensive plan; the recommendations include a palette of trail design concepts, which are illustrated on the map. Note that the specific design for these greenway and pedestrian connections will vary based on location and type of trail needs. Since the Virginia Creeper Trail is located as an off-road greenway with dedicated right-of-way, this design should be utilized where possible on all new connecting greenways. Pedestrian connections along streets should utilize existing and new sidewalks.

In addition to the need for more greenway connections, citizens expressed their concerns for increasing visual and physical encroachments on the Virginia Creeper Trail from adjacent development along the corridor. This special recreational amenity is important to the overall social and economic health of the community, and therefore, should be protected. Encroachment issues that should be addressed include: access to and across the trail, increased buffers for adjacent development, and architectural standards for structures visible from the corridor. At the present



time, the town requires new structures to be set back 35 feet from the Creeper Trail right-of-way.



## **Map 6 Trails and Greenways**



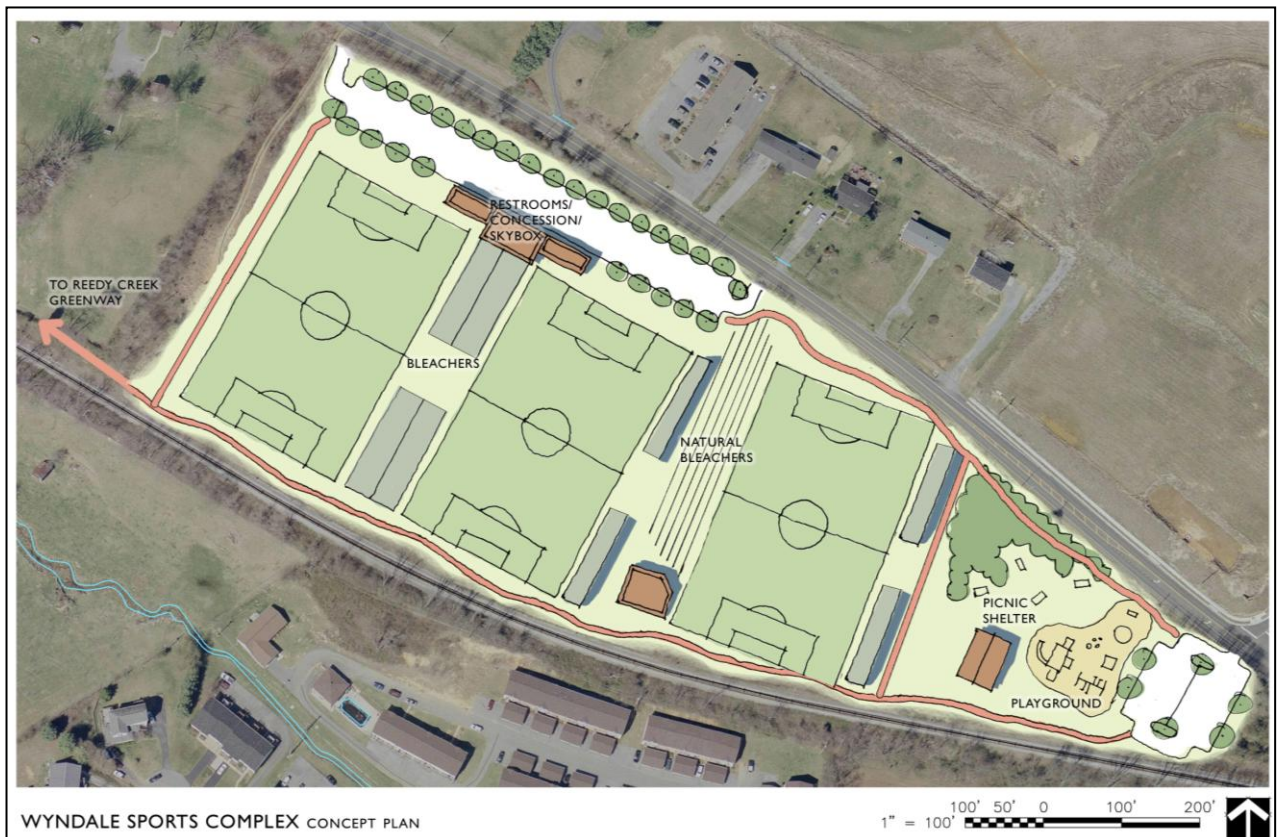


## Park and Open Space Opportunities 2027

To meet the recreational needs for soccer, baseball and softball fields, two areas in Abingdon were identified for study as potential park facilities. The potential sites that were studied in conjunction with this comprehensive plan update were: (1) 13-acre parcel on Wyndale Road, and (2) 22-acre parcel between Trigg Street and Deadmore Street. The following paragraphs briefly discuss the potential use and development of each of the properties. In addition to these parks, the county is pursuing efforts to establish a regional soccer complex to meet public recreational needs.

### Concept for Wyndale Park

Wyndale Park is proposed on an approximately 13-acre parcel located on the western side of town on Wyndale Road, north of Porterfield Highway. The site is bounded on the south side by the Norfolk Southern rail tracks; Willoughby West and Highlands subdivisions are nearby. This park would serve to meet the recreational needs on the western end of town. Also







this proposed park has the potential to expand on large fields across the street, creating a large recreation area. Access to the fields and playground would be provided at each end of the site from Wyndale Road. This park concept would include: three soccer fields, a playground, picnic shelter, and a link to Reedy Creek Greenway. A row of natural bleachers would be set along the hill for spectators, maximizing the change in topography between the soccer field locations. Additional park amenities would include parking at the soccer fields and at the playground, restrooms, press box, and concession space.

### Concept for Trigg Street Park

Trigg Street Park is proposed on a 22-acre parcel between Trigg Street and Deadmore Street, north of Interstate 81, south of Main Street, and east of the Virginia Creeper Trail near the



TRIGG STREET SPORTS COMPLEX CONCEPT PLAN

1" = 100' 100' 50' 0 100'





King's Mountain neighborhood. Access is proposed from Deadmore Street and Trigg Street. Trigg Street Park would simulate the appearance of the old fairgrounds and racetrack with a new running track around the perimeter. The larger of two barns is proposed to remain, as well as the single-family residence. The park would feature: three baseball/softball fields, press box, concession space, restrooms, playground, and picnic shelter. A link to the Virginia Creeper Trail would be provided. Bleachers and parking would be centrally located among the park facilities.

#### Regional Sports Complex

The Town of Abingdon, as of October 2013, was identify sites for a regional soccer complex. Depending on the final location of the complex, it may affect the implementation and need for the two sports fields proposed for Wyndale Road and Trigg Street. However, these two facilities would still meet the demands for practice facilities.

#### Creeper Trail Y Park Improvements

One opportunity for additional park improvements is at the "Y Park" on the Creeper Trail. This park land is owned by the town, but is underutilized; it could be improved for more active recreation. It is easily accessible to adjacent neighborhoods and offers expanded space for a playground, picnic facilities, or other similar park uses.

#### **Open Space Opportunities 2027**

Residents of Abingdon value the scenic views and natural open spaces within and around the town. Visitors passing through on I-81 also experience wonderful vistas of the open farmlands and rolling landscapes that surround the town. These scenic qualities enhance the recreational amenities and contribute to the overall quality of life and ambiance of Abingdon. Consequently, it is important to identify those special areas that should be conserved and preserved for the greater benefit of the community. As part of this planning update, viewsheds from I-81 were identified using Geographic Information System (GIS) data. These viewsheds are depicted on the map on the following page. The topography of the town's perimeter along I-81 not only provides a pleasant cinematic experience for visitors and residents using the road, it buffers noise and traffic and contains pollutants, while separating the town settlement from the busy transportation corridor. Consequently, it is important that this landscape be carefully considered where new development is proposed.



## **Map 7    Important Viewsheds**



## Planning Policies for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space 2027

To achieve the desired vision for parks, recreation, and open space in the future, the following policies are established:

### Planning Policies for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

- PR1** Greenways, trail connections and special open spaces are important community amenities that should be promoted, expanded, and protected in order to sustain the social and economic well-being of Abingdon's residents and encourage tourism.
- PR2** New public and private development should be consistent with adopted plans for recreational facilities and pedestrian and greenway connections and incorporate planned improvements.
- PR3** New park facilities and pedestrian/greenway connections should link public facilities and neighborhoods and be designed to be safe and easily accessible.
- PR4** Special open spaces and important viewsheds within the town and along I-81 should be carefully considered when evaluating new development proposals. Preservation and sensitive development alternatives should be pursued. Development should be encouraged in areas that are not constrained by steep topography.

## Action Strategies for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to implement the future vision and recommended policies for Abingdon's park, recreation, and open spaces.

- PR1** Greenways, Trails and Open Spaces: Greenways, trail connections and special open spaces are important community amenities that should be promoted, expanded, and protected in order to sustain the social and economic well-being of Abingdon's residents and encourage tourism.

**Amend zoning and subdivision codes to add provisions for considering open space and adopted recreational plans when considering new development proposals. Ensure that proposed rights-of-way are included for dedication and improvement.**

**Amend applicable development and town regulations to increase buffer requirements for the Virginia Creeper Trail. Increase buffer to 100 feet. Designate the Creeper Trail as an entrance corridor overlay district in order to provide architectural oversight for adjacent development.**

**Continue developing the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail as a recreational facility within the town limits and into Washington County.**



**Explore connectory trail from Abingdon to Meadowview, to Emory to Glade Spring, connecting the Salt Trail to the Va Creeper Trail.**

**Support and work with the VDOT/DCR proposed Beaches-to-Bluegrass Trail, connecting Virginia Beach to the Cumberland Gap.**

**Work with Bristol, VA and the Bristol MPO in developing connector trail along Wyndale Rail corridor.**





**PR2** Planned Recreation Facilities: New public and private development should be consistent with adopted plans for recreational facilities and pedestrian and greenway connections and incorporate planned improvements.

**Publicize proposed recreation and greenway planning documents showing desired connections to encourage public awareness of planning and implementation of desired connections.**

**Review all new development proposals and encourage dedicated corridors and linkages to systems, where feasible.**

**Pursue the development of a parking area and dog park location on the former “Olde Towne Village” property, now owned by the Town.**

**PR3** Community Linkages: New park facilities and pedestrian/greenway connections should link public facilities and neighborhoods and be designed to be safe and easily accessible.

**Include priority pedestrian and greenway connections in an adopted capital improvement program for the town.**

**Solicit additional funding for park, trail, and sidewalk connections through Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and other applicable state and federal agencies. In addition, consider private sources of funding for projects.**

**A potential new dog park location at the proposed parking area on Fugate and Hagy Street for the Muster Grounds.**

**A proposed pocket park for Black’s Fort Lane, especially for use as a dog park or community garden.**

**Pocket Parks along the streetscape, utilizing up to 2 on-street parking spaces, on a temporary basis, can add traffic calming and greenspace effects to the urbanized downtown.**

**PR4** Special Open Spaces and Viewsheds: Special open spaces and important viewsheds within the town and along I-81 should be carefully considered when evaluating new development proposals. Preservation and sensitive development alternatives should be pursued.

**Amend the zoning and subdivision ordinances to provide for cluster development that considers and protects these special open spaces and viewsheds.**

**Undertake additional study of open space and viewsheds to identify priority areas. Pursue appropriate measures to acquire conservation easements or use other tools to ensure preservation or sensitive development of these special areas.**

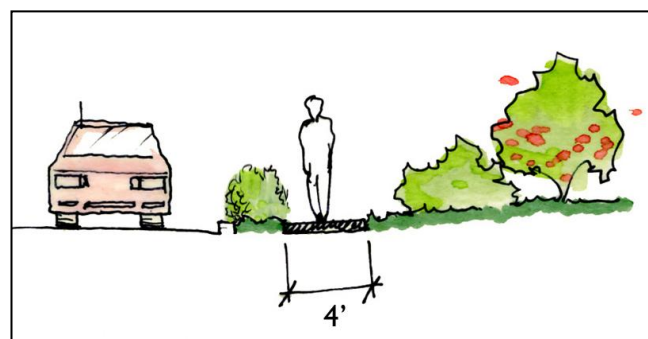
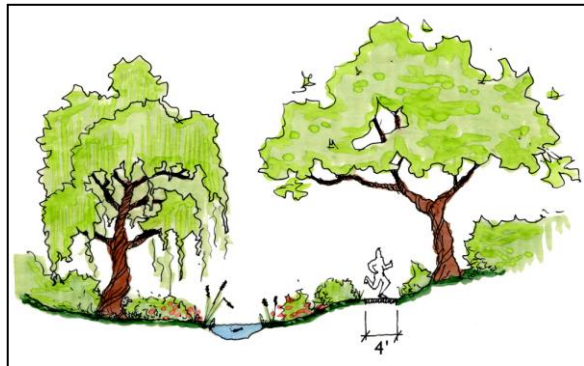
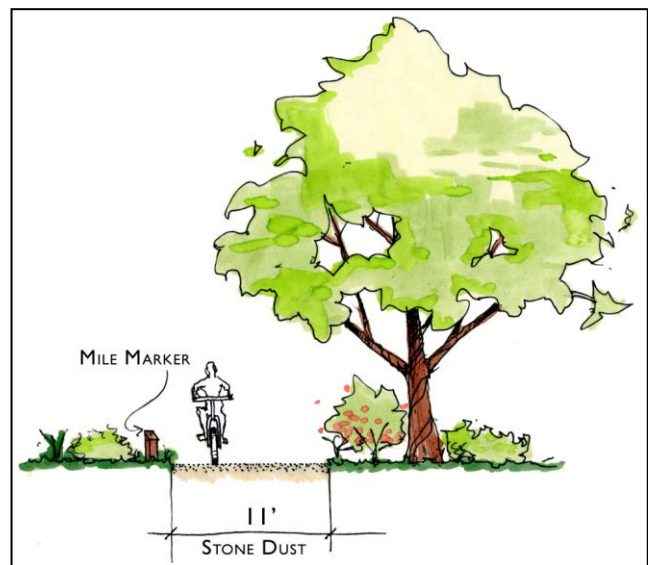
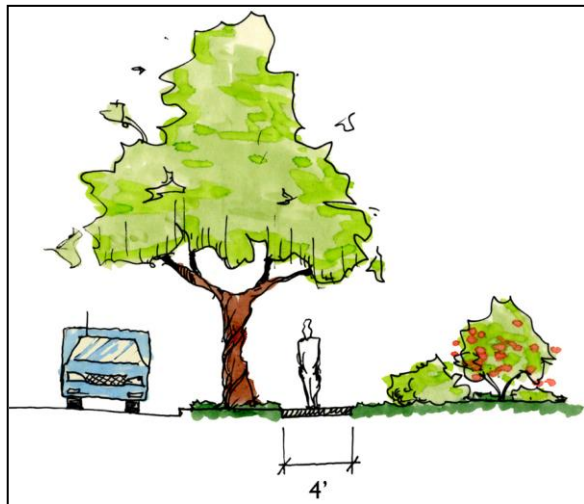






### Special Action Projects: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Greenways and parks are signature elements of Abingdon that serve both residents and visitors. In addition to the two new parks on Trigg Street and Wyndale Road, additional greenway connections throughout Abingdon can add valuable recreational space and opportunities. The following illustrations represent typical cross-sections for potential greenway trails in Abingdon. Priority connections are those to schools, the Creeper Trail, and the Overmountain Victory Trail.



*Typical Greenway Cross-Sections for New Trail Connections*



## Economic Development

The future sustainability of Abingdon requires a stable and diversified economy that celebrates and reflects the special community heritage and fulfills the market needs of residents and visitors. The town is the recognized regional center for health care, law, and headquarters operations for professional businesses. In addition, the arts and culture of Abingdon has historically provided a stable foundation for economic development. Future economic prosperity should build on the regional emphasis and expand the arts/culture foundation to take advantage of the community's potential for new economic development initiatives to complement the existing heritage and take advantage of new niche markets.

### Employment

According to September 2012, statistics provided by the Virginia Employment Commission<sup>i</sup>, of the fifty largest employers in Washington County, 24 are headquartered in Abingdon. [...] Forty-one out of the fifty employers in Washington County are private companies; three are Virginia State agencies; and five are local governments. Washington County Schools is the largest public-sector employer. The top ten employers in Washington County are shown below.

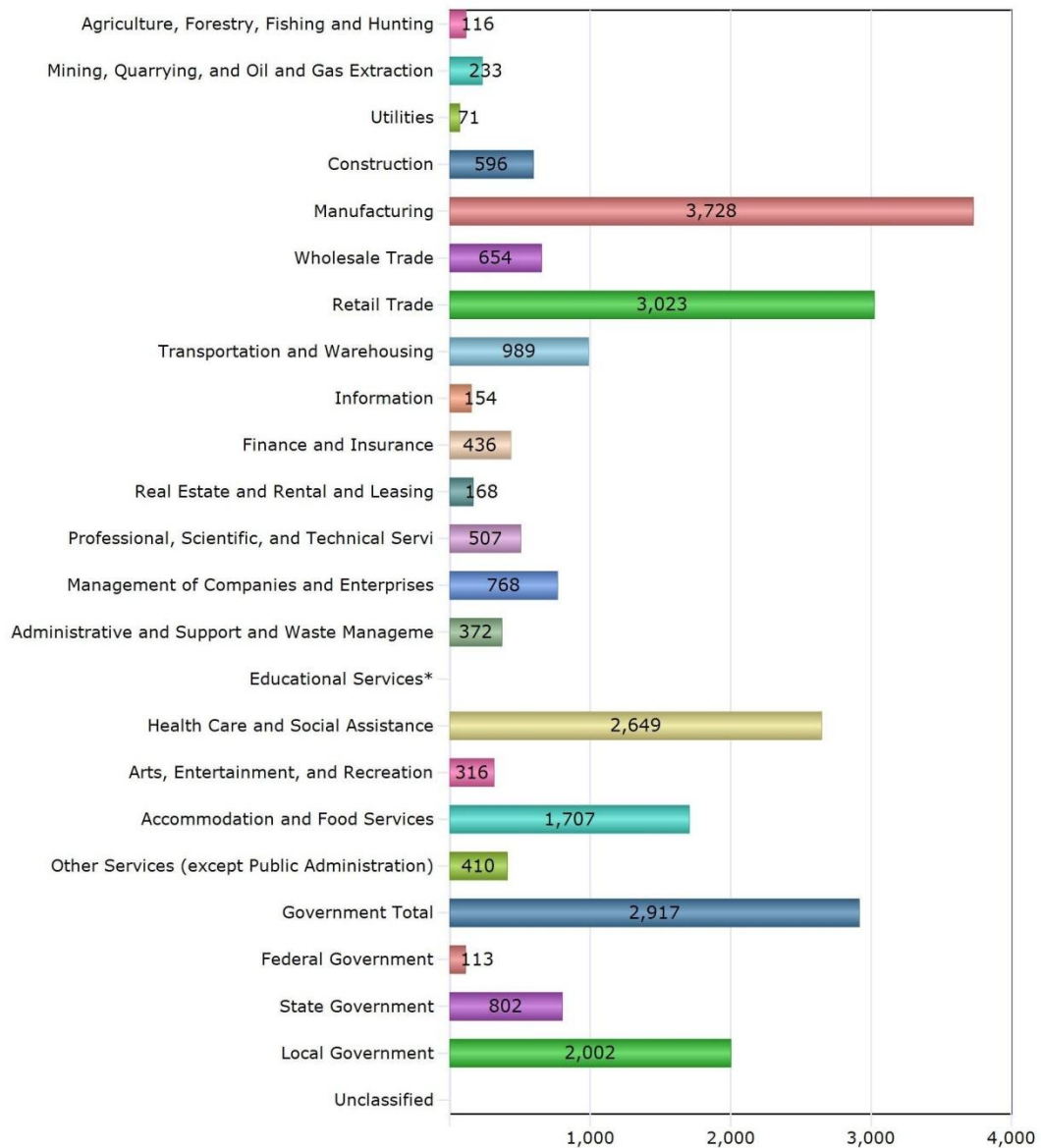
Top Ten Employers in Washington County (2012) <sup>i</sup>			
Rank in County	Company Name	Business Type	Employees
1	Food City	Food and Beverage Stores	1000+
2	Washington County Schools	Educational Services	1000+
3	Mountain States Health Alliance	Hospitals	500 to 999
4	Bristol Compressors International	Machinery Manufacturing	500 to 999
5	Utility Trailer Manufacturing	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	501 to 999
6	Universal Fibers	Chemical Manufacturing	250 to 499
7	Wal-Mart	General Merchandise Stores	251 to 499
8	Washington County	Executive, Legislative, and Other General Government Support	252 to 499
9	Virginia Highlands Community College	Educational Services	253 to 499
10	Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.	Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	254 to 499

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 3rd Quarter (July, August, September) 2012

Employment numbers by industry as of the 3rd quarter, 2012, are provided in the following table. As illustrated in the table, manufacturing provides the greatest employment opportunities, followed by government and retail trade.



