



TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Preliminary Report of Existing Resources

DRAFT

Prepared by the Technical Review Committee

September 2012

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I. ACHNOWLEDGEMENTS.

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II. MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR.

On behalf of the Town of Front Royal's Planning Commission, I welcome everyone in reviewing the contents of this document. I also encourage all to participate in the process of updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Some of you may ask, what exactly is a comprehensive plan? While a brief answer to this question is difficult, a comprehensive plan can be described as a document that dictates the public policy in regards to all types of land development and growth. It is perhaps the most important local document in guiding the future of the Town.

The Planning Commission and Town Council are working together to update the Comprehensive Plan so that it more accurately reflects the goals and aspirations of the community. To accomplish this, a visioning process will take place before any changes to the Comprehensive Plan are drafted. We need new ideas and embrace the opinions from a diversity of people. Despite the difference of opinions that exist, I am confident that we can create a shared vision from our common goals. This will enable the Town to move forward in a direction that best service the current and future citizens of the Town.

This document, *"Preliminary Report of Existing Resources,"* gives recognition to existing laws and previously created plans. It is hoped that from compiling this information everyone involved in the comprehensive plan update process will be more educated and informed about what is required in a Comprehensive Plan and what information from our past we can learn from.

~ *David Gushee, Planning Commission Chair*

III. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE.

The Preliminary Report is a starting point in the process of drafting an updated Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Front Royal. It is intended to serve the three (3) purposes listed below.

PURPOSES OF PRELIMINARY REPORT

1. To explain what content is required to be within a Comprehensive Plan according to the Virginia Code.
2. To emphasize the importance of public participation within the general methodology approved by the Planning Commission.
3. To review the existing Comprehensive Plan and compile existing information and resources that are critical for updating the Comprehensive Plan.

The Preliminary Report is not intended to establish preconceived directives or ideas that would influence free-thought or discourage different opinions and ideas. Rather, it is intended to be a guiding source of information that outlines the general project of updating the Comprehensive Plan so future individuals, businesses and/or groups can spend more time thinking about how best to create and implement a community vision for the future prosperity of the Town of Front Royal.

IV. THE PROCESS.

Phase 1 – Preparation & Review of Resources

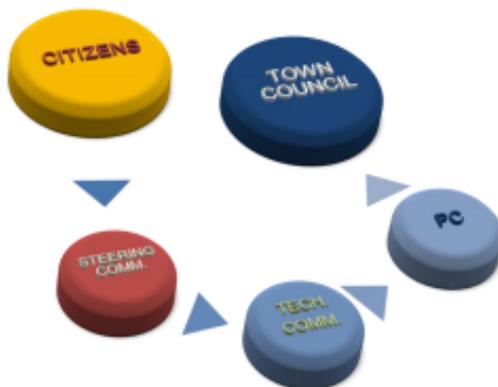
- Inventory of Studies, Surveys, and Plans
- Statistics, Maps and Data Sources
- Stakeholder Identification
- State Code Requirements
- Coordination with Warren County
- Approval of Review Methodology*
- Technical Sub-Committee Formation*
- Preliminary Report on Existing Comp. Plan*

Phase 2 – Visioning

- Citizen Survey
- Visioning Meetings
- Visioning Report & Survey Conclusions*
- Steering Committee Formation*

Phase 3 – Writing a Draft Plan

- Outline
- Chapter Formation
- Maps, Charts, Illustrations, Figures and Tables
- Draft Plan Creation*



Phase 4 – Presentation of Draft Plan

- Preliminary Legal Review
- Presentation to Citizens
- Presentation to Planning Commission
- Presentation to Town Council
- Review Comment Report*

Phase 5 – Final Editing

- Final Legal Review
- Revisions
- Final Report & Public Hearing Draft*

Phase 6 – Final Plan Implementation

- Planning Commission Public Hearing
- Town Council Public Hearing
- Adoption of new Comp. Plan*

* Deliverables

V. TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL FAST FACTS.

Physical Characteristics:

Total area: 9.5 square miles
 Coordinates: 38°55'33"N 78°11'31"W
 Average Elevation: 568 feet
 Founded: 1788
 County: Warren
 State: Virginia

Population Trends (1980 – 2010)

1980	1990	2000	2010
11,126	11,880	13,589	14,440

Population Characteristics (2010)

Race	Population	% of Total
White	12,295	85.1%
Black	1,292	8.9%
Hispanic	666	4.6%

Housing Characteristics

Total Housing Units	6,184	100%
Occupied	5,561	89.9%
Vacant	623	10.1%
Owner Occupied	3,273	58.9%
Renter Occupied	2,288	41.1%