## Employment by Industry



**Total: 20,166**

Note: Asterisk (\*) indicates non-disclosable data.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission,  
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 3rd Quarter (July, August, September) 2012.

Similar charts provided by the Virginia Employment Commission depict projected employment in the County (2020) by industry and by major occupational group. As shown in the following charts, the largest employers for the future are expected to be those associated with manufacturing, educational services, and retail trade. Those occupations with the highest growth potential are healthcare support, personal care and services, and computer and mathematical occupations.



## Industry Employment and Projections

Long Term

	Employment			Percent	
	Estimated 2010	Projected 2020	Change	Total	Annual
Total, All Industries	142,957	161,445	18,488	12.93%	1.22%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	***	***	***	***	***
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	***	***	***	***	***
Utilities	272	268	-4	-1.47%	-.15%
Construction	4,798	6,167	1,369	28.53%	2.54%
Manufacturing	23,574	24,230	656	2.78%	.27%
Wholesale Trade	3,248	3,654	406	12.5%	1.18%
Retail Trade	17,879	20,145	2,266	12.67%	1.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	2,852	3,502	650	22.79%	2.07%
Information	1,265	1,331	66	5.22%	.51%
Finance and Insurance	2,445	2,724	279	11.41%	1.09%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,303	1,480	177	13.58%	1.28%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Servi	4,000	5,159	1,159	28.98%	2.58%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,230	1,281	51	4.15%	.41%
Administrative and Support and Waste Manageme	5,632	6,833	1,201	21.32%	1.95%
Educational Services	21,056	23,088	2,032	9.65%	.93%
Health Care and Social Assistance	15,048	19,867	4,819	32.02%	2.82%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,059	1,239	180	17%	1.58%
Accommodation and Food Services	12,898	14,700	1,802	13.97%	1.32%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,165	3,741	576	18.2%	1.69%

Note: Asterisks (\*\*\*) indicate non-disclosable data.  
 Projections data is for New River/Mt. Rogers (LWIA II). No data available for Washington County.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission,  
 Long Term Industry and Occupational Projections, 2010-2020.





## Occupation Employment and Projections

Long Term

	Employment			Openings		
	Estimated 2010	Projected 2020	% Change	Replace-ments	Growth	Total
Total, All Occupations	142,957	161,445	12.93%	3,397	1,918	5,315
Management Occupations	4,753	5,021	5.64%	102	30	132
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	3,724	4,277	14.85%	77	56	133
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,504	1,887	25.47%	28	38	66
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	2,607	2,766	6.1%	58	17	75
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	911	1,010	10.87%	25	10	35
Community and Social Service Occupations	2,829	3,330	17.71%	63	50	113
Legal Occupations	577	658	14.04%	10	9	19
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	14,017	15,566	11.05%	276	155	431
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1,317	1,492	13.29%	35	19	54
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	7,320	8,975	22.61%	152	166	318
Healthcare Support Occupations	3,310	4,572	38.13%	46	126	172
Protective Service Occupations	2,155	2,298	6.64%	57	15	72
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	13,049	14,914	14.29%	465	187	652
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	5,143	5,754	11.88%	92	61	153
Personal Care and Service Occupations	3,785	5,073	34.03%	82	129	211
Sales and Related Occupations	16,896	18,798	11.26%	548	192	740
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	21,162	23,589	11.47%	484	262	746
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	450	498	10.67%	13	5	18
Construction and Extraction Occupations	5,900	6,836	15.86%	128	96	224
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	6,503	7,387	13.59%	143	89	232
Production Occupations	16,429	17,093	4.04%	307	97	404
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	8,616	9,651	12.01%	208	108	316

*Note: Asterisks (\*\*\*) indicate non-disclosable data.*

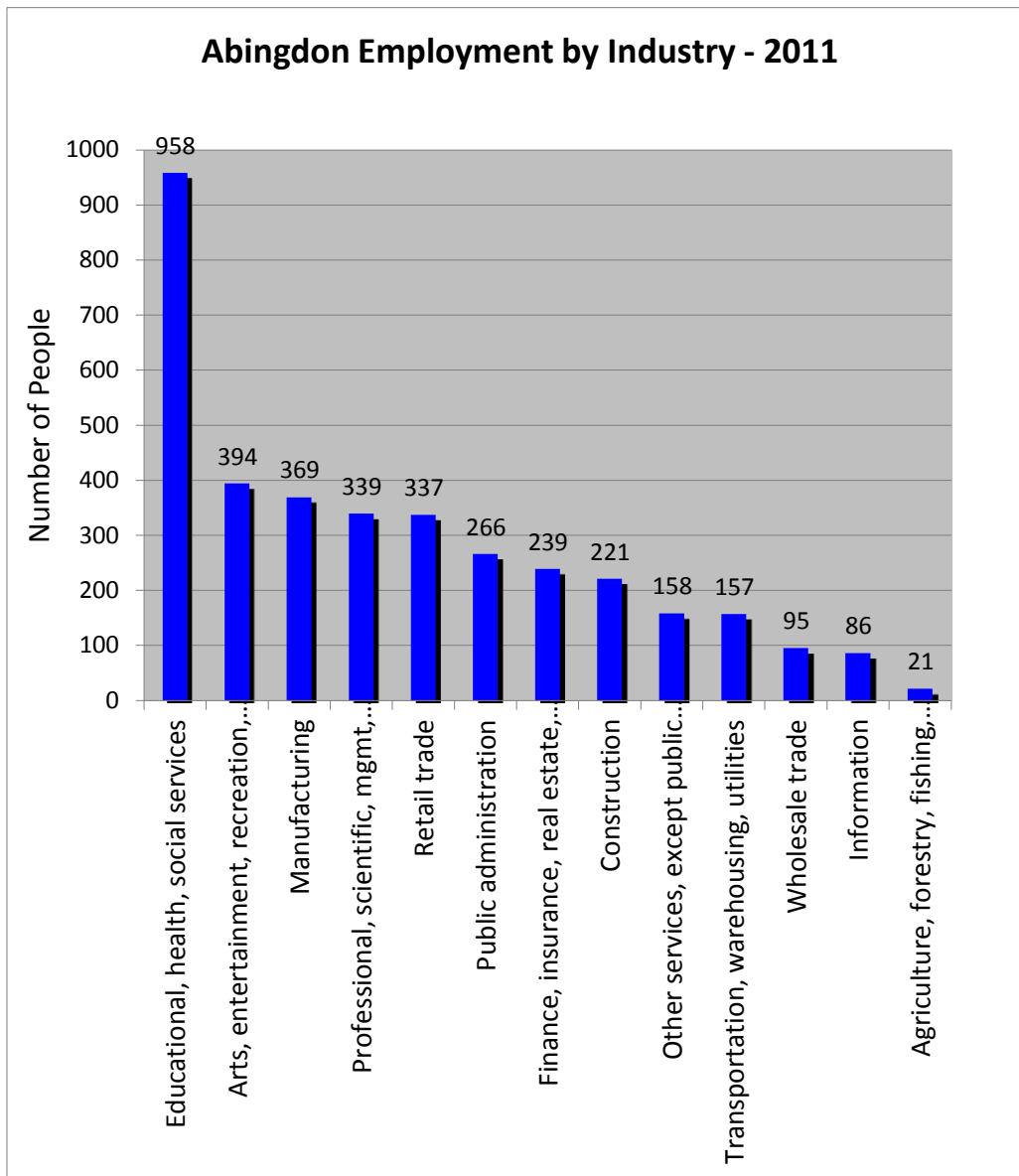
*Projections data is for New River/Mt. Rogers (LWIA II). No data available for Washington County.*

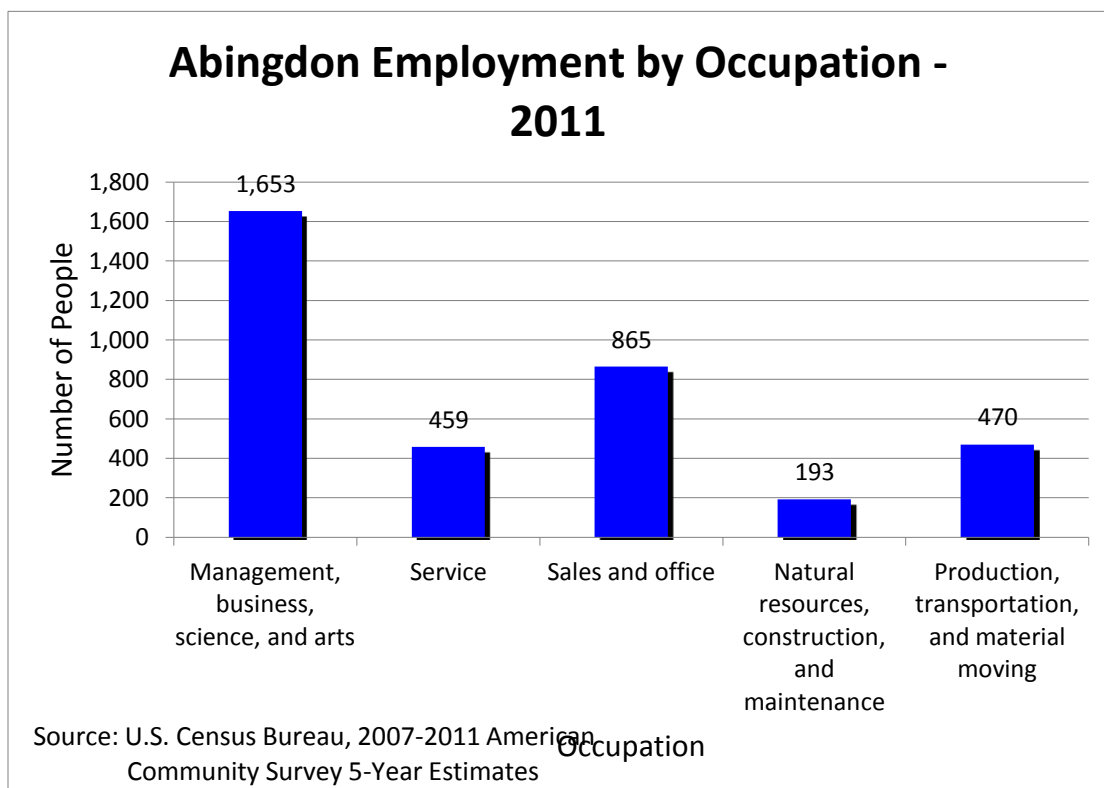
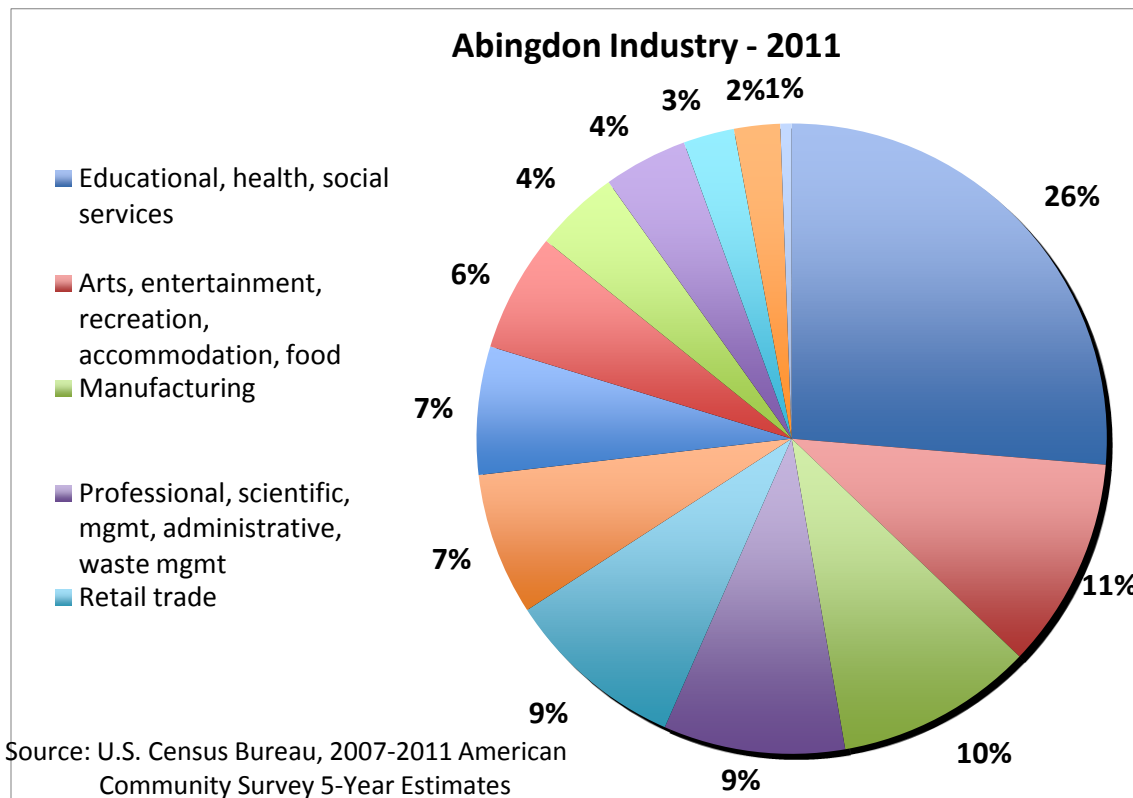
*Source: Virginia Employment Commission,  
 Long Term Industry and Occupational Projections, 2010-2020.*

VEC statistics show unemployment rates for Washington County from March 2012 to March 2013 range from 6.3 percent to 6.0 percent. This compares to a range of 6.0 percent to 5.2 percent for the Commonwealth of Virginia and a range of 8.4 percent to 7.6 percent for the nation. Thus, while the county unemployment rates are somewhat higher than the state, they are lower than the national rates.



The following charts present 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates employment information for Abingdon. As can be seen from the first chart, the largest numbers of persons employed in Abingdon are in the industry categories of education, health and social services and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. Manufacturing, professional services, and retail trade also provide substantial employment. The second chart presents the same information in a pie chart format. The third chart displays the general occupations of persons employed in Abingdon. Most persons are employed in managerial, business, science, and arts occupations.









### Economic Development 2007

Abingdon's existing business and economic development efforts focus on promoting tourism and revitalizing the town's commercial corridors and historic downtown. Both public and private interests work as partners to enhance tourism opportunities and improve the historic Main Street and entrance corridors.

Abingdon was named first place national winner of the "American Dream Town" competition in 2006. The designation was bestowed on the town by the American Dream Town, USA which is dedicated to inspiring Americans to celebrate their heritage, take pride in neighborhoods, and promote tourism. This designation is very prestigious and provides outstanding marketing opportunities for the town to attract visitors from all over the world.

### Tourism

The historical and cultural attractions in Abingdon have contributed to considerable growth of tourism in recent years. Abingdon is located on The Crooked Road, Virginia's heritage music trail and is associated with the 'Round the Mountain initiative to promote the local crafts of Southwest Virginia. To foster tourism, the town established the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau in 1989. Its mission is to encourage travel and tourism development and provide the technical assistance and services needed to expand the industry.

The bureau presently operates the state certified Abingdon Visitors Center located in the historic Hassinger House at 335 Cummings Street. In 2013, the center was staffed by a Director of Tourism, four full-time, and four part-time personnel. Since its founding a decade ago, visitation and tourism inquiries received by the bureau have multiplied many times over, with impressive increases occurring in the mid-1990s. Visitation to the center has more than doubled over the years, rising from about 5,000 visits annually in the 1990s to over 13,000 as of May 2007.

In addition to operation of the Visitors Center, the bureau is responsible for marketing Abingdon as a visitor destination through advertising and tradeshow. The bureau prepares brochures, promotional items and activities, and provides information to the public. The bureau also promotes the town to tour operators interested in bringing groups to Abingdon, as well as to meeting planners interested in holding conventions and meetings in the town. The Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau coordinates tourism information and provides services to visitors related to special events and tourist attractions. In 2007, tourism generated over \$46.6 million in gross receivables revenue to businesses in town<sup>3</sup>. This spending generated over \$2.25 million in meals and lodging tax receipts to the town, much of which was reinvested into the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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<sup>3</sup> Abingdon Visitors and Convention Bureau. Gross receivables for taxes from meals and lodging from July 2006 to May 2007. Gross receivables from July 2005 to June 2006 were \$46.1 million.



In addition to tax receipts, travel-generated payroll and jobs add substantially to the local economy. Based on data collected by the Virginia Tourism Corporation in 2011, Washington County (including Abingdon) generated \$19.5 million in travel payroll and 1,127 jobs. The Abingdon area presently offers numerous lodging establishments ranging from grand hotels to bed and breakfasts. Over 500 rooms or suites are available at these facilities. There are currently eleven hotel/motel establishments in the area; with half in the budget/economy class and remainder offering mid-price to upscale accommodations. The Abingdon area also offers more than 40 restaurants and over 100 retailers and shops which cater to tourists.

The Abingdon/Washington County area has long recognized the significance of tourism and has enjoyed considerable success in securing a major portion of the region's tourist trade. The establishment of the Abingdon Visitors Center, nearly a decade ago, has provided local assistance and services necessary for growth of the industry. World renowned facilities such as the Barter Theatre (the State Theatre of Virginia) and Martha Washington Inn have continued to strengthen the area as a destination for tourism. Other attractions include the Creeper Trail, Abingdon Train Depot, the Arts Depot, William King Regional Arts Center, and many historic properties. A new Southwest Virginia Artisan Center is planned in Abingdon on the campus of the Virginia Highlands Community College. Abingdon was chosen, in 2005, as the location for this center for the display of arts and crafts from the area. This Artisan Center will also act as a regional visitor center, representing Southwest Virginia.



Source: VHCC News, Oct. 2005

## Music

Richard Florida, in his highly influential book, The Rise of the Creative Class, comments on the aspects of a community that make it appealing to creative people. Florida notes that: "Places are valued for authenticity and uniqueness...Authenticity comes from several aspects of a community's historic buildings, established neighborhoods, a unique music scene or specific cultural attribute. Music is a key part of what makes a place authentic. Finding ways to support a local music scene can be just as important as investing in high tech business." Abingdon should pursue a goal of supporting a diverse mix of music. Locations such as the Farmers Market and Community Pavilion and the pavilion at Main Street Park already exist to provide venues for such events. Abingdon's location along The Crooked Road offers more support in this goal. With The Crooked Road offices located in Abingdon, the town should work closely with this initiative to support forms of traditional acoustic music in the community. Tourism staff should use this resource to increase visitation and increase the musical life of our community.



## **Farm Fresh**

In 1798, the County Court of Washington County directed that a market house be built on the courthouse lot. Tuesdays and Saturdays were the regular market days, as they are now. In 2005, the town, with financial assistance from Washington County and the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Program, began planning a new market facility, to be located on Remsburg Drive. The new Farmers Market is a key structure in increasing the level of activity in the core downtown area. The market and Abingdon's locally owned restaurants offer an opportunity to attract visitors and create a new experience for Abingdon. The new facility will allow for more flexible market hours and, therefore, more access to farm fresh products, creating a more health conscious community. Virginia's Main Street Program's 2005 annual report commented on communities that have become destinations for chic dining and farm-fresh products. Locally-owned restaurants offering organic and local farm products such as cheese, eggs, meat and home baked goods would complement the success of the farmers market. Locally owned restaurants, using locally grown produce offer unique and original experiences.

## **Major Cultural Events & Festivals**

Abingdon hosts several major festivals throughout the year. The largest of these is the Virginia Highlands Festival, which marked its 50th anniversary in 1998. Other popular festivals held in and around Abingdon include the Virginia Highlands Festival, Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration, Garden Tour of homes, Downtown Christmas Celebration, Summer Concert Series, Plumb Alley Day, the Washington County Fair & Burley Tobacco Festival, and numerous other holiday and seasonal celebrations. The major festivals of the area are profiled briefly below.

**The Virginia Highlands Festival was first organized by Robert Porterfield, founder of the Barter Theatre, to showcase the area's cultural heritage. The festival has grown to a regional festival for all of Southwest Virginia, celebrating the arts, crafts, and performing arts of the region. Today, the Highlands Festival attracts more than 200,000 people during its 16-day celebration in early August. The festival is now billed as one of the top 100 tourist events in North America and one of the top 20 in the Southeast. Activities and displays during the festival include arts, crafts, musical performances, an antique flea market and car show, tours of historic homes, theatre productions and more. Most activities are staged in the historic district including the Juried Craft Show at Barter Green. Other festival activities are held at Virginia Highlands Community College. In 2004, the economic impact of the festival to Abingdon and the region was estimated to be \$75 million.**

**Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration is held annually in September to recreate the area soldiers' march to Kings Mountain to fight in the Revolutionary War, over two hundred years ago. There are four days of re-enactments, including exhibitions on soldier life and how to make salt, wheels and pottery.**





The Downtown Christmas Celebration is conducted annually by the Hometown Merchants Association to celebrate the Christmas season.

Plumb Alley Day is another increasingly popular celebration centered in downtown Abingdon. Founded in 1982, this community event stretches along the quaint alley between Main and Valley Street. Activities vary from year to year, but generally include a parade, musical entertainment, food and craft vendors, and activities geared specially to children. The festival is a major fundraiser for the Kiwanis Club of Abingdon, with proceeds supporting local charities and non-profit organizations. Plumb Alley Day is traditionally held on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.



The Washington County Fair is held every September at the county fairgrounds just west of Abingdon. The festival features daily exhibits of farm equipment, tobacco, livestock and other agricultural commodities. Live entertainment is scheduled throughout the week, including concerts, talent shows, beauty pageants and a parade. Convention and Tourism Facilities

Abingdon offers a number of small to medium-sized conference and meeting facilities. The newest, state-of-the-art facilities are located at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center; they include a 13,000-square foot hall for tradeshow and an executive conference room that



seats 100 persons. The Dickenson Conference Center, located at the Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center northeast of Abingdon, offers modern, spacious meeting rooms and flex-space facilities for up to 220 people. The Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, located in the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park, provides meeting space in a high tech atmosphere. A variety of other meeting, banquet and entertainment facilities are found at the Martha Washington Inn, Coomes Recreation Center, and area motels.

### **Commercial Districts**

Abingdon exhibits several distinct business districts: East and West Main Streets, Courthouse Hill and historic Downtown Abingdon. Additional business areas are located at the town's gateway entrance corridors at Porterfield Highway, and I-81 Exits 19, 17 and 14. The town prides itself on its unique, niche businesses and its orientation to arts and entertainment.

Courthouse Hill and Downtown Abingdon contain much of the town's impressive architecture and historic buildings. Courthouse Hill contains the historic Washington County Courthouse and most of the oldest structures and early office buildings. Washington County Treasurer's and Commissioner of the Revenue Offices and Courts, attorney offices and the Johnston Memorial Hospital greatly influence business activities and development patterns in this area.



The central business district, or historic Downtown Abingdon, extends generally from Pecan Street (east) to Palmer Street (west). Downtown Abingdon was designated as an official Virginia Main Street community in 2007. This designation provides technical expertise and programs for businesses in the areas of economic restructuring, marketing/promotion, organization management, and architectural design assistance. Based on the success of this program in other communities, historic Main Street should see positive revitalization progress in the near future. A key element of successful revitalization to create a vibrant downtown will be expanded mixed-use development of both commercial and residential uses in buildings. Improving the land use mixture will enhance activities and hours of operation.

The commercial corridors leading into town offer a variety of business services for residents and visitors; however, the corridors also are challenges in terms of visual attractiveness, signage, and coordinated development. East and West Main Street reflect early development patterns of U.S. Route 11, which once served as the major transportation corridor for east-west traffic prior to the development of I-81. Exits 19, 17, and 14 reflect different business services and patterns of development, mostly those oriented to the interstate traveler. All of these entrance corridors need improvement to better coordinate access and enhance signage. These areas serve as a first impression for visitors; it is essential that they are welcoming, distinctive, and representative of the community's identity.





## Business and Technology Parks, Industry

The Stone Mill Business and Technology Park is located west of downtown in close proximity to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center near I-81, Exit 14. The park consists of approximately 75 acres and is established as a planned business and technology park with design covenants and common amenities, including a boulevard entrance and a trail system. The Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator was constructed in Stone Mill in 2003. [Southwest Virginia School](#) [Southwest Virginia School](#) [Southwest Virginia School](#) [Southwest Virginia School](#)



Other industrial areas are located adjacent to the railroad, south of Main Street. These areas are scattered through town and may be opportunities for improvement and/or redevelopment, to better serve the town with mixed-use development. The town should explore allowing professional offices, specialty retail shops and restaurants in the existing M-1 Limited Industrial District, to gradually phase these districts into future business and technology districts.



*Rendering of Village Center in Stone Mill Business and Technology Park*



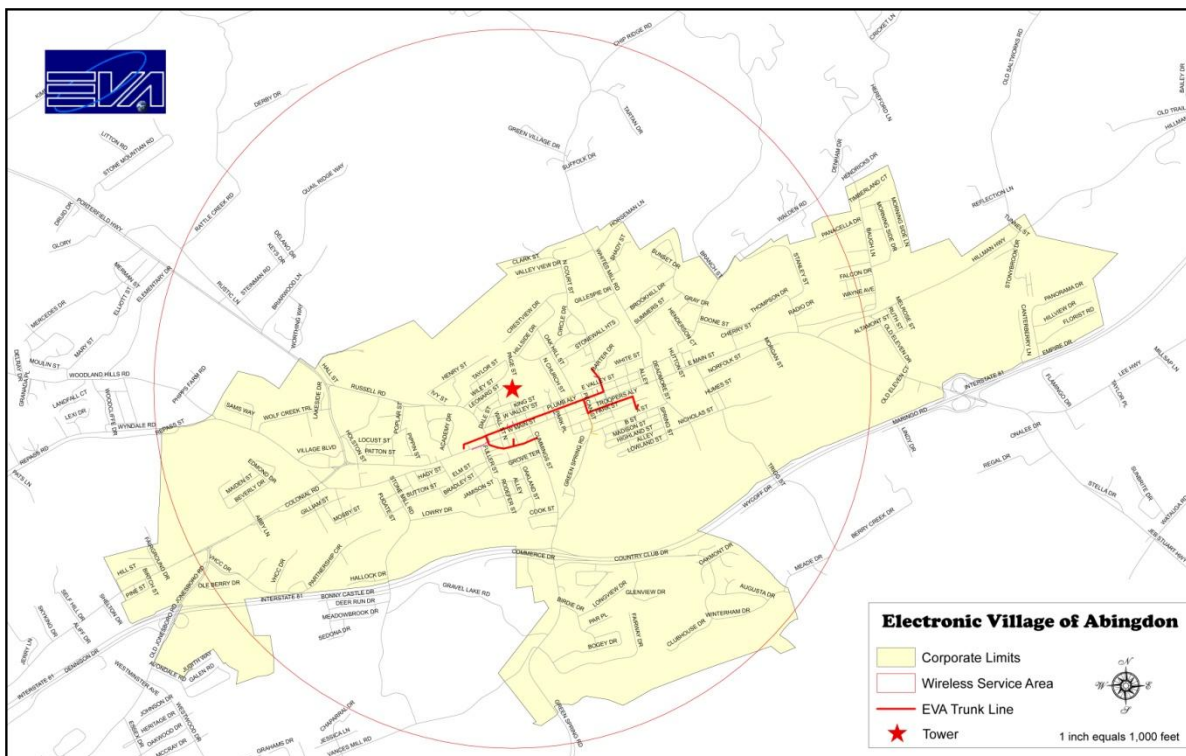


## Telecommunications Network

In 1996, the Town of Abingdon established a telecommunications, fiber optic network, known as the Electronic Village of Abingdon. The mission of EVA is to use electronic technologies to improve the quality of life within Abingdon and Washington County. Currently, the EVA fiber optic backbone runs from the G.M. Newman Police Building, down Plumb Alley to the Town Municipal Building and then on to the Embarq building at the corner of Court and east Valley Street, then north to KVAT/Food City Headquarters where it terminates. The eastern most terminus is the Abingdon Volunteer Fire Department, at the corner of Tanner and Park Streets and the Abingdon Convention and Visitor's Bureau makes the southern most point, located on Cummings Street.

In 2007, the town purchased four communications towers that will enable the town to create a wireless service, off the existing fiber lines. This will allow broadband access to anyone with a wireless network card in his or her computer. The first tower is located on Leonard Street, atop Taylor's Hill, adjacent to the Washington County Service Authority Water Tanks. This tower will be the most elevated in the town and provide a signal over more than 2/3 of the town. The wireless service provided by EVA will create a point-to-point system. A mesh, utilizing three frequency bands is being developed. One of these bands will be used by the general public; the other will create a secure communications line for emergency services. The town will pursue grants to build its Electronic Village throughout town, with hopes of installing fiber the length of Main Street.

After receiving the "American Dream Town" designation in 2006, the Abingdon Town Council





directed that the town's website ([www.abingdon-va.gov](http://www.abingdon-va.gov)) be updated, as this is the first impression visitors may have of the town. The site was updated and each department met with the chosen developer to create a more aesthetically appealing site with useful information for visitors and residents alike. At the adoption of this plan, the website is still in need of updating to create a more user friendly site. A web designer should be hired by the town to ensure updated information, on a daily basis and to create a user friendly site for the procurement of document, permits and news, pertinent to the town government.

In 2007, Abingdon implemented the "Ask Abingdon" program, a technology initiative to assist citizens with public service issues and basic information about town departments, services, and operations. The service is available by touchtone phone or through the town's website. Over fifteen categories of public service issues and administrative processes can be accessed through a series of information codes. Detailed information and contacts are available to assist citizens in conducting business. Users can be faxed or emailed information that they request, 24-hour per day, 7-days a week.:

a citizen must create an user account using this link: <https://abingdon.smartmsg.com/>

### Opportunities and Challenges for Economic Development 2027

Abingdon desires to promote tourism and expand niche business markets that complement the community's heritage and artisan character. Continued growth is expected for tourism at both a local and regional level. A key issue will be the availability of employees to serve the hospitality industry and other tourism-related sectors. Other future challenges include improving year-round visitation, particularly during the winter off-season; and helping small retailers participate more fully in the area's tourism trade.

Discussions with citizens and leaders of Abingdon during development of this plan indicated that the future economic development efforts in Abingdon should capitalize on the strengths of the community as a cultural and artisan center, as well as its uniqueness for specialty retail and entertainment. The following goal summarizes the desired future direction of economic development in the community:

**Economic Development:** *Abingdon will be recognized as the regional center for health, professional and business operations and will be known as the center for tourism, arts and culture in Southwest Virginia that celebrates the unique regional heritage, exhibits a vibrant, revitalized downtown, and maintains a diverse economy that successfully sustains the town and the region.*

Consequently, to achieve this goal, special emphasis must be placed on protecting historic buildings, preserving open space and the environment, and revitalizing downtown, Courthouse



Hill, and the entrance corridors. As an initial step in that direction, special attention was devoted during the development of this comprehensive plan to looking at underutilized buildings and areas that could be redeveloped for alternative land uses. Specifically, (1) gateway entrances were studied for landscaping and corridor enhancements; (2) East and West Main Street were studied for business revitalization and reinvestment; (3) Main Street adjacent to Depot Square was considered for new in-fill development; and (4) an underutilized shopping center at Exit 17 was studied for redevelopment. All of these design initiatives cumulated in some exciting reinvestment and future economic development opportunities for Abingdon which are discussed in greater detail in the Special Action Projects for Economic Development section of this planning element.

Because of downtown Abingdon's unique amenities, it is considered a viable location for additional convention and conference space. Abingdon offers a unique setting for groups looking for alternatives to major urban areas or suburban-type facilities. As the local convention market continues to grow, Abingdon will eventually need facilities to support larger trade shows of up to 50,000 square feet and groups of 500-1000. Some downtown possibilities include expansion of the Martha Washington Inn or new multi-use facilities developed by the Barter Green Partnership. In addition, the new Southwest Virginia Artisan Center may include larger facilities that can accommodate groups.

Other local tourism initiatives under consideration for the future include promoting more year-round events and festivals, developing a hospitality curriculum at the Virginia Highlands Community College, and a downtown kiosk for tourists and pedestrians.

### Planning and Development Policies for Economic Development 2027

To achieve the desired vision for economic development in the future, the following policies are established:

Planning and Development Policies for Economic Development	
ED 1	<p><u>Economic Focus on Arts, Culture and Entertainment:</u> Abingdon serves as the arts and cultural center of Southwest Virginia. New commercial development and economic investment should support this economic focus, strengthen existing businesses, complement the overall economy, and foster expansion of businesses. Special emphasis should be placed on encouraging business services and products that are unique to and representative of the region.</p>
ED 2	<p><u>Expanded Opportunities for Technology:</u> The Electronic Village of Abingdon (EVA) provides the technological foundation for fiber communication opportunities for residents, businesses, and new economic development initiatives. Technology services should be consistently maintained, expanded, and upgraded to meet the changing economic and service needs of the community.</p>



**ED 3** Tourism: As the arts and cultural center of Southwest Virginia, tourism is a fundamental economic employer and business for the town and the region.

Vibrant, Revitalized Downtown: The central business districts along East and West  
**ED 4** Main Street are essential to the future economic vitality of Abingdon. These areas should be revitalized, enhanced and protected.



**ED 5** Corridor Entrances: The approach corridors into Abingdon are community gateways that showcase the town and businesses. They attract tourists, new businesses, and new residents. These entrance corridors should be enhanced and protected through design regulation to encourage consistent and sensitive treatment of architectural details, site development, signage, and landscaping.

**ED 6** Continuing Education Opportunities: The growth and nurturing of the region's intellectual capital is fundamental to the economic success of Abingdon. Professional training and educational opportunities for persons of all ages and levels should be easily accessible and available to residents.

### Action Strategies for Economic Development 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to implement the future vision and policies for economic development in Abingdon:

**ED 1** Economic Focus on Arts, Culture and Entertainment: Abingdon serves as the arts and culture capital of Southwest Virginia. New commercial development and economic investment should support this economic focus, strengthen existing businesses, complement the overall economy, and foster expansion of businesses. Special emphasis should be placed on encouraging business services and products that are unique to and representative of the region.

Develop a consistent official "brand" and logo for Abingdon and use it in all marketing materials for the town and businesses.

Relocate the "All American Town" sign to a more appropriate location such as in the improved gateway corridors. Promote and market the designation to residents and visitors by including in marketing materials, inclusion on the town's web page, adding additional signs, etc.

Work with cultural and tourism organizations to coordinate and promote tourism, special events, cultural attractions, and community business services (downtown and corridors). Provide leadership in coordinating work efforts and maintaining communication among organizations.

**ing** Work with the county to keep county offices and facilities in Abingdon.

Work with the hospital to keep major medical facilities in Abingdon.

Actively promote Abingdon as the regional center for health care, professional services, and county services. Work with regional organizations and officials to retain and expand regional/corporate headquarters in Abingdon.

Work with Washington County and the Public Library Board to retain and expand the main library in Abingdon

Work with Washington County and the Virginia Highlands Airport Authority to market the airport as a quality general aviation facility for business.

Develop a docent program to train volunteers to staff historic facilities.

Explore creating the Office of Historic.



- ED 2** Expanded Opportunities for Technology: The Electronic Village of Abingdon (EVA) provides the technological foundation for fiber communication opportunities for residents, businesses, and new economic development initiatives. Technology services should be consistently maintained, expanded, and upgraded to meet the changing economic and service needs of the community.