Economic Characteristics

Total Labor Force	11,533
Median Household Income	46,603
Mean Household Income	63,183
Poverty	12.6%
200,000+	2.7%
Unemployed (July 2012 – Warren County)	5.8%

Population Forecast

2010	2020	2030	2040
14,440	15,884	17,473	19,220

VI. STATE CODE REQUIREMENTS.

Virginia Code §15.2-2223(A) requires that the local planning commission of every jurisdiction in the Commonwealth prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction. The Virginia Code further requires that the Planning Commission review the Comprehensive Plan every five (5) years. A public hearing must be held prior to the implementation or amendment of a Comprehensive Plan.

In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the Planning Commission is required to make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants (Virginia Code §15.2-2223(A)). The Comprehensive Plan must be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities (Virginia Code §15.2-2223(A)). The comprehensive plan must be general in nature, by designating the approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan (Virginia Code §15.2-2223(A)).

The Virginia Code requires that a comprehensive plan contain the following elements and plans:

- Long-range recommendations: A comprehensive plan must show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the locality (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Transportation plan: A comprehensive plan must include a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that may include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan. The transportation plan must include, as appropriate, but is not limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations,

pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. The transportation plan also must recognize and differentiate among different types of roads, such as expressways, arterials, and collectors. Upon request by the locality, VDOT is required to provide the locality with technical assistance in preparing the transportation plan (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).

- Road and transportation map: A comprehensive plan must contain a map showing road and transportation improvements, including cost estimates, of the road and transportation improvements to the extent that information is available from VDOT. The plan must take into account the current and future needs of the residents in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Affordable housing: The comprehensive plan must designate areas in the locality for the implementation of measures to promote the construction and maintenance of affordable housing, sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Traditional neighborhood design: If urban development areas are designated, the comprehensive plan must incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design in the urban development area, which may include but is not limited to: (1) pedestrian-friendly street design; (2) the interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets; (3) connectivity of streets and pedestrian networks; (4) the preservation of natural areas; (5) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types; (6) the reduction of front and side yard building setbacks; and (7) the reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections (Virginia Code 15.2-2223.1(B)(6)).

The Virginia Code provides that a comprehensive plan also may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Land Use: A comprehensive plan may designate areas for various types of public and private development and uses, such as different kinds of residential, business, industrial, agricultural, mineral resources,

conservation, active and passive recreation, public service, flood plain and drainage and other areas (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).

- Community service facilities: A comprehensive plan may designate a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, community centers, waterworks, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas and the like (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Historical areas and renewal: A comprehensive plan may designate historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Groundwater protection. A comprehensive plan may designate areas for the implementation of reasonable ground water protection measures (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Capital improvements program, land use regulations, maps of certain districts: A comprehensive plan may include a capital improvement program, recommendations for subdivision and zoning ordinances, and maps of mineral resource districts and agricultural/forestal districts (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Recycling centers. A comprehensive plan may include the location of existing and proposed recycling centers (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Military bases: A comprehensive plan may include the location of military bases, military installations, military airports and their adjacent safety areas (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Utility line corridor: A comprehensive plan may include the designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more (Virginia Code 15.2-2223).
- Urban Development Areas: Any locality may designate one or more urban development areas (Virginia Code 15.2-2223.1(B)).

VII. EXISTING RESOURCES.

- a. **PLANS AND STUDIES.** *The following plans and studies are listed below with a brief description, and are included within the appendix. While other plans and studies exist, and may be appropriate for consideration, the following references are believed to be the most relevant.*

● **PS1. Our Vision for Front Royal: 1997 Town Plan (1998, revised 2/00, 6/00 and 11/04)**

The Town of Front Royal's most recent comprehensive plan is the 1997 Town Plan, adopted in 1998. Revisions to it were made twice in 2000 and again in 2004. Comprehensive Plan Addendums were added to it in 2008 and 2011, and are listed below. The Town's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1958, with revisions occurring in 1970, 1979, and 1988. The comprehensive plan adopted in 1998 differed from past plans because it included a more detailed future land use plan that was broken down into the 14 current planning areas of the Town.