**Expand the EVA technology backbone throughout Abingdon and provide “wireless” access in key public facilities. Pursue grants, as appropriate to expand facilities.**

**Implement an emergency siren system utilizing the Mesh network and existing sirens.**

- ED 3** Tourism: As the arts and cultural center of Southwest Virginia, tourism is a fundamental economic employer and business for the town and the region.

**Encourage and promote sustainable business opportunities in Abingdon. Promote heritage tourism and eco-tourism, small-scale businesses offering specialty products/services, and artisan crafts of Southwest Virginia.**

**Encourage and actively recruit the development of convention/conference facilities in Abingdon through public-private partnerships and/or coordination with private businesses specializing in such facilities.**

**Expand the available conference and meeting facilities in Abingdon.**

**Construct a kiosk in downtown for visitors and pedestrians.**

**Explore the relocation of the Convention and Visitors Bureau to a more accessible downtown location, such as the Passenger Rail Station, now occupied by the Historical Society of Washington County to allow for improved tour bus staging and Amtrak station potential.**

- ED 4** Vibrant, Revitalized Downtown: The central business districts along East and West Main Street are essential to the future economic vitality of Abingdon. These areas should be revitalized, enhanced and protected.

**Pursue official “Main Street” status for downtown and implement the four-point approach for successful revitalization: organization, economic restructuring, design education/assistance, and marketing/promotion. Hire a Main Street Coordinator to manage the program, events, and improve communication among businesses.**

**Promote Abingdon as the regional center for governmental services, health care and professional services. Maintain regular communication with county, state, and federal agencies and private businesses to proactively address issues, ensure successful business, and encourage retention of these employers and service providers.**





Work proactively with Washington County regarding economic development initiatives. Actively participate in regular meetings with regional economic development agencies and strengthen Abingdon's role as a business center.

Expand farmers' market activities and facilities in downtown. Encourage more events in the farmers' market.

Work with Appalachian Sustainable Development to steadily increase the market days and variety of food items offered for sale and increase the number of locally owned restaurants that use locally grown produce.

Utilize the Infill and Mixed-use Development Feasibility Survey (ASRL-ETSU Report) and the subsequent Hill Studio and Arnett Muldrow Reports to apply for Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Community Block Grants.

**ED 5** Corridor Entrances: The approach corridors into Abingdon are community gateways that showcase the town and businesses. They attract tourists, new businesses, and new residents. These entrance corridors should be enhanced and protected through design regulation to encourage consistent and sensitive treatment of architectural details, site development, signage, and landscaping.

Pursue revitalization/redevelopment of underutilized business properties (i.e. properties on Cummings, West Main, Elm, etc.)

Implement financial incentives to encourage reinvestment in and rehabilitation of existing buildings, especially in historic areas and entrance corridors. Consider such measures as tax abatement incentives, façade grants, and tax service districts.

**ED 6** Continuing Education Opportunities: The growth and nurturing of the region's intellectual capital is fundamental to the economic success of Abingdon. Professional training and educational opportunities for persons of all ages and levels should be easily accessible and available to residents.

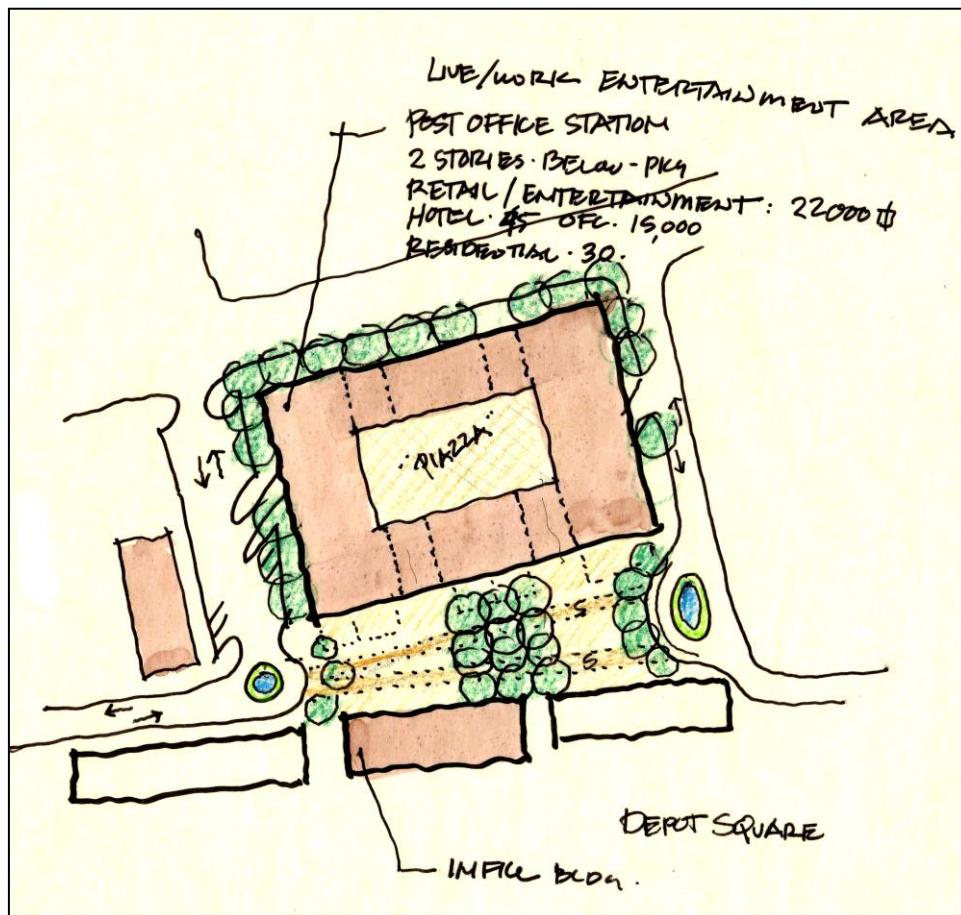
Promote a continuous learning environment for residents of Abingdon. Encourage and enable participation in educational programs through marketing and coordination of programming with local and regional educational institutions and organizations.

Partner with Virginia Highlands Community College to establish a hospitality curriculum at the college to foster tourism and employee training.



### Special Action Projects: Economic Development

During development of the comprehensive plan, several revitalization and redevelopment initiatives were studied to enhance the economy of Abingdon and provide opportunities for reinvestment and/or new development. Many of the initiatives serve as models for many similar scenarios along major business corridors. These initiatives include: (1) revitalization of historic downtown through a new infill building on Main Street at Depot Square; (2) revitalization of West Main Street through corridor improvements and new in-fill development; and (3) redevelopment of an underutilized shopping center on Cummings Street at I-81, Exit 17.



### Proposed New Development Concept for former Belmont Hotel site on Main Street

During discussions on the Comprehensive Plan, citizens expressed fond memories of the historic Belmont Hotel in downtown and the businesses and services available there. Presently, the area contains a large surface parking lot and the post office. Improvements are now underway for Depot Square which will enhance the area.

To complement Depot Square and Main Street in the future, a new building on Main Street is shown in the above sketch. This in-fill development can provide optimal use of valuable land in downtown and add commercial space for retail, entertainment, a hotel, residential, downtown branch post office, and a parking garage. Also shown are pedestrian plazas and a new in-fill building or structure between the depot buildings for expanded outdoor activities and festivals. An important component of the development would be retaining a branch post office in downtown as a civic anchor. Post office distribution facilities could be moved to an accommodating site, thus creating a win-win project for downtown.







*West Main Street entrance corridor before and after recommended improvements that include landscaping, coordinated entrances and parking areas, building façade improvements, new infill development and coordinated signage.*





## Arts, Culture and History

The arts, culture and history of Abingdon have been the traditional foundation for the growth and development of the community. These special attributes contribute greatly to the town's quality of life and to its social and economic fabric. It comes as no surprise that these elements are consistently rated by residents and visitors as the most important assets to be protected and enhanced for the future well-being of the town and the region. Consequently, this comprehensive plan focuses on building on the arts and culture of Abingdon in order to achieve a creative and sustainable future.

### History of Abingdon

The Town of Abingdon is rich in history and tradition. Because of its location on the Great Valley Road leading from the Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley to the Cumberland Gap, it was an area of early interest and settlement. Early surveyors explored the area in the mid-1700s. These included Dr. Thomas Walker, a physician and early explorer/surveyor of southwestern Virginia who first discovered the Cumberland Gap in 1750; and later Daniel Boone, noted pioneer and explorer of the American frontier who blazed the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap in 1775.

Abingdon was part of a 6,780 acre tract of land granted by King George II to Dr. Thomas Walker in 1752. The town was initially known as Wolf Hills, after an encounter by Daniel Boone with wolves while in the area. Later, the community was known as Black's Fort (1774) in recognition of a fort constructed by Joseph Black for Indian protection. In 1776, the town was recognized as the county seat of Washington County when the first court met at Black's Fort. In 1778, the town was incorporated as Abingdon.



There are several versions of how the name, Abingdon, was derived. Tradition holds that Abingdon is named in honor of Martha Washington in recognition of her home parish where she worshipped as a girl, near Mount Vernon; however, other historical theories indicate that the town was named in honor of Lord Abingdon, a young English nobleman who was a close acquaintance of General William Campbell, a commander of the King's Mountain Men during the important Battle of King's Mountain in the Revolutionary War. Still another version is that Abingdon's name is associated with Daniel Boone's first residence in America - Abington, Pennsylvania, whose founders hailed from Berkshire, England, specifically the market town of Abingdon. Regardless of the origin of its name, the town is associated with early, well known persons who have contributed immensely to the region and the nation.

Abingdon prospered in the 1800s because of its location on the Great Valley Road, and its location on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (later operated by the Norfolk & Western





Railway and Norfolk Southern Railroad). According to the National Register Nomination form submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources<sup>4</sup>, Abingdon was described in 1845 as a town of over 1,000 persons built on an elevation with many brick buildings and a macadamized principal street, surrounded by a fertile, settled, agricultural county. Parts of the town were burned during the Civil War. Today, Abingdon is noted for its 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century dwellings, churches, and commercial buildings which include such architectural styles as Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, and Tudor Revival. In addition to historic districts in town, there are several individually significant properties, including Sinking Spring Cemetery (1776), General Francis Preston Home/Martha Washington Inn (1832) William King School (1913), Washington County Courthouse (1869), and numerous others.



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<sup>4</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources. National Register of Historic Places. Abingdon Historic District. 1969.





### Arts, Culture and History 2007

Abingdon is considered the cultural and historic center of southwest Virginia. Since the early 1900s, the town has placed a tremendous emphasis on the arts and historic preservation. After the Barter Theatre was established in 1932 and the Martha Washington Inn was opened as a hotel in 1935, Abingdon became more widely appreciated for its history, architecture and art. In 1957, significant historic properties were inventoried by the University of Virginia. In 1971, the town was one of the first communities in Virginia to establish an architectural review board and adopt an historic preservation ordinance. At present, it is a certified local government recognized by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Abingdon also has traditionally been recognized for its emphasis on education. Originally the home of the Abingdon Male Academy (1803), Martha Washington College (1860), and Stonewall Jackson Female Institute/Stonewall Jackson College (1869), the town now includes the Virginia Highlands Community College, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, and has close ties to nearby Emory and Henry College.

### Abingdon Historic District and Significant Historic Properties

The Abingdon Historic District lies in the heart of town. The district was initially placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and expanded in 1986. The district is noteworthy because of its architectural character and its role in the growth and development of the community. The district contains over 250 frame and brick buildings that date from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that include a diversity of architectural styles. The oldest building in Abingdon is the Tavern (222 East Main Street) circa 1779 which was an early tavern and inn for stage coach travelers.

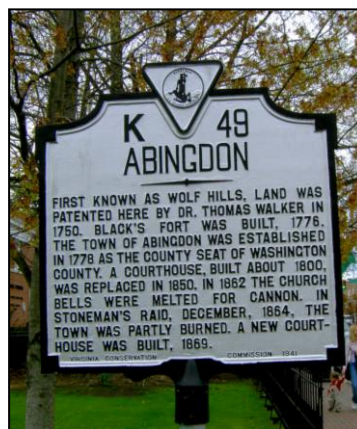




In addition to the Abingdon Historic District, there are two additional properties that are currently listed on the National Register and the Virginia Landmarks Register. These properties are the Abingdon Bank on East Main Street, and Mont Calm near Green Spring Road.

In 1998, a survey and inventory of historic properties and areas was conducted. Approximately 325 properties in Abingdon were surveyed and documented as contributing properties. According to the 1998 *Abingdon Historic Preservation Plan*<sup>5</sup>, there are still pre-1950 architectural resources that need to be surveyed. In addition, the survey identified several areas and individual properties that may be eligible for the National Register/Virginia Landmarks Register. Areas that are considered potentially eligible as National Register Historic Districts include: Depot Square, Stonewall Heights, and Stonewall Jackson College. Properties that may be individually eligible include: Retirement (Craig, 1808), Grafton (White, 1874), Oakland (Branch/Cosby, 1835), Ackland (Greenway, 1859), Clapp House (1828), and Lustron House (1950).

A map of the Abingdon Historic District and other important historic properties is presented on the following page.



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<sup>5</sup> Thomas and Associates Preservation Planners. *Abingdon Historic Preservation Plan*. December, 1998.



## **Map 8    Historic Districts and Sites**





## William King Regional Arts Center

William King Regional Arts Center is located on 25 acres west of downtown Abingdon. The center is located in the historic 1913 William King High School which has been adapted for the facility. The center receives broad funding support at the federal, state and local levels. According to the executive director, its programming attracts approximately 60,000 participants annually. The William King Regional Arts Center operates as a high-security museum facility that is nationally accredited by the American Association of Museums. The museum is a partner of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and a member of the American Association of Museums, the Virginia Association of Museums and the Southeastern Museums Conference. The facility houses exhibitions of world cultures, regional historic heritage and contemporary art, and a niche program called the "Cultural Heritage Project" that documents over 2,000 records of material culture and crafts made in the Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee from 1780-1940. In addition, the center provides arts programming for school audiences in fourteen school districts as an alternative, innovative method of teaching art in the public schools.



In 2004, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission funded a facility master plan and schematic design to expand the center for artisan studios and classrooms. As of 2007, additional funds for design development have been received from the Appalachian Regional Commission, Washington County and Town of Abingdon.

The master plan (sometimes referred to as the Cultural Campus Expansion Project) provides for two new buildings, improved parking, realigned roads, enhanced museum entrance, amphitheater, and an outdoor sculpture garden. The center has received funding for Phase I which will include site work, improvements at Main Street, and the artisan courtyard; construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2007. Fundraising is in progress for Phase II which includes revisions to the building entrance.

A companion facility of the arts center is the Fields-Penn House (1860), located on West Main Street at Cummings Street. A property of the Town of Abingdon, the house museum features regional furnishings from the permanent collection of the William King Regional Arts Center.





## Barter Theatre

The Barter Theatre was founded in 1932 by Robert Porterfield, a young actor who returned to Southwest Virginia during the Depression. He opened the theatre in 1933, furnishing it with salvaged items from New York's Empire Theatre (1875), including a lighting system designed by Thomas Edison. The theatre got its name from the "barter system" used to pay for entertainment; actors performed in exchange for fruit, vegetables, livestock, and other agricultural products. The Barter Theatre was designated the State Theatre of Virginia in 1946. It has a long list of awards, celebrated accomplishments, and recognition by famous persons.

The building was constructed in 1831 for the Sinking Springs Presbyterian Church. The Town of Abingdon owns the building and used it as a town hall, jail and fire hall before it was used for the theatre.



The Barter Campus extends across Main Street to the former grounds of the former Jackson Female Institute / Stonewall Jackson College. The Barter Green, or Stonewall Jackson Square, is used for outdoor exhibitions. A second venue located here, Barter Stage II, was renovated in 1961 and contains approximately 140 seats. The original building was built in 1831 as a Methodist Protestant Church; it was also used at one point by Martha Washington College.

## Martha Washington College/Martha Washington Inn

The Martha Washington Inn was built in 1832 as the private residence of General Francis Preston and Sarah Buchanan Preston. In 1860, the house was converted to a school for young women, Martha Washington College, which operated until 1926. It was during this period that the local residents lovingly referred to the building as "the Martha".



In 1935, the building was opened as a hotel. It is said that many famous guests have stayed there, including Eleanor Roosevelt, President Harry Truman, Lady Bird Johnston, Jimmy Carter, and Elizabeth Taylor. Today, the inn is operated as a four-diamond hotel consisting of 62 guestrooms, banquet and meeting rooms, restaurant, deli, pool and spa.







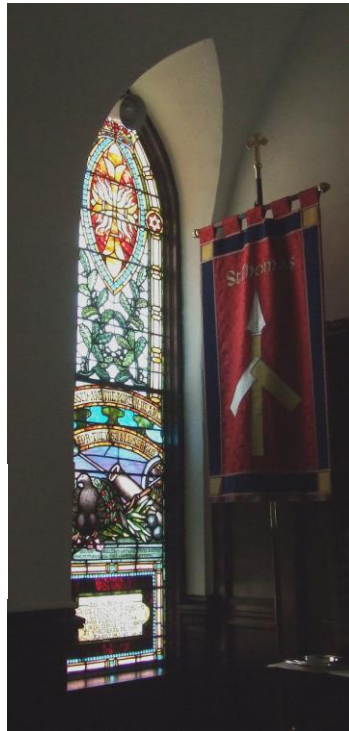
## **Public Art**

In addition to the impressive architecture, performing arts, and cultural heritage, Abingdon offers outstanding examples of public art. There are numerous statues and sculptures located throughout town, in well-landscaped plazas and courtyards. These include the bronze Confederate Soldier at the Courthouse, the Yellow Ribbon Sculpture in Veterans Memorial Park, and other sculptures on the Barter Green and at the William King Regional Arts Center sculpture garden. There are also historic interiors that display significant works of art. Some of the most spectacular ones are the Tiffany stained-glass window in the historic Washington County Courthouse, the interior of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which was modeled after a 14<sup>th</sup> Century monastery, the altar rail at St. John's Lutheran Church, forged by a local blacksmith, and gravestones at Sinking Springs Cemetery to name a few.



*Yellow Ribbon Sculpture*

*Barter Green Sculpture*



*Images from St. Thomas Episcopal Church*



*War Sculptures and Art at Court House*







## Opportunities and Challenges for Arts, Culture and History 2027

The arts, history, culture and special community ambiance of Abingdon offer a unique niche for tourism, specialty economic development, and the ability to nurture a special quality of life for residents. The future success of additional arts, culture and historical initiatives will require continued protection of these assets, public education regarding their value, and excellent communication with various organizations.

Recent designation of downtown Abingdon as an official Main Street Community should help revitalize downtown and improve its economy and physical appearance. This will require a committed partnership effort between Main Street merchants, the Main Street coordinator, and town officials. Increased tourism and business investment will require extended hours of operation, expanded services, and additional opportunities for downtown living to create a vibrant, active district.

During public workshops on this comprehensive plan, citizens frequently discussed the need to coordinate events, activities, and attractions. Citizens recommended many options including adding an information kiosk downtown, having an arts coordinator, hosting regular meetings of organizations, and maintaining a public calendar of events and exhibits.

## Planning/Development Policies for Arts, Culture and History 2027

To achieve the desired vision for arts, culture and history in the future, the following policies are established:

### Planning and Development Policies for Arts, Culture and History

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>ACH 1</b> | <u>Arts, Culture and History as a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy:</u> Abingdon's special artisan and cultural qualities represent an economic and market niche for the community that should be supported, expanded upon, and protected.   |
| <b>ACH 2</b> | <u>Marketing and Celebration of Arts, Culture and History:</u> Community revitalization efforts and the economic success of downtown rely on increased marketing, events, and celebrations of the town's arts, culture and history.   |
| <b>ACH 3</b> | <u>Protection of Resources and Unique Features:</u> Abingdon's historical and cultural resources must be protected and preserved for the benefit of future generations and for the town's economic sustainability. Historic districts should be expanded to encourage investment incentives and to encourage appropriate rehabilitation and preservation methods. |
| <b>ACH 4</b> | <u>Public Art as an Asset for Tourism:</u> The public art in Abingdon is a valued and contributing element of Abingdon's artisan culture and heritage. It is a community asset that should be recognized, promoted, and supported by public and private entities for the benefit of residents and visitors.   |



### Action Strategies for Arts, Culture and History

The following action strategies are recommended to implement the future vision and policies for arts, culture, and history in Abingdon:

#### ACH 1

Arts, Culture and History as a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy: Abingdon's special artisan and cultural qualities represent an economic and market niche for the community that should be supported, expanded upon, and protected.

**Develop an inventory of arts and culture agencies, programs, offerings, and coordinate a calendar of events. Establish lines of communication among agencies and meet regularly to coordinate efforts and activities. Develop an Arts Master Plan that can be updated and integrated into the town's comprehensive plan.**

**Set aside a budget for public art and cultural enhancements (i.e. annual town budget line item, one percent construction cost for new public buildings allocated to art, endangered historic properties fund, etc.)**

**Work with Main Street businesses, galleries, and museums to expand hours of operation and coordinate special evening events.**

**Develop Depot Square area as an arts and entertainment district.**

**Develop a walking tour and map to showcase significant public art in Abingdon.**

**Install an information kiosk in downtown or other special public place.**

**Consider appointing an arts coordinator to work with all arts, historic, and cultural organizations to coordinate programs, events, and economic initiatives related to enhancing Abingdon's art, history and culture.**

**Pursue participating in the national Sister Cities Program and establishing a formal partnership with Abingdon, UK or other town.**

#### ACH 2

Marketing and Celebration of Arts, Culture and History: Community revitalization efforts and the economic success of downtown rely on increased marketing, events, and celebrations of the town's arts, culture and history.

**Schedule more events and activities and expand venues. Include educational workshops that are oriented to the arts.**

**Develop a walking tour of galleries, museums, historic sites, etc. Publish map and make available to public in prominent locations and on the internet.**

**Involve youth in arts and culture organizations. Develop youth-oriented arts programs and provide opportunities for participation. Work with the schools to identify budding artisans and highlight works.**



**Establish art and music venues and events for youth.**

**ACH 3**

Protection of Resources and Unique Features: Abingdon's historical and cultural resources must be protected and preserved for the benefit of future generations and for the town's economic sustainability. Historic districts should be expanded to encourage investment incentives and to encourage appropriate rehabilitation and preservation methods.

**Expand the town's historic district to include additional areas of town. Recognize and protect other individual properties (especially those that may be eligible for the National Register) through either an overlay historic district or a special awards/plaque program.**

**Update the historic district's Design Review Guidelines to include illustrations and pictures.**

**Provide financial incentives and/or technical assistance to encourage appropriate rehabilitation of historic properties in targeted revitalization areas. Consider such methods as façade grants, tax abatement programs, and others.**

**Encourage conservation and preservation easements for significant historic properties.**

**Using historic properties owned by the town, set appropriate examples for property preservation, interpretation, and building rehabilitation.**

**Develop a list of significant archaeological resources in Abingdon and protect through public education and inclusion of resources in the town's historic district ordinance.**

**Revise the zoning ordinance to include a conservation overlay district to protect important neighborhoods or areas that contribute to Abingdon's historic and architectural qualities. This district should be less stringent than the historic district, yet address new construction, additions, and demolitions.**

**Work with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to undertake an additional historic survey in Abingdon.**





## Transportation

Abingdon has a rich history as a major transportation crossroads. In its beginnings, the community was located on the Wilderness Road, an early trail for pioneers and western settlers. Later, U. S. Route 11 (East and West Main Street) accommodated vehicular traffic, following the alignment of the Wilderness Road. Today, I-81 passes to the south of Abingdon, providing easy access for residents and visitors to much of Southwest Virginia. U. S. Route 19, Porterfield Highway serves as a major north transportation corridor to adjacent counties.

### Transportation 2007

The existing transportation network in Abingdon is depicted in the transportation map on the following page.

The *2020 Transportation Plan*<sup>6</sup> for Abingdon prepared by VDOT identifies future demands on the transportation system and recommends transportation improvements to meet the future needs. Transportation projects are categorized into three phases: Phase I – Base Year 2001 (needed immediately); Phase II - Interim Year 2010 (needed in the short-term); and Phase III - Study Year 2020 (may be needed long-term). The 2020 plan is presently being updated to 2030. Those transportation improvements with the highest priority by the town over the next ten to twenty years are depicted in the Future Transportation Map. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### Priority Transportation Improvements

Already, several transportation improvements listed in the 2020 plan have been implemented. These transportation projects include improvements to West Main Street (pavement markings, signage upgrades, and new pedestrian crosswalks in the historic district); improvements to East Main Street (widening of a portion of Hillman Highway); and drainage improvements on West Main Street (Charwood Drive to Old Reedy Creek Road). Other priority road improvement projects identified in the plan as needed immediately include:

**Connection from U.S. Route 140, Jonesboro Road, to U.S. Route 19 (Porterfield Highway) - This improvement was initially proposed in 1969. It is planned as a four-lane divided roadway to improve the north-south traffic flow to adjacent counties. This new road will improve congestion in town by reducing through traffic that currently utilizes Main Street.**

**Extension of Cook Street from Cummings Street to Lowry Drive and improvements to Lowry Drive from Stone Mill Road to Cook Street. These improvements are proposed as two-lane roads to improve access to the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park, as well as improve east-west traffic flow through town.**

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<sup>6</sup> *Abingdon 2020 Transportation Plan*. Virginia Department of Transportation, Planning Division. 2001.



## **Map 9 Transportation Network**

**Intersection improvements at: Main Street and Cummings Street; Main Street and Porterfield Highway; Porterfield Highway and Russell Road; Main Street and Jonesboro Road; Valley Street and Court Street; Main Street and Wyndale Road; and Jonesboro Road and VHCC Drive.**

### **6-Year Transportation Plan**

In addition to the twenty-year transportation plan, the six-year transportation plan provides further focus for transportation projects, especially as they relate to a locality's priorities and the transportation funds available. The VDOT *FY07 Six-Year Improvement Program for the Bristol District (2007-2012)* identifies two projects for Abingdon as top priorities – Improvements to West Main Street at Jonesboro Road and Porterfield Highway, and improvements to Exit 17 at I-81.

Of particular note is that in 2007, VDOT completed the Final Environmental Impact Study for the Virginia I-81 Corridor. The study studied transportation and environmental conditions along the interstate in Virginia and recommended improvements. Prior to VDOT undertaking this study, Abingdon and VDOT completed extensive studies of Exit 17 to resolve transportation congestion. VDOT completed design of the interchange; however, reconstruction of Exit 17 is pending final construction recommendations for the I-81 corridor. While having the improvements included in the six-year plan is considered a positive step, town officials and public works staff consider the improvements to Exit 17 a high priority and hope that the project can be implemented very soon.

### **Long-Range Transportation Improvements**

The following transportation improvements are included as Phase II recommendations in the *2020 Transportation Plan*:

**Widening Cummings Street from two lanes to four lanes from the southern corporate limit to I-81 and Exit 17 to improve interstate access;**

**Widening VHCC Drive to urban road standards (36 feet);**

**Extending Dr. French Moore, Jr. Blvd (Route 372) to Stone Mill Road and Lowry Drive to provide additional access to the Virginia Highlands Community College from both Stone Mill Road and Cummings Street;**

**Widening Wyndale Road from Main Street to the western corporate limits (20 feet to 36 feet);**

**Widening Hillman Highway to the eastern corporate limit and installing curb, gutter and sidewalks;**



## **Map 10   Future Transportation**



## Improving the intersections at West Main Street and Old Reedy Creek Road, Main Street and Colonial Road, Cummings Street and Main Street, and Cummings Street and Fairway Drive.

Many of these projects should be studied further prior to considering them for implementation, especially in light of the recommendations in this comprehensive plan for design improvements, traffic-calming, and revitalization of the Main Street corridor. In particular, widening of some of the town's primary corridors should be carefully designed to maintain community character and ensure a pedestrian-friendly environment.

### Transportation Opportunities 2027

#### Corridors and Gateways

In 2003, Abingdon adopted a Historic District Entrance Corridor Overlay District to achieve an enhanced land development pattern and retain the town's historic character. New development within entrance corridors leading to the historic district must meet design standards for landscaping, signage, architecture, lighting, and site planning and be approved by the Planning Commission. This district has been very successful in protecting existing development patterns and regulating new development in entrance corridors; however, additional design guidance and illustrations are needed to assist applicants in understanding and meeting requirements, and to ensure consistency in the review of projects.

In addition to corridor design regulations, the appearances of public right-of-ways are important in setting the standard for entrance corridor development. Because gateway corridors announce the community and make a first impression on visitors, this comprehensive planning effort included intensive study of key gateways. Detailed information on the gateways and the specific recommendations for each can be found in the *Abingdon Streets and Streetscapes Plan*, included as an appendix to the plan. Specifically, the gateways studied included:

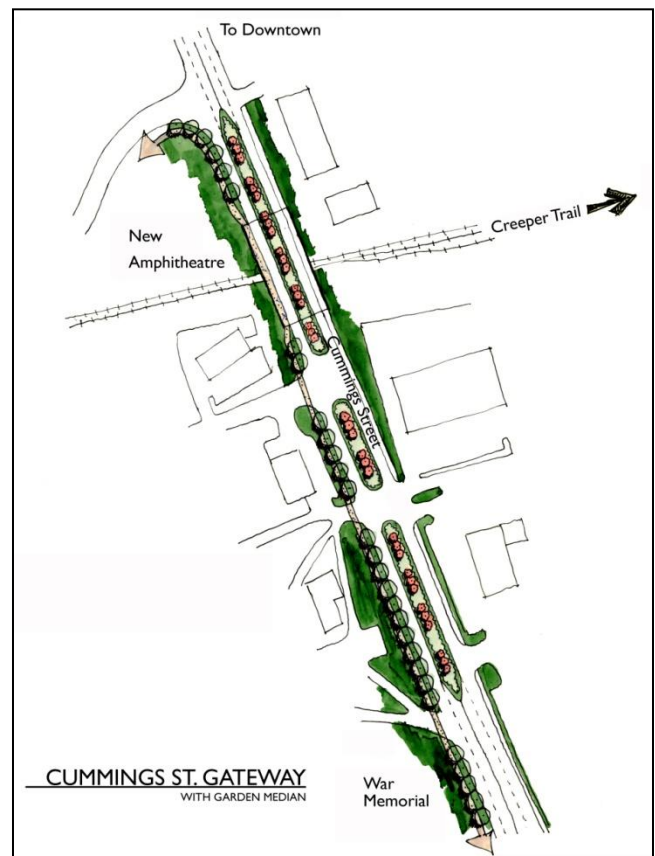
**Interstate 81, Exits 14, 17 and 19**

**Porterfield Highway**

**West Main Street**

**East Main Street**

For approach gateways from Interstate 81, recommended improvements included: (1)





implementing a four-lane boulevard with medians and aligned street entrances in lieu of the existing paved center turning lane; (2) using a 20-foot wide vegetative strip on each side of the boulevard for coordinated signage, landscaping, and pedestrian access; (3) coordinating improvements to correspond with VDOT roadway improvements; and (4) soliciting Transportation Enhancement Funds (SAFETEA-LU) to provide assistance with landscaping and combined signage.



For East and West Main Street, recommended gateway improvements included: (1) using a four-lane boulevard with medians; (2) coordinating access and entries; (3) coordinating and managing signs; (4) pursuing scenic easements at town boundaries and adding wildflowers and gateway signs; and (5) pursuing economic restructuring to enhance businesses and promote businesses using the “Main Street” approach.





## Streetscapes

As part of the comprehensive planning effort, a design palette of furnishings was developed for Abingdon that matched the diversity of street types. For downtown, streets should be pedestrian friendly with well-coordinated streetlights, benches, trash receptacles, and brick sidewalks. Additional improvements recommended for downtown include additional streetlights, and matching trash receptacles, planters, and benches.



*Photos Courtesy of Country Casual, Sourcebook 2006  
Recommended Windermere Bench, and Pyramid 22" trash receptacle*

For the gateway entry corridors which are more oriented to vehicles, a streetscape palette was selected that includes concrete sidewalks, cobra-style street lights, and matching trash receptacles and benches. Landscaping of the corridors is recommended in accordance with the gateway corridor plans.



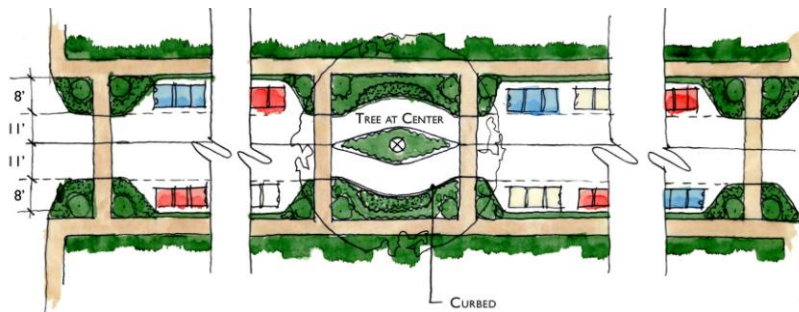
*Recommended Victor Stanley Bench R28,  
Photo Courtesy of Victor Stanley, Inc.*



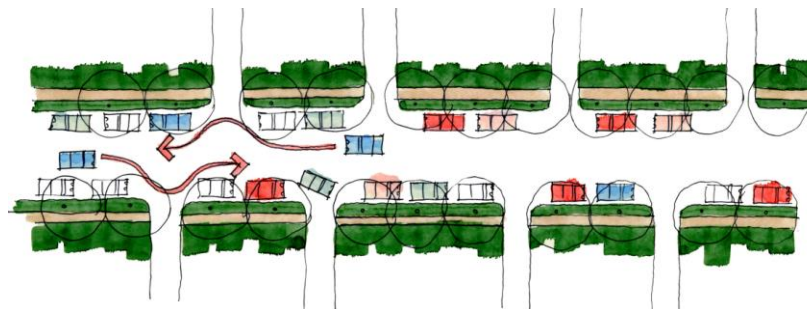


## Traffic Calming

During citizen workshops for the comprehensive plan, there was much discussion regarding the speed of traffic in downtown, and particularly, on Valley Street. The pedestrian ambience of Abingdon is considered an important asset, especially for attracting visitors. As part of the streets and streetscape planning effort, additional study was undertaken to improve pedestrian safety and calm traffic. A few of the recommendations are illustrated in the sections below; additional information is provided in the appendix as part of the Streets and Streetscapes Plan.



*Illustration of Tree Street Calming Technique - Mid-block bump-outs with tree planting in central median and parking on sides.*



*Yield Street Traffic Calming Technique – Narrow street requires traffic to yield to one another.*



## Alternative Modes of Transportation

As an alternative to traditional vehicular transportation, other modes of transportation are important to future sustainability of Abingdon. Trails, bicycle routes, and sidewalks offer great opportunities for alternative transportation. In addition, there is easy access to a community bus service, passenger rail, and to nearby airports.

In downtown and the historic district, safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities add to the economic and social success of Abingdon. Residents and tourists are able to access a variety of establishments and facilities without using a car. Additionally, local residents working in downtown can walk to work. The ability to work, live, and play in a community is truly something to celebrate and market to potential residents.

In 2002 a *Pedestrian Safety and Movement Study*<sup>7</sup> was prepared in an effort to improve pedestrian continuity, control vehicular patterns, decrease the conflicts between pedestrians and motorists, and provide alternate routes for pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The study identified a need for pedestrian safety improvements at: the Barter Theater, Cummings Street and Main Street, the Courthouse area, and the entire length of Valley Street. Crosswalk improvements have been completed in front on the Barter Theatre which improved pedestrian safety; improvements to other areas are planned, including several that are discussed in this comprehensive plan.

The Virginia Creeper Trail is a wonderful amenity that is used by both residents and visitors. The trail begins in Abingdon and stretches for 35 miles. The existing Creeper Trail is ideally located for a greenway on an off-road, dedicated right-of-way and can serve as a model for any new greenway expansions and corridors. Another important trail is the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, located west of the downtown. This trail offers educational information regarding the march of the Overmountain Men and their victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain, a turning point of the Revolutionary War.

During the public workshops held as part of this comprehensive plan, a number of comments were received that suggested a need for additional bike lanes and sidewalks throughout town. Some of the specific connections noted included the following:

### **Connections to the Barter Campus**

#### **Connection from the Farmer's Market to the Veterans Memorial Park**

**Connection linking William King Regional Arts Center and Dubose-Foster Fields with Sinking Creek Cemetery and including a connection to Academy Drive**

**Connection to William King RAC from downtown and Depot Square, and designated "Safe Route to School" connections to the schools**

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<sup>7</sup> Abingdon Pedestrian Safety and Movement Study 2002.



## Local Transit Systems

Abingdon Public Transit serves as Abingdon's public bus system. It is operated by the District Three Governmental Cooperative which covers the Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe. The local transit system includes modern handicapped accessible vans and two refurbished trolley cars. The main users of the transit system are senior citizens, students, and tourist groups. Taxi service is also available in town.

There may be opportunities for expansion of the local transit system in the future, especially given the desire to increase tourism efforts. A local trolley system, small guided bus tours, or other group transportation activities may be beneficial. In addition, the service needs of residents may need further evaluation, especially since there are substantial governmental and medical services in Abingdon. A survey of transportation needs may be helpful to determine where there are deficiencies in public transportation.