● **PS2. Comprehensive Plan Addendum: Happy Creek, North East, and Leach Run Planning Areas (2008)**

A comprehensive plan addendum was added to the Town's Comprehensive Plan in 2008. It included updates to the Happy Creek, North East and Leach Run Planning Areas. These planning areas represent the eastern most portion of the Town, excluding the area south of John Marshall Highway. The addendum was created to address land use and transportation planning needs that were being felt due to the housing boom between the years of 2001 and 2006. The plan more clearly laid out future roads needed in the area, such as the Leach Run Parkway. Although the East-West Connector was not laid out until the Front Royal Limited Partnership Rezoning Application, the 2008 addendum to the Town's Comprehensive Plan identified a need for a more significant connector road that moved in an east-west orientation and connected with the Town. The 2008 addendum was adopted after a development constraints analysis that was drafted in 2007, which emphasized development while preserving the natural resources in these areas.

● **PS3. Comprehensive Plan Addendum: Urban Development Area (2011)**

In 2011, Warren County and the Town worked jointly to establish a shared Urban Development Area (UDA). The creation of a UDA was both a state requirement and a recognized planning strategy to reduce sprawl by allowing room for growth in the UDA so it is not forced outward into the agricultural and open space areas. Although UDA's were highly controversial in some rural areas in the Commonwealth, they were relatively non-controversial in Warren County or Front Royal. This may be the combined result of higher development pressures in the area and the existence of a future land use plan that closely matched what the State defined as an Urban Development Area.

● **PS4. Where the Mountains Meet the River (1994)**

This plan was adopted in 1994 by Town Council. It is a plan that establishes priorities for creating trails and recreational facilities, while preserving open space and environmental resources of the Town.

● **PS5. VEC's Warren County Community Profile (2012)**

The Warren County Community Profile includes demographic and other quantitative data regarding Warren County, including the Town of Front Royal.

● **PS6. Northern Shenandoah Valley Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2007)**

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires local governments to create a hazard mitigation plan. To address this requirement, the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Planning District developed a regional hazard mitigation plan in 2007 for the localities of Frederick County, Va, the City of Winchester, Clarke County, Warren County, Page County, Shenandoah County, the Town of Front Royal, the Town of Luray, and the other small Towns within the region's Counties. The plan identifies natural disaster vulnerabilities and develops projects and goals to reduce the associated risks. An update of the 2007 Northern Shenandoah Valley Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is underway and should be adopted in late 2012 or early 2013.

● **PS7. Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (2007)**

The plan evaluates information received from surveying citizens about parks and recreation in Warren County, including the Town of Front Royal. The plan identifies needs and strengths of the parks and recreational facilities in Warren County and proposes future improvements to meet the increasing demand from the public.

● **PS8. Fishnet Property (Rockland Park) Master Plan (2009)**

This is a plan that includes cost estimates, phasing and possible funding sources for the development of recreational facilities on the Fishnet Property, located in the Rockland area just north of the Town. The plan also evaluates information received from surveying citizens about parks and recreation in Warren County, including the Town of Front Royal. The proposed recreational facilities include a recreational center, trails, softball and baseball fields, rectangular practice fields, disc golf, playgrounds, camping facilities, use of the existing barn and residence, dog park, stage and event space, picnic areas, canoe/kayak ramp, and interpretive signage.

● **PS9. Northern Shenandoah Regional Water Supply Plan (NSVRC-2011)**

The Northern Shenandoah Regional Water Supply Plan was prepared by the NSVRC to meet the state DEQ requirements of 9 VAC 25 780. The plan studies existing water resources in the region, including Warren County and the Town of Front Royal, to determine what water resources will be needed in the future to meet the growing population. It also implements a drought mitigation plan for localities to following to conserve water resources in times of drought.

● **PS10. Airport Layout Plan (2009)**

The Airport Layout Plan is included due to the special safety considerations regarding development within the area around the airport, and because of the economic importance of the airport to the Town and County.

● **PS11. VDOT 6 year plan.**

The VDOT 6 year plan includes projects that are intended to be funded and constructed, in full, or in part, during the next 6 years.

● **PS12. Analysis of Future Water & Sewer Demand (2011)**

This study was conducted by Town Planning & Zoning Staff. It completes a build-out analysis of the Town and studies the adequacy of the existing and planned water and sewer supply over the next 50+ years.

● **PS13. Front Royal Historic District Survey**

The Front Royal Historic District submission papers are included as background to the number of important historic structures in the Town. The Front Royal Historic District was established in 2002 by Governor Mark

Warner and the Director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The Town Zoning Ordinance includes a Historic Overlay District and regulations intended to encourage and protect the historic structures located within the district.

● **PS14. Riverton Historic District Survey (2000)**

The Riverton Historic District was established in 2000 by Governor James Gilmore and the Director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. No special regulations exist for the Riverton Historic District.