## Rail

Although Abingdon initially had passenger rail service, there is no active passenger rail service in town at the present time; however, there is a railroad depot and several rail spurs that serve industrial properties. The Class A, Mainline of the Norfolk Southern Railroad runs through the center of Abingdon. The nearest passenger rail station is in Hinton, West Virginia, approximately 120 miles north of Abingdon.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation conducted a feasibility study in 1997 for providing passenger rail service between Bristol, Richmond, and Washington D.C. This study included a proposed rail station in Abingdon. Despite the fact that no major initiatives have been undertaken to implement this regional passenger rail service, the *2020 Transportation Plan* still recommends that the town support regional plans for passenger rail service in Abingdon.

## Air Travel

The Virginia Highlands Airport is a general aviation airport located approximately one mile west of Abingdon on U. S. Route 11. The Airport is operated by an airport authority consisting of appointed representatives of Washington County's seven election districts. The authority does not include a representative from the Town of Abingdon.

In 2007, the airport contained 4 hangars, 57 tie-downs, a commercial hangar, and one corporate hangar. In addition to private and corporate aviation facilities, the airport provides facilities for the U. S. Forest Service and the Virginia State Police. Charter passenger service and flight instruction are available. The airport was expanded in 2005 to include a terminal addition, a new corporate hangar, improved commercial hangar, and an improved corridor approach. The *Virginia Highlands Airport Layout Plan 2003-2022* serves as a twenty year planning document for the airport. The document has been approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. The plan determined that there was a critical need to accommodate small business jets associated with the increasing racing, coal, and banking industries in the region. Consequently, the plan



recommended extending the runway to 5,500 feet. At the present time, an environmental impact assessment is underway for the improvement plan. Public information meetings were held in 2006; a draft environmental assessment is expected in the fall of 2007 with a final decision on the appropriate airport improvements expected in the spring of 2008. During comprehensive planning meetings residents expressed concerns for increased air traffic and noise impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Commercial passenger service is available at the Tri-Cities Regional Airport near Blountville, Tennessee, about 25 miles southwest of Abingdon. This airport is served by three commercial carriers (Delta Connection, Northwest Airlink, and US Airways Express) that offer service to six major hubs.

### Policies for Transportation 2027

The following planning policies reflect the community's desire to encourage a multi-modal transportation network that will appropriately serve and enhance the community.

Planning Policies for Transportation	
T1	<u>Multi-modal Transportation</u> : The town's transportation network should provide safe, effective multi-modal facilities for vehicular traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians.
T2	<u>Inviting Transportation Corridors</u> : Major transportation corridors should be attractive and inviting to residents, businesses and visitors. Corridors should be designed to include landscaping, sidewalks and bicycle lanes, where feasible. Corridor gateway entrances into the community should be attractively designed and landscaped.
T3	<u>Connected, Landscaped Streets</u> : New development should include connected streets, landscaping, and sidewalks, where appropriate.
T4	<u>Commercial Corridor Development</u> : New development along commercial corridors should be encouraged close to the street and designed with landscaped parking to the rear or side.
T5	<u>Coordinated Transportation and Land Use</u> : Transportation facilities are important in maintaining and enhancing the economy and social fabric of Abingdon. Facilities operating in Abingdon and the surrounding area should be coordinated with town's comprehensive plan and should support the recommendations for future land use and development.



## Recommended Action Strategies for Transportation 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to address identified community needs and to implement the recommended policies for Transportation:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>T1</b> | <p><b><u>Multi-modal Transportation:</u></b> The town's transportation network should provide safe, effective multi-modal facilities for vehicular traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partner with appropriate public agencies to survey the transportation service needs of residents; pursue appropriate services through partnership efforts and grant solicitation.</li> <li>▪ Undertake more detailed studies of the multi-modal capabilities of transportation facilities within the town to identify where additional improvements can be made to enhance access for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. These studies may include a sidewalk inventory and conditions assessment, a detailed bicycle plan, and priority corridors for calming traffic.</li> <li>▪ Work with tourism agencies to determine the public transportation needs of visitors; pursue appropriate facilities through partnership efforts and grant solicitation.</li> <li>▪ Pursue funding for implementation of recommended improvements through various programs, including VDOT Transportation Enhancement Program and Sidewalk to Schools Program.</li> <li>▪ Explore connector trail, stretching from Abingdon to Meadowview, Emory, and Glade Spring.</li> <li>▪ Work with VDOT and other state agencies to include town trail system in the proposed Beaches-to-Bluegrass Trail.</li> <li>▪ Study town crosswalks for improvements in line-of-sight and illumination at night.</li> <li>▪ Support passenger rail to Southwest Virginia by developing a bus connector, preparing Abingdon as a station, and developing partnerships with Tennessee communities along the line.</li> </ul> |
| <b>T2</b> | <p><b><u>Inviting Transportation Corridors:</u></b> Major transportation corridors should be attractive and inviting to residents, businesses and visitors. Corridors should be designed to include landscaping, sidewalks and bicycle lanes, where feasible. Corridor gateway entrances into the community should be attractively designed and landscaped.</p>  |

**Implement the recommendations for improving streets and streetscapes in Abingdon, as detailed in the Streets and Streetscapes Plan.**

**Work with Washington County to improve corridors leading into Abingdon. Encourage the county to adopt design standards for main entrance corridors leading into Abingdon (i.e. Porterfield Highway, Jonesboro Road, Cummings Street, East and West Main Street).**

**Develop an attractive wayfinding system and signage plan that is in context with the historic context of the town and pursue implementation.**

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>T3</b> | <p><b><u>Connected, Landscaped Streets:</u></b> New development should include connected streets, landscaping, and sidewalks, where appropriate.</p> |
|-----------|--|





**Revise the town's subdivision and zoning ordinances to include provisions for connected streets, landscaping and sidewalks in new development.**

**T4**      Improved Commercial Corridor Development: New development along commercial corridors should be encouraged close to the street and designed with landscaped parking to the rear or side.

**Revise the town's zoning ordinance to revise provisions for placement of buildings and parking (i.e. setbacks, landscaping, etc.)**



- T5** Coordinated Transportation and Land Use: Transportation facilities are important in maintaining and enhancing the economy and social fabric of Abingdon. Facilities operating in Abingdon and the surrounding area should be coordinated with town's comprehensive plan and should support the recommendations for future land use and development.

Work with Washington County regarding the future development planned for the Virginia Highlands Airport to ensure that it is consistent with the town's comprehensive plan and with the future land use and development envisioned by the town.

Request that Washington County appoint a representative of the Town of Abingdon to the airport authority board to ensure good communication with town officials and citizens of Abingdon. Encourage the County to select a Town representative in consultation with the Abingdon Town Council.

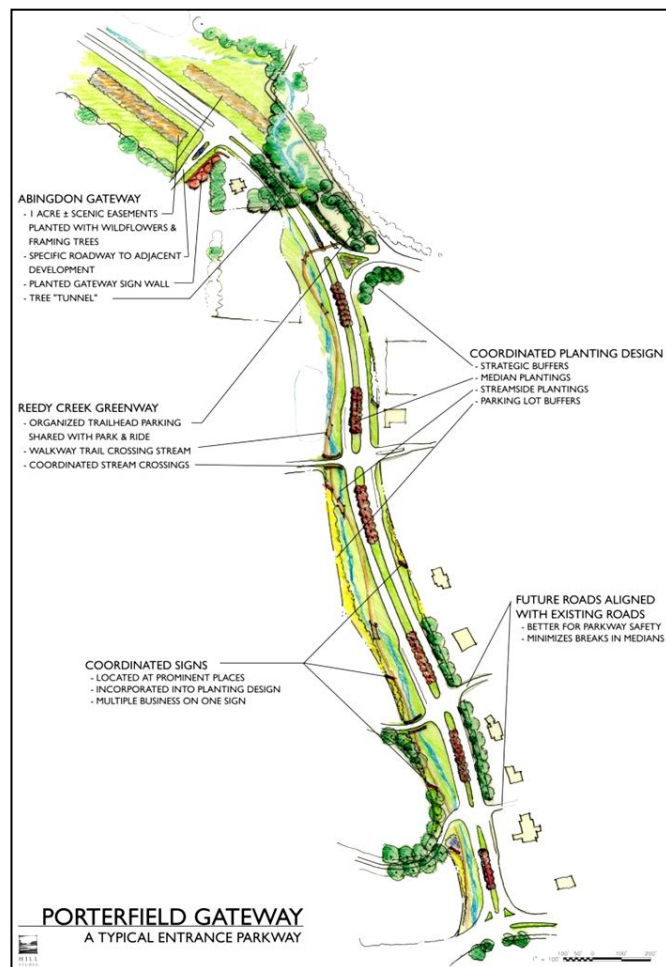
Promote the airport for business recruitment.

Explore the creation of a "northwest bypass connector" from West Main Street at the Jonesboro RD intersection, to Porterfield Highway.

### Special Action Projects: Transportation

Gateway corridors are important to the future economic and social well-being of Abingdon, especially with the future directed toward tourism. This comprehensive plan contains many recommendations for enhancing corridors and improving transportation access to encourage additional business investment.

Porterfield Highway is an important gateway into Abingdon and to other portions of Washington County and the region. This corridor has many opportunities for new development and streetscape improvements. The gateway improvement plan shown to the right recommends a greenway along Reedy Creek, alignment of road intersections to maximize new development options and improve traffic circulation. In addition, the plan





shows gateway beautification, additional median planting, and coordinated signage along the corridor. Coordination with Washington County is strongly encouraged to ensure consistency for the entrance streetscapes and appropriate development of vacant lands surrounding Abingdon.



## ***Public Utilities, Facilities, and Services***

The public infrastructure, facilities and services available to residents and businesses are fundamental elements in maintaining and sustaining any community. Public utilities (water, sewer, solid waste management, etc.) are driving factors for community development. Public facilities (schools, parks, libraries, etc.) are important in retaining and attracting residents and businesses. Finally, public services (police, fire and rescue, social services, etc.) are responsible for ensuring safety and providing essential services for living.

Abingdon's public utilities, facilities, and services are provided by the town, the county, and by many other service and volunteer organizations. A map of Abingdon's public facilities is presented on the following page. The paragraphs below provide a brief overview of the services and facilities in Abingdon.

### **Public Utilities**

#### **Sewer and Waste Water Treatment**

Sewer service and treatment of waste water is provided by the Town of Abingdon. Most of the town's residential areas are served by sewer; there are only a few properties that are on septic systems (Nicholas and Trigg Street).

In 2006, the town completed expansion of its waste water treatment facility (4.95 MGD). This facility serves not only the town, but also designated areas of Washington County (subject to joint agreement). The expanded plant should meet the area's needs until 2025.

Studies completed in 1977 indicated that there were infiltration and inflow issues with the main east and west interceptor lines, which were constructed in the 1940s. An updated study of the system is needed, as well as improvements in targeted areas.

#### **Water**

Water to town residents and businesses is provided by the Washington County Service Authority (WSA). Water to Abingdon is supplied by a 4.6 MGD surface water treatment plant on the Middle Fork of the Holston River (the primary water supply), a 1.1 MGD plant on Mill Creek near Chilhowie (the secondary source), and a spring on Route 58 in Taylor's Valley (supplemental supply source). Based on a 2002 study for the region<sup>8</sup>, the WSA plans to expand the 4.6 MGD plant to 12 MGD by adding a new raw water intake point on the South Fork of the Holston River and pumping it to the Middle Fork water treatment plant. As of 2007, the water source has been approved and engineering services are being solicited.

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<sup>8</sup> Draper Aden Associates. Master Plan, Washington County Service Authority, Water Treatment Facilities. October, 2002.



## **Map 11    Public Facilities**





Water service is available to most streets and populated areas in town. Many of the town's water lines consist of 2-inch, galvanized lines that are prone to corrosion and maintenance issues. In addition, these lines may yield low water pressure and affect the aesthetic quality of the water.

The 2007-2012 Capital Improvement Plan for the WSA includes three water improvement projects for Abingdon:

**White's Mill Road Water Line Extension** – This project will extend water to approximately 600 connections within the town's limits. The project involves line replacement, a water storage tank, and a pump station. The authority is obtaining easements for the project, which is a lengthy process.

**Water Storage Tank Replacement on Leonard Street** – This project will replace the oldest tank on Leonard Street with a new tank that will be twice the capacity of the old one (1 MGD to 2 MGD).

**Replacement of 2-inch, Galvanized Lines** – This project affects lines in both the town and the county. It consists of replacing approximately 200 miles of lines that are in need of maintenance and repairs, many of which are located in Abingdon. Thus, the project will take considerable time and is expected to be implemented over a ten year period.

### Solid Waste Management

The Town of Abingdon provides household waste collection service to town residents. The town has two automated trucks for collection. The town provides curbside recycling.

### Public Safety

The Town of Abingdon operates a police department housed in the new Abingdon public safety building on West Main Street. It employs 26 persons.

Fire protection is provided by the Abingdon Volunteer Fire Department, located on Park Street. The department also serves portions of Washington County. The department has a firefighting staff of over forty persons and operates with four engines and three vehicles.

Rescue service is provided by the Washington County Lifesaving Crew, also located on Park Street. The agency has over forty volunteers and retains five emergency vehicles.

### Libraries

The Washington County Public Library is located in Abingdon at the corner of Valley Street and Oak Hill Road. As the main library in the county system, the mission of the Washington County Public Library system is to provide the





community with current resources for life-long learning, social exchange, pleasure, and entertainment. Once the Central Elementary School, the building was renovated in 1976; it is in need of expansion to meet the service needs of the town and the county.

In addition to the county library, a college library is located at the Virginia Highlands Community College. The Washington County Historical Society also operates a small library for historical and genealogical research at the Abingdon Railroad Depot.

### Schools

Abingdon is served by 5 public schools, two vocational centers, and two higher education facilities. Washington County operates the school programs for grades K-12. The mission of Washington County schools is “to provide a safe, supportive and engaging learning environment which challenges all students to achieve their own maximum potential. In partnership with the family and the community, the school system will ensure that each student acquires basic academic skills and received a diverse array of education opportunities that promote health social, physical and intellectual growth.”

Enrollment information on these schools is shown in the table below. In 2006, the elementary, middle and high schools were fully accredited and met Virginia Standards of Learning.

School	Enrollment 2013-14
Abingdon Elementary	494
Greendale Elementary	341
Watauga Elementary	586
E. B. Stanley Middle School	719
Abingdon High School	861
Neff Center Science & Technology	600
Virginia Highlands Community College	2,486*
Southwest VA Higher Education Center	>1,000



\* 2005-06 Enrollment

The Neff Center for Science and Technology (1975) offers expanded career and technical training and provides programs in advertising, cosmetology, culinary arts, criminal justice, electronics, nursing, welding, and others. Many of the programs are dual credit programs that are conducted in partnership with participating local colleges.

The Virginia Highlands Community College was established in 1967 and is one of 23 community colleges operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is located on a campus of approximately 100 acres housing six buildings (totaling about 84,000 square feet) and offers programs in nursing and applied health, science and engineering technology, and business, humanities, and social sciences. The Center for Business and Industry provides a niche job-training program for the region as a tool to promote economic development. The college employs 122 full-time faculty members and 154 part-time instructors. Buildings are equipped with state-of-the-art technology that enables both on-campus and off-campus learning.

The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was established in 1991 to strengthen the economy of the region through workforce training and development. The center offers over sixty graduate and undergraduate degree programs through nine participating colleges and universities. The hi-tech learning center includes a 13,000 square-foot conference facility, 110 person auditorium, and approximately 25 classrooms. The facility is used by both academic institutions and by businesses. [Southwest Virginia School of Medicine](#) [Southwest Virginia School of Medicine](#)

### Health and Human Services

Abingdon is the regional center for medical services. Memorial Hospital, founded in 1905, is located on Court Street, just north of East Main Street. It is a modern healthcare facility providing a full range of medical services. Recently, the hospital opened a 60,000 square-foot comprehensive cancer center east of Abingdon. The hospital's future growth may require it to relocate, as the existing location will not allow much more expansion. The town should make every effort to keep the hospital within the town limits, while moving it to a more conducive location for expansion.<sup>t</sup>



Social services to regional residents are provided by Washington County Department of Social Services. The department provides a diversity of programs oriented to family investment, child support, employment training, and human services. The agency has adopted a Strategic Plan for 2007-2011<sup>9</sup> which guides work efforts and programs. Goals are established for fostering employee development, developing community partners, continuously improving the quality of services, improving public relations and providing needed customer/client services.

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<sup>9</sup> Washington County Department of Social Services. *Building a Foundation for a Better Community FY2007-2011*. March, 2007.



### Public Utilities, Services and Facilities Opportunities and Challenges 2027

Over the next five to ten years, the availability and quality of public utility services will have the greatest influence on future growth and development in Abingdon and the surrounding area. Also, continued population growth in the town and the surrounding county will affect the need for expanded public facilities and services.



In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 3202, referred to as the Transportation Act of 2007, as a tool to relate transportation planning and land use. The bill provides that by July 1, 2011, any county with a 1990-2000 population growth rate of 15% or more, or, any county with at least 20,000 persons and a growth rate of 5% or more, must incorporate Urban Development Areas (UDA) into their comprehensive plans. The second provision applies to Washington County. Essentially, an urban development area would be a designated area for higher density development that is in close proximity to transportation facilities, utilities, and other public services in a town, city or other developed area. In addition to the requirement that the comprehensive plan address UDAs, state and local expenditures for transportation, housing, and economic development would be focused within the UDA. Thus, the future development of the county areas surrounding Abingdon will require significant coordination between the town and the county with respect to desired areas and density of development, appropriate community design principles, potential financial methods for implementing the required infrastructure, and equitable sharing of public service costs for taxpayers. Typically, an UDA would be established through a joint governmental agreement after considerable study of future land use, environmental factors, utility availability and capacity, and public input on growth areas and proposed densities.

Under the same HB 3202, Washington County will be able to impose road impact fees on development in order to provide a safe, efficient transportation infrastructure to serve development. There is an established process for implementing and applying road impact fees.





### Policies for Public Utilities, Facilities and Services 2027

The following planning policies reflect the community's desire to provide appropriate, well-planned public utilities, facilities and services to residents and businesses in Abingdon.

#### Planning Policies for Public Utilities, Facilities and Services

- PUF 1** Available, Quality Public Utilities: Public utilities should be available to all residents and businesses of Abingdon. New development should be connected to public utilities and should not adversely affect the quality and/or level of service for existing utility or transportation systems.
- PUF 2** Coordinated and Planned Development: Development on the perimeter of Abingdon and in adjacent Washington County should be carefully planned and coordinated with public utilities and facilities so as to protect environmental and visual qualities, maintain an acceptable level of service, and appropriately share public costs for anticipated improvements and facilities.
- PUF 3** Accessible, Convenient Public Facilities: Facilities serving the public should be located and maintained within the Town of Abingdon. Public facilities should be easily accessible to citizens and located in central areas with the greatest population.
- PUF 4** Quality Education Facilities and Opportunities: Quality public education is a fundamental element in maintaining the economy and the quality of life in Abingdon. Opportunities for continuing education and educational partnerships should be priorities for public and private agencies.
- PUF 5** Safe Community: Public safety services are essential to the health and well-being of Abingdon. Police, fire, and rescue services should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that public safety needs are appropriately addressed.



### Recommended Action Strategies for Public Utilities, Facilities, and Services 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to address identified community needs and to implement the recommended policies for public utilities, facilities, and services:

**PUF 1**      Available, Quality Public Utilities: Public utilities should be available to all residents and businesses of Abingdon. New development should be connected to public utilities and should not adversely affect the quality and/or level of service for existing utility or transportation systems.

**Work with the Washington County Service Authority to develop a mutual plan for expanding water utilities and implementing important capital improvements.**

**Work with Washington County to develop a mutual plan for priority areas for future waste water and public sewer services. Correlate planning with the town's comprehensive plan and future land development policies.**

**PUF 2**      Coordinated and Planned Development: Development on the perimeter of Abingdon and in adjacent Washington County should be carefully planned and coordinated with public utilities and facilities so as to protect environmental and visual qualities, maintain an acceptable level of service, and appropriately share public costs for anticipated improvements and facilities.

**Partner with Washington County to develop a mutual agreement and review policy for new development located in close proximity to the town limits.**

**Work with Washington County to update their comprehensive plan, particularly as it relates to establishing Urban Development Areas.**

**PUF 3**      Accessible, Convenient Public Facilities: Facilities serving the public should be located and maintained within the Town of Abingdon. Public facilities should be easily accessible to citizens and located in central areas with the greatest population.

**Work with Washington County and the Public Library Board to retain and expand the main library in Abingdon.**

**PUF 4**      Quality Education Facilities and Opportunities: Quality public education is a fundamental element in maintaining the economy and the quality of life in Abingdon. Opportunities for continuing education and educational partnerships should be priorities for public and private agencies.

**Establish a leadership committee of education representatives to meet on at least an annual basis to discuss and coordinate important educational initiatives. Develop a network of educational professionals that will boost basic and continuing education opportunities for the community.**



**Safe Community:** Public safety services are essential to the health and well-being of Abingdon. Police, fire, and rescue services should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that public safety needs are appropriately addressed.

**Provide leadership in coordinating police, fire and rescue services to citizens and businesses in Abingdon by meeting on a regular basis with public safety organizations.**

**Work with volunteer agencies for fire and rescue to ensure appropriate emergency response times, facilities, and personnel.**

**Special Action Projects: Public Utilities, Facilities, and Services**

Improvements to the public water system in Abingdon should be a priority initiative over the next several years. The town should cooperatively work with the Washington County Service Authority to upgrade facilities and improve water lines in town.



## Environment and Quality of Life

The environmental and natural features of Abingdon influence the health of the community and the quality of life for residents. Consequently, community plans should encourage protection and responsible stewardship of these amenities. Important environmental features to consider in long-term planning include such resources as mountains, trees, soils, wildlife, and streams. All of these natural features are affected by development and should be considered in public and private undertakings to sustain the high environmental quality found in Abingdon.



### Trees

Abingdon has long been known as a community that cherishes its trees. The town is recognized as a Tree City USA. Trees play a vital role in contributing to Abingdon's character and quality of life by adding visual interest and value to the landscape. The town is surrounded by forested lands in the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest. Beyond the visual appeal, the trees reduce home energy costs, influence property values, manage storm water runoff quantity and quality, and calm traffic. Trees provide town residents with "green" surroundings that provide a quality environment for social activities, a sense of place, and attractive natural settings.

In 2001, town council established the Abingdon Tree Commission. Appointed by council, the commission consists of five members. An arborist is employed by the town and is assigned to the commission to guide conservation activities and provide technical assistance. The purpose of the commission and corresponding ordinance (officially known as the Vegetation Ordinance) is to establish and maintain maximum tree cover, promote conservation of tree resources, promote the health and development of Abingdon's urban forest, and foster community support for an urban forestry program. The ordinance applies to all trees and shrubs planted in public areas. Both the arborist and the commission are active in developing an inventory of trees on public property and in establishing standards for planting and maintaining trees in Abingdon.

In 2007, a tree inventory was initiated using a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry. This initiative **will provide** technical information on the location of trees and will produce a comprehensive tree management plan, which will evaluate tree coverage, tree species utilization, and make recommendations for improvements and changes. The inventory will be completed in 2008.



In addition to the inventory, the commission and arborist are active in providing training to town crews and others regarding the proper pruning, planting, and maintenance of trees. Education is a primary goal to increase public awareness of the trees and best management practices for tree conservation and growth.

Complementing the urban forest initiatives, Abingdon has three official arboretums within its town limits:

- (1) The campus at Virginia Highlands Community College specializes in non-native species research. The campus arboretum is managed by the college's horticulturist. Also, the campus contains an orchard of heritage apple trees.
- (2) Valley Street, Russell Road, and "A" Street are designated as "utility line arboretums" by the Virginia Department of Forestry. These streets have extensive plantings of power line compatible trees and are part of the Virginia Municipal Tree Restoration Project that received international attention.
- (3) Veterans Memorial Park is designated as an arboretum by Abingdon Town Council. It is noted as one of the Best Tree Places in Virginia by the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project. Individuals and families may purchase trees for planting in honor of a veteran. Currently, trees are being planted on the south side of the park behind the main sign and flags. The middle section of the park holds large, stately trees adjacent to a children's playground. The northern section of the park contains two major tree research plots. The first plot is managed by the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research Experiment Station, a satellite post of Virginia Tech; utility-friendly trees are being grown in several locations throughout the state to test their ability to prosper in the various climates and soils of Virginia. The second plot is managed by the American Chestnut Foundation and contains the new species of American Chestnut. Ultimately, these trees will be inoculated with chestnut blight to determine blight resistance and to provide seeds for further research.

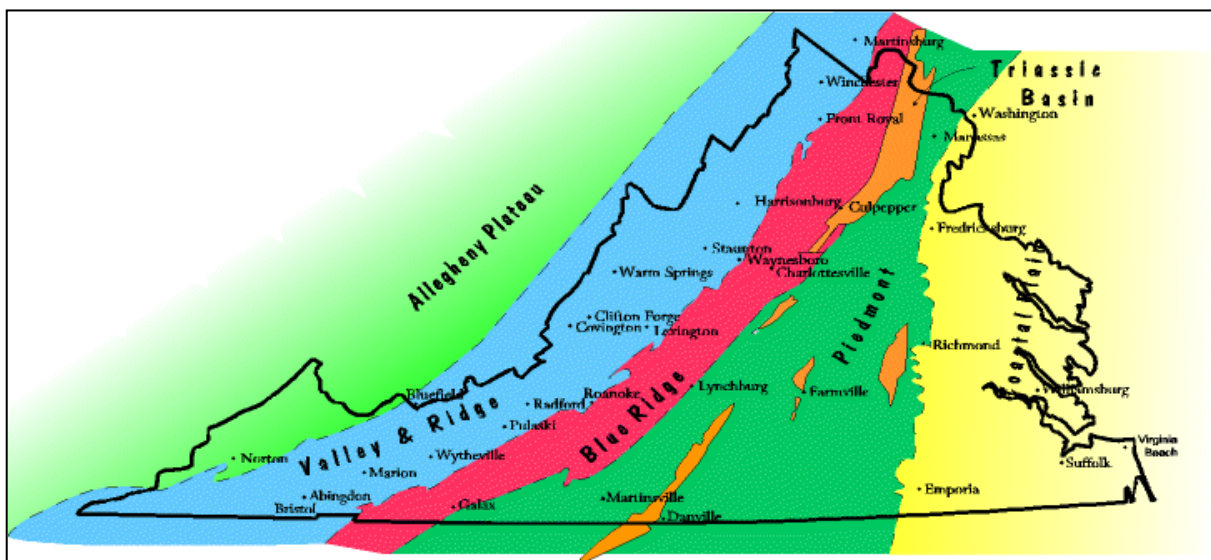






## Landforms and Geology

Abingdon is located in the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province of Virginia. A map of the provinces in Virginia is shown below. As illustrated in the map, the Valley and Ridge province runs the north-south length of Virginia from Tennessee north to West Virginia and Maryland and lies between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Alleghany Plateau. Linear ridges characterize the Valley and Ridge and valleys with carbonate, limestone rocks in the valleys (erosive) and sandstone and quartzite rocks in the ridges (erosion resistant). Abingdon is located in the Great Valley Sub-province, which contains mostly valleys with higher elevations on the perimeter. Elevations in Abingdon range from 1,934 to 2,316 feet mean sea level (msl). A map showing the elevations in Abingdon is found on the following page.



Source: James Madison University, *The Geological Evolution of Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic Region*, <http://csmres.jmu.edu/geollab/vageol/vahist/physprov>.

Abingdon exhibits scenic vistas of the neighboring mountains to the east and west. The Blue Ridge Mountains form the ridgelines to the east, while the Cumberland Mountains form the ridge lines to the west. Significant mountains visible from Abingdon include Holston Mountain and Iron Mountains (south), and Mount Rogers/White Top (southeast), and Clinch and Walker Mountain (north and east). A slope analysis for Abingdon is presented on the following page. Based on this analysis, approximately two-thirds of the town's land has a slope of 20% or less; approximately one-third of the town exhibits slopes are greater than 25%.



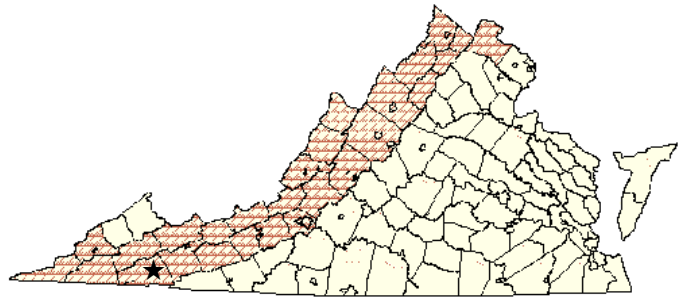
## **Map 12      Abingdon Elevations**



**Map 13      Abingdon Slopes**



Mapping from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation shows that Washington County lies in a region that exhibits karst topography (areas with caves, sinkholes). Carbonate rocks that underlay the region (limestone, dolomite and others) are water soluble, creating opportunities for ground and surface waters to intrude, leaving fractures and holes. Consequently, major development projects should investigate the potential for karst features.



*Virginia Counties Containing Karst Topography  
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation*



## Soils

The U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service published a soil survey of Washington County and the City of Bristol in 2006. Based on web soil survey information,<sup>10</sup> the Town of Abingdon contains Frederick silt loams (approximately 50%), Weikert silt loams (approximately 15%), Udorthents/urban land (9%), Hagerstown silt loams (approximately 8%), Wyrick-Marbie complex (approximately 7%), as well as other soil classifications. The Frederick silt loams are particularly suited for croplands and pastures; typically, they are well-drained and deep. The Weikert and Hagerstown silt loams are upland soils that are shallow to bedrock and exhibit rock out-croppings; they are well-suited for forests. The Udorthents soils are those disturbed by development. The Wyrick-Marbie complex soils are lowland soils; they are subject to flooding and particularly suited for pastures. More technical information on the soils in Abingdon and their suitability and limitations are accessible at the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service website at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey>.

According to the soil survey, many of the soils in Abingdon are especially important for agriculture. Soils that are classified as prime agricultural land or farmland of statewide importance are shown on the map on the following page and listed in the table below. These soils are particularly important to consider when conducting environmental reviews of projects, especially those involving state and federal funds. Also, they are important in enhancing and preserving the agricultural heritage and productivity of the region.

Town of Abingdon, VA - Significant Agricultural Soils		
Soil Name	ID No.	Significance
Frederick silt loam, 2-7% slope	16B	Prime Farmland
Sindion silt loam, 0-3% slope	38A	Prime Farmland
Wyrick-Marbie complex, 2-7% slope	55B	Prime Farmland
Frederick silt loam, 7-15% slope	16C	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Frederick silt loam, 15-25% slope	16D	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Hagerstown silt loam, 7-15% slope	20C	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Hagerstown silt loam, 15-25% slope	20D	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Timberville-Marbie complex, 2-7% slope	42C	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Wyrick-Marbie complex, 7-15% slope	55C	Farmland of Statewide Importance

<sup>10</sup> U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Web Soil Survey.  
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey>.





## **Map 14    Soils and Floodplains**



### Hydrology - Streams and Floodplains

Abingdon is located within the watersheds of the North and Middle Forks of the Holston River, part of the Tennessee and Big Sandy River Basins. South Holston Lake (7,850 acres) is located southwest of town, and extends from Washington County, Virginia to Sullivan County, Tennessee. The lake is owned and operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority and provides hydroelectric power for the region. The major streams located in the town are: Wolf Creek, Town Creek, Berry Creek, and Fifteen Mile Creek. The floodplains of these streams are shown on the following map.

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's *2006 Water Quality Assessment*,<sup>11</sup> various watershed segments of Wolf Creek and Town Creek in Washington County are listed as impaired (i.e. PCB in fish tissue and high *Escherichia coli* concentrations). Consequently, improvement to water quality and further study are recommended to determine appropriate Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) levels for pollutants and corresponding treatment alternatives. To address the quality of surface waters in town and reduce non-point sources of pollution, Abingdon is pursuing a watershed study, which most likely will require regional cooperation, as the streams flowing through town originate north in Washington County. Therefore, cooperation from the county is essential.

The Middle Fork of the Holston River is the main source of drinking water for the region. In 2007, it provided up to 4.6 million gallons of water per day. According to the 2006 Water Quality Report published by the Washington County Service Authority, the public drinking water sources met all the established drinking water standards and monitoring requirements established by the Environmental Protection Agency. In 2004, the Service Authority received an award from the Virginia Department of Health for providing drinking water that surpassed state and federal regulations.

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<sup>11</sup> Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. *Water Quality Assessment 305(b) and 303(d) Integrated Report*. October, 2006.

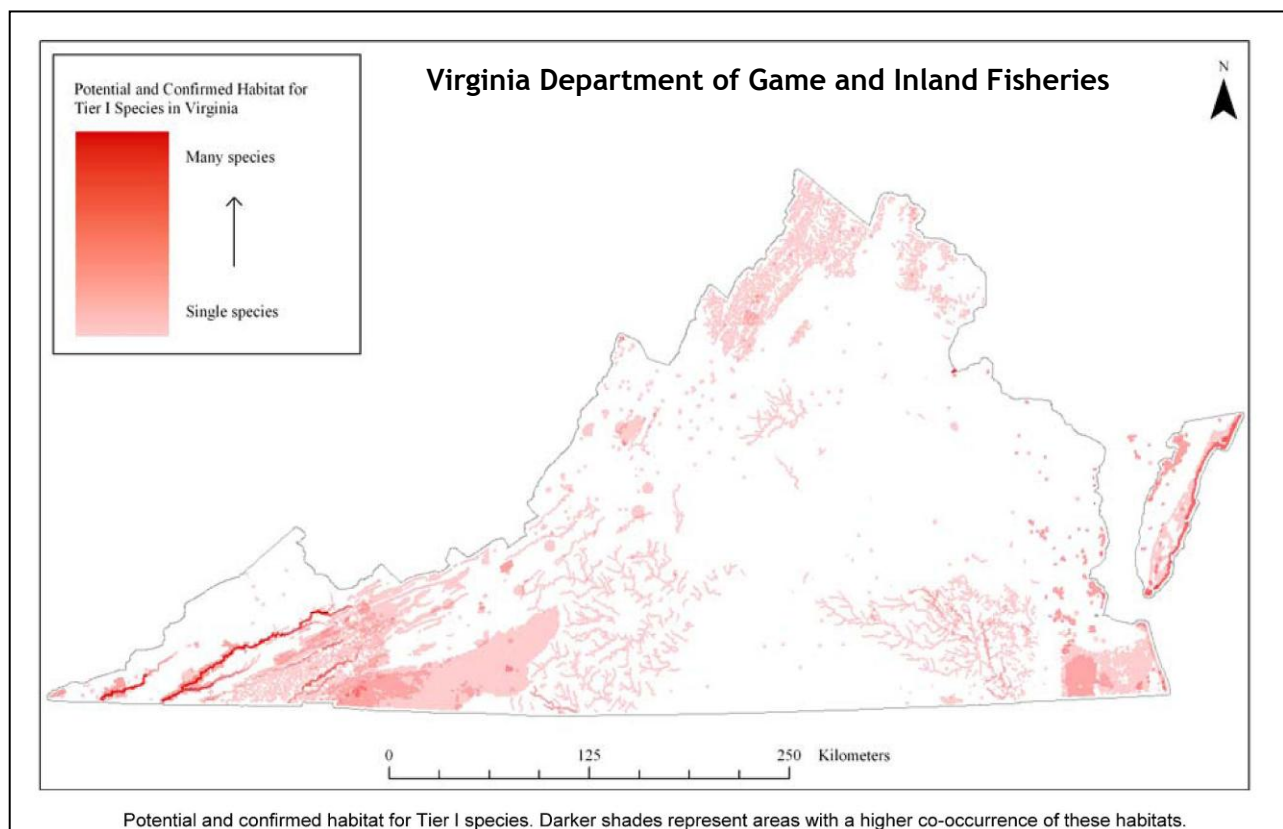


## Wildlife

In 2005, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries prepared a *Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*<sup>12</sup> which identified approximately 1,000 species in Virginia in need of conservation. Threats for these species included habitat destruction, deterioration in water quality from pollution and sedimentation. Based on the data collected (see map below), Washington County is included as an important ecological region that contains species identified for conservation. Abingdon is described as being located in the Ridge and Valley Holston Ecological Region. The list includes 62 species consisting of 32 fish, 17 mussels, 3 snails, 2 insects, and 4 crawfish.



Those species of most concern (Tier 1) in the region include: spotfin chub\*, sharphead darter, yellowfin madtom\*, Tennessee dace, tan riffleshell\*, shiny pigtoe\*, little-wing pearl mussel\*, bottle horn snail, and rough rabbitsfoot\*. Those species noted with an \* are listed as Federal Endangered or Threatened Species.



<sup>12</sup> Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. *Virginia's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*. 2005.



### Environmental Challenges and Opportunities 2027

In addition to Abingdon's recognition as the arts and culture capital of Southwest Virginia, the town's natural beauty and quality environmental features draw both residents and visitors. Environmental assets such as trees, the Creeper Trail, National Forest, and scenic vistas contribute to the future social and economic well-being of Abingdon. As development continues to occur in the region, special efforts will be needed to protect the community's environmental quality and natural features. This will require coordination with developers, Washington County, and with applicable state and federal agencies and organizations. Enhancing and preserving the "green infrastructure" of Abingdon will help the community achieve its vision for 2027. Public education and increased awareness of the town's special features will be critical in assisting and supporting town officials in land development decisions. Maintaining and enhancing the ecology and the natural landscape of Abingdon and the surrounding county should be a priority for the community's long-term health and well-being.