● **PS15. SRI Study - Future Community Roadmap Year One Final Report for Front Royal/Warren County (2008)**

The SRI Study was prepared in 2008 as an economic development visioning document that was created by the EDA to help Warren County and Front Royal manage and promote economic development in a jointly productive way. The SRI Study includes many good recommendations in regards to economic development, but it did not include an extensive amount of public outreach with the citizens.

● **PS16. Warren County Comprehensive Plan Citizen Survey (2010)**

Warren County conducted a citizen survey in 2010 during the earlier stages of their Comprehensive Plan review and update process. The survey provides useful information regarding the demands and opinions of local residents in Warren County, including residents within the Town limits and outside of the Town limits.

● **PS17. The Avtex Fibers Conservancy Park Master Plan Report (2000)**

This plan was developed with input from stakeholders and analysis of the characteristics of the Avtex property. It establishes a proposed master plan for the reuse of the property that includes significant preservation of open areas, trails and generally passive recreational facilities.

● **PS18. Shenandoah River Park at the Former Avtex Fiber Site Draft Interpretive Plan (2000)**

The Interpretive Plan for the Avtex Fibers Property complements with Master Plan developed in the same year. The site of the former Avtex Fibers tells an important historic story of the Town of Front Royal and the Country. The Interpretive Plan establishes a rational argument for developing facilities on the property that tell the story of Avtex and the natural environment. A number of trails, signs/markers, an information

kiosk, community park, entrance features, picnic and river access areas are some of the linked features proposed for this site on the west side of the railroad tracks of the Avtex Fibers Property.

● **PS19. VDOT Shenandoah Valley Transportation Context Study July 27, 2012**

This plan is an evaluation of “context sensitive solutions” along Route 340. Context sensitive solutions is a different approach for designing transportation improvements that VDOT is experimenting with. The approach includes more outreach with the public and integration of design options that are sensitive to the location and the locality. A number of designs were created along the Rt. 340 Corridor from Berryville to Luray. In Front Royal, designs were created for the Rt. 340 intersections at Main Street and Criser Road.

● **PS20. Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan & Front Royal SUATS (2011)**

The 2035 Small Urban Area Transportation Study (SUAT) and Rural Long Range Transportation Plan include long-range transportation planning for the Front Royal Area. The plan identifies the significant transportation improvement projects as prioritized by VDOT and the NSVRC, the latter of which Front Royal is a voting member.

● **PS21. VDOT Front Royal 2020 Transportation Plan (2010)**

The VDOT 2020 Plan for Front Royal is the precursor to the VDOT 2035 Plan.

● **PS22. Preliminary Assessment of the Hydrogeology and Groundwater Availability in the Metamorphic and Siliciclastic Fractured-Rock Aquifer Systems of Warren County, Virginia (2010)**

This report, prepared by USGS, describes the hydrogeology and groundwater availability of the aquifer systems in Warren County. The information is a guide for the development and management of groundwater in Warren County.

● **PS23. Front Royal Capital Improvement Program (CIP) (2008)**

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a five-year schedule prepared for capital projects in the Town of Front Royal, Virginia. It is required to forecast capital outlays for the upcoming fiscal year and the ensuing four years. The information provided in the CIP is useful for projecting future revenue needs and setting funding priorities for capital expenditures

established in the Town budget. The Virginia Code also requires a CIP before cash proffers can be received from developers. The 2008 CIP is the most recent CIP that has been adopted by the Town of Front Royal. However, an update is in the process of being reviewed and approved.

● **PS24. Warren County Capital Improvement Program (2008)**

The most recent CIP for Warren County is from 2008. It includes proposed facilities in the Town, such as those projects related to schools and parks and recreation, as well as major transportation projects.

● **PS25. VDOT Traffic Counts (2002) & VDOT Traffic Counts (2010)**

The most recent data on the volume of traffic on roads in the Town and County are included within the 2010 and 2002 traffic count reports from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

● **PS26. Royal Shenandoah Greenway Plan (2009)**

This plan was prepared by the Virginia Department of Forestry with the assistance from the Front Royal Tree Stewards and Town Staff. It proposes the development of a major trail along Happy Creek and extending to link with the river and national forest.

● **PS27. Warren County Comprehensive Plan, currently under review by Warren County, VA.**

*Under development by Warren County
– to be added at a future date*

● **PS28. Front Royal Town Facilities Plan**

*Under development by the Town of Front Royal
– to be added at a future date*

● **PS29. Warren County Broadband Plan**

*Under development by Warren County
– to