### Planning Policies for Environment 2027

To achieve the desired vision for environment in the future, the following policies are established:

#### Planning Policies for Environment

- EN 1 Economic, Social and Environmental Value of Trees:** Trees contribute to the town's character and attractiveness, and assist in managing the adverse effects of pollution and urban development. Trees should be considered in all public and private development efforts to ensure protection, enhancement, and conservation of Abingdon's tree cover.
- EN 2 Influence of Streams and Floodplains on Environmental Quality:** The streams and floodplains of Abingdon and the surrounding region are important natural features that influence the overall environmental quality of the community. Safe, clean surface and ground waters are essential to the health and quality of life for residents and visitors. Protection of water resources and adjacent floodplains is a priority for the future.
- EN 3 Preservation of Agricultural Soils:** Agricultural soils reflect the heritage of Abingdon and contribute to long-term sustainability. Fertile soils contribute to the "green infrastructure" of the town and provide opportunities for cherished open space, pastures, community gardens, and active farmlands. Plans for new development or projects should consider significant areas of prime agricultural soils and those of statewide importance, preserve them where feasible, and minimize impacts on these resources.



- EN 4 Ecology and Wildlife:** Abingdon's unique ecology and diverse wildlife contribute to the overall quality of life. The region's ecology and wildlife offer enhanced aesthetic and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Plans for public and private initiatives should consider development impacts on significant wildlife species and promote conservation of sensitive ecological habitats.
- EN 5 The Creeper Trail – A Regional Asset:** The Creeper Trail is a regional environmental, economic, and recreational asset. The trail provides habitat for wildlife and assists in maintaining and sustaining the environmental quality of the community. New development should include adequate buffers and provisions to ensure adequate protection of the trail and its natural resources.

### Recommended Action Strategies for Environment 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to address identified community needs and to implement the recommended policies for environment:

- EN 1 Economic, Social and Environmental Value of Trees:** Trees contribute to the town's character and attractiveness, and assist in managing the adverse effects of pollution and urban development. Trees should be considered in all public and private development efforts to ensure protection, enhancement, and conservation of Abingdon's tree cover.

*Encourage the Tree Commission to revise the zoning ordinance to include an updated list of preferred tree species for landscaping development projects. This needs to be incorporated into the zoning ordinance.*

*Encourage the Tree Commission to partner with regional and state-wide organizations to increase tree plantings, provide public education materials on the value and proper care of trees, and coordinate regional urban forestry practices.*

*Encourage the Tree Commission to develop a walking tour of significant trees in Abingdon as a guide for residents and tourists.*

*Encourage the Tree Commission to include recommended urban forestry practices and maintenance measures as a resource guide on the town's web site.*

*Encourage the Tree Commission to establish an awards program for tree preservation, conservation, maintenance, etc. to celebrate citizen accomplishments and efforts.*

*Maintain tree canopy goals that include standards for preservation and planting of native trees based on zoning district and density.*





**EN 2 Influence of Streams and Floodplains on Environmental Quality:** The streams and floodplains of Abingdon and the surrounding region are important natural features that influence the overall environmental quality of the community. Safe, clean surface and ground waters are essential to the health and quality of life for residents and visitors. Protection of water resources and adjacent floodplains is a priority for the future.

**Revise the town's storm water management regulations to incorporate low impact development techniques for new development.**

**Revise the zoning ordinance to include provisions for stream buffers to protect water quality. Encourage the county to consider similar regulations to improve water quality at the regional level.**

**Provide additional public education to encourage appropriate methods for managing storm water runoff and for protecting the quality of surface and ground water. Consider adding information to the web site, partnering with other local and state organizations to develop publications, and providing community leadership for a regular monitoring program.**

**Undertake a watershed study in partnership with Washington County to define sources of non-point source pollution and identify options for water quality improvement.**

**EN 3 Preservation of Agricultural Soils:** Agricultural soils reflect the heritage of Abingdon and contribute to long-term sustainability. Fertile soils contribute to the "green infrastructure" of the town and provide opportunities for cherished open space, pastures, community gardens, and active farmlands. Plans for new development or projects should consider significant areas of prime agricultural soils and those of statewide importance, preserve them where feasible, and minimize impacts on these resources.

**Revise the subdivision ordinance to include provisions for considering prime agricultural soils as part of development review. Require new development to be carefully designed to protect these soils, where feasible.**

**EN 4 Ecology and Wildlife:** Abingdon's unique ecology and diverse wildlife contribute to the overall quality of life. The region's ecology and wildlife offer enhanced aesthetic and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Plans for public and private initiatives should consider development impacts on significant wildlife species and promote conservation of sensitive ecological habitats.

**Revise the zoning and subdivision ordinances to include provisions for planned, clustered development that integrates conservation principles in the design of residential and commercial development. Establish development standards for open**



space, landscaping, access, community facilities, sensitive environmental features, and others that may be applicable.

Promote public education as a tool to raise awareness and protect significant wildlife species and sensitive habitats. Consider such things as a walking tour, web site information, citizens' or students' environmental academy, and partnering with other local and state agencies on specific enhancement projects.

**EN 5 The Creeper Trail – A Regional Asset:** The Creeper Trail is a regional environmental, economic, and recreational asset. The trail provides habitat for wildlife and assists in maintaining and sustaining the environmental quality of the community. New development should include adequate buffers and provisions to ensure adequate protection of the trail and its natural resources.

**Amend the town code to establish increased setbacks and buffer for the Creeper Trail. Consider a minimum buffer width of one hundred feet.**

#### **Special Action Projects: Environment**

Abingdon is conducting an intensive inventory of trees on public property and significant trees within the community. When completed, the inventory should be celebrated and promoted to both residents and visitors as a proactive strategy to recognize the value of trees to the community's quality of life.





## Land Use

A primary purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to set forth the town's policies and strategies for guiding the future use of land in Abingdon, especially with respect to needed changes in existing land use and land management ordinances. The following paragraphs discuss the existing and future land uses within the town and provide recommendations for achieving the community's vision for Abingdon in 2027.

### Existing Land Use

A map of the existing land use in Abingdon is presented on the following page. As illustrated in the map, a majority of the existing land in the town is in residential or agricultural/forest/open space use. A reasonable amount of land is in business use, which is beneficial to maintaining cost-effective public services and a diversified economy. In general, the commercial land uses follow the existing transportation systems and the historical development pattern of the town. The following table provides more detailed information on the acreages by existing land use category.

Abingdon Existing Land Use 2007		
Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage
Agricultural/ Forest/ Open Space	1,405	28%
Low-Density Residential	1,286	25%
Medium-Density Residential	194	4%
High-Density Residential	20	< 1%
Office/ Commercial	421	8%
Business/ Technology/ Industrial	81	2%
Public/ Institutional	340	7%
Recreation	213	4%
Cemetery	29	1%
Undeveloped/ I-81 ROW	1,113	22%
Town of Abingdon	5,102	100%



## **Map 15   Existing Land Use**



## Future Land Use

A future land use map for Abingdon is presented on the following page. This map was developed through analysis and evaluation of the elements of this comprehensive plan, including existing land use, development opportunities, and planned improvements to transportation and infrastructure. The future land use reflects the policies and initiatives discussed in this plan and will guide future land use and zoning decisions. Also, it will provide guidance for extending public facilities such as utilities, roads and other public improvements. The following table provides more detailed information on the recommended future land use. As can be seen in comparing the existing and the future land use tables, the future land use is reflective in general of the existing land use and development patterns in Abingdon. Greater attention is given to encouraging higher density residential development within the center of town and to encouraging conservation methods for residential development in the town's perimeter.

<b>Abingdon Future Land Use 2027</b>		
<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agricultural/ Conservation Residential	1,371	27%
Low-Density Residential	1,678	33%
Medium-Density Residential	350	7%
High-Density Residential	63	1%
Mixed-Use Residential/ Commercial	62	1%
Central Business District	44	1%
Gateway Office/ Commercial	455	9%
Corridor Office/ Commercial	229	4%
Office/ Commercial	49	1%
Business/ Technology/ Industrial	105	2%
Public/ Institutional	361	7%
Recreation/ Open Space	266	5%
Cemetery	30	1%
I-81 ROW	39	1%
Town of Abingdon	5,102	100%





## Map 16 Future Land Use



The land use categories shown on the map are described in the following paragraphs. These descriptions provide guidance for amending land use regulations in the future and for encouraging the type of land development desired for Abingdon in 2027.

Agricultural/Conservation Residential: This land use category applies mostly to lands on the perimeter of town which are presently in farms, forests, or open space. These lands are very important environmental assets to Abingdon and the region, adding substantial value to the quality of life and the attractiveness of the town. These lands also have unique topographic features that contribute to important viewsheds that should be considered in any future development. Typical land uses would include: farms, estate residential development, clustered residential development (conservation design), and open space.

Low-Density Residential: This land use category applies to most of the land now developed for single-family residences. Lot sizes should reflect existing development patterns. Densities for this land use category should range from 1-4 dwelling units per acre.

Medium-Density Residential: This land use category applies to properties that have been developed for townhouse and multi-family development. It also applies to areas that are targeted for future development as multi-family. Typical land uses would include: townhouses, apartments, condos, and patio homes. Land uses in this category should be designed to be attractive in architectural quality, contain sufficient landscaping and community spaces, and relate well with adjacent land uses. Residential densities for this land use category should range from 4-8 dwelling units per acre. All properties should be served by public water and sewer and have good transportation access.

High-Density Residential: This land use category applies to densely development multi-family properties developed in the town. It is proposed also for an area south of East Main Street that is close to the center of town and has potential for redevelopment. Typical land uses would include: townhouses, apartment, condos, and live/work units. Because these areas would be densely developed, it is essential that they be well designed, provide sufficient green/open spaces, and be complementary to the architecture and context of adjacent neighborhoods. Residential densities for this land use category should range from 6 -12 dwelling units per acre. All properties should be served by public water and sewer and have good transportation access.

Mixed-Use Residential/Commercial: This land use category applies to the Valley Street area where land uses have historically included both residential and light commercial uses. Future development in this area must emphasize protecting the residential qualities of structures and sites. Land uses should be compatible with one another and not require large parking areas or visible signs. Typical land uses may include: residences, small offices, and live/work units. New in-fill development should meet strict architectural standards for both the building and the site layout.



Central Business District/Downtown: This land use category applies to the historic downtown. Typical land uses would include: retail commercial, business services, entertainment, restaurants (no drive through), hotel, offices, and residential uses above ground-floor commercial uses. The ultimate goal is revitalization of the historic business core through building rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and new in-fill development that fits with the scale, architecture and context of the area. Signs and lighting should be pedestrian scale.

Gateway Office/Commercial: This land use category applies to the gateway entrances into Abingdon. These areas have been developed in a mixture of commercial uses over the years. (Improvements are needed to make existing development more attractive and inviting.) New development should reflect the recommendations set forth in this plan for gateway commercial development and should fulfill the 2027 vision for Abingdon's economic development efforts while protecting the unique and attractive nature of Abingdon. Typical land uses would include: retail commercial, restaurants, offices, and planned shopping centers. New development should have substantial landscaping; coordinated access points, minimal signage and lighting, and be complimentary to adjacent development. The design of new development should be in accordance with adopted design standards for entrance corridor development. It is desirable to keep new office commercial development on the perimeter of the town incorporation limits as opposed to downtown where it will conflict with the unique character of Abingdon.

Corridor Office/Commercial: This land use category applies to East and West Main Street. Typical land uses would include: retail commercial, offices, small restaurants, business /personal services, and perhaps second-story residential. Revitalization of this corridor is important in order to improve entrance corridors into historic Abingdon. Rehabilitations and new in-fill development should be architecturally appropriate, include landscaping, and be designed to enhance the appearance of the corridor.

Business/Technology/Industrial: This land use category applies to existing business parks and industrial areas in town. Typical land uses would include: light manufacturing, office parks, and technology businesses. Heavy manufacturing uses may be considered by special use permit. New development in these areas should be in accordance with adopted design guidelines.

Public/Institutional: This land use category applies to existing public buildings and institutions. Typical land uses would include: schools, recreation facilities, governmental offices, hospital, and churches. These land uses should be developed in accordance with an adopted master plan that includes provisions for design guidelines, landscaping, and coordinated signage.

Recreation/Open Space: This land use category applies to existing and proposed public parks and dedicated public greenways.



## Policies for Land Use 2027

The following planning policies for land use reflect the community's vision for Abingdon and the use and development of land in the future.

Planning Policies for Land Use	
LU 1	<u>Orderly Land Development</u> : Land development and community growth should be undertaken in an orderly manner that is compatible with community character and protects important environmental features.
LU 2	<u>Development Opportunities</u> : Infill development and redevelopment of underutilized properties should be encouraged and promoted.
LU 3	<u>Environmental Constraints and Viewsheds</u> : Land development planning should include consideration of important environmental constraints and viewsheds.

## Action Strategies for Future Land Use 2027

The following action strategies are recommended to address land use conflicts and to provide for orderly land development in Abingdon:

LU 1	<u>Orderly Land Development</u> : Land development and community growth should be undertaken in an orderly manner that is compatible with community character and protects important environmental features.
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**Amend the town's zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the development recommendations set forth in this comprehensive plan.**

**Amend the town's zoning map to reflect new regulations and desired future land use.**

LU 2	<u>Development Opportunities</u> : Infill development and redevelopment of underutilized properties should be encouraged and promoted.
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**Prioritize infill development and redevelopment opportunities and work with public and private partners to implement development options.**

**Develop marketing materials for infill development and redevelopment opportunities and make them available to interested businesses and economic development agencies.**

LU 3	<u>Environmental Constraints and Viewsheds</u> : Land development planning should include consideration of important environmental constraints and viewsheds.
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**Work with potential developers to minimize impacts on environmental features and viewsheds. Encourage sensitive land development and best management practices.**



**Promote conservation design principles in new development.**





### Special Action Project: Land Use

Abingdon's Comprehensive Plan provides the vision, direction, and legal foundation for updating the town's land development regulations and for planning future public facilities and capital improvements. The next step in implementing the comprehensive plan will be to review subdivision and zoning regulations and amend them to reflect the recommendations established by this plan.



## 2027 Comprehensive Plan: Implementation Strategy

An effective comprehensive plan is one that is implemented and used on a daily basis by citizens and governmental officials in dealing with land development and public decisions. One of the first steps will be to update the town's zoning and subdivision ordinances to reflect the goals and recommendations of the comprehensive plan. In addition, other initiatives are recommended to implement the 2027 plan for Abingdon. These key initiatives, discussed in the preceding sections, are illustrated in the map on the following page. The following paragraphs briefly describe each of these key planning recommendations.

### **Implementation Action Strategies**

The implementation action strategies for Abingdon's Comprehensive Plan 2027 include a variety of initiatives that include such things as new park facilities, streetscape and gateway improvements, and expansion of the historic district. Additionally, specific areas have been identified for revitalization/ reinvestment, redevelopment and new development. Each of these specific areas is discussed in greater detail throughout this comprehensive plan. These strategic initiatives and action areas are shown on the Implementation Action Strategies map on the following page.

#### **Revitalization Areas**

Two areas in downtown are identified for revitalization and reinvestment: West Main Street and Depot Square/Farmers Market. A third area for revitalization is identified west of Trigg Street.

Revitalization of West Main Street would include beautifying streetscapes (landscaping, signage, etc.), improving building facades, and developing appropriate infill buildings on vacant or underutilized lots. Revitalization of the downtown will improve the appearance of downtown and attract new businesses to enhance the overall experience of residents and visitors.

The Depot Square and Farmers Market revitalization would include landscaping and improvements to Depot Square, infill development along Main Street, and a new Farmers Market.

The industrial area west of Trigg Street could be revitalized through building and landscaping improvements.

#### **Redevelopment Areas**

Four areas are identified as underutilized and potential redevelopment areas. Three of these areas are industrial in nature and border the railroad tracks parallel to Main Street. The two western most areas consist entirely of larger industrial buildings that should be redeveloped for new land uses that can accommodate additional residential, office and commercial uses. The



eastern most redevelopment area consists of an industrial site and mobile-home park, which could be redeveloped into a more attractive and productive high-density residential use.

Another redevelopment area is an underutilized shopping center located northeast of I-81, Exit 17. The property is prime land for redevelopment due to its location, but is partially located in the floodplain and is not well planned. With the reconstruction of Exit 17 and Cummings Street, there is an opportunity to realign roads in the area and environmentally redevelop the property for a life-style shopping center that can add to the commercial businesses available in Abingdon.

### **Development Opportunity Areas**

Several large tracts of undeveloped land exist west of downtown Abingdon. The lands along western gateways to town can be developed for gateway office/ commercial uses. However, special attention must be given to development layout and design to meet the land development standards and economic development vision of the town. In addition, it will be important to encourage appropriate development standards for adjacent lands in the county.

### **Conservation and Historic Districts**

Expansion of the historic district to the east is recommended to further protect historic resources. Also, individual properties that are architecturally or culturally significant should be protected. It is important that these areas remain a part of the historical fabric that has made Abingdon a historic destination throughout the years. Town initiatives are planned for Fairview and Craig's Meadow/Abingdon Muster Grounds.

In addition, a conservation district is recommended for residential areas located on Bradley Street and Stonewall Heights. Both of these areas contribute to the architectural and cultural heritage of Abingdon and should be enhanced through design standards and guidelines for rehabilitation of buildings, and particularly new structures.

### **Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Improvements**

Traffic calming is recommended along Valley Street to reduce traffic speeds and provide a more attractive pedestrian environment. This is proposed through landscaping, lane adjustments, and alternative on-street parking arrangements. Also, landscaping and traffic management improvements to Plumb Alley are recommended. This project has been discussed many times in the past and a favorable design plan exists that should be implemented.

Pedestrian safety improvements are recommended for schools and the Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center to provide pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, the schools, and the recreation center.



## **Map 17    Implementation Action Strategies**



## **2027 Plan Implementation Matrix**

Implementation of the Abingdon Comprehensive Plan 2027 will require a diversity of partners. Town government will provide leadership and will be a primary player; however, town officials cannot undertake all the recommended action strategies. Participation of civic groups, business leaders, citizens, and others will be needed to effectively achieve the vision established by this plan. Both public and private investment will be required, as well as cooperation and commitment from Washington County. In addition, a variety of potential funding sources should be considered to assist town officials in implementing public projects.

An implementation matrix is provided as an appendix to this plan as a tool for town officials and citizens. This matrix is a summary of the development policies and action strategies discussed in this plan, as well as a summary of proposed timeframes and participants responsible for implementation. The matrix can be used as a quick reference guide for programming work efforts and planning for capital improvements. It can also be used to develop a report card for monitoring implementation of the plan.





## **Appendix**

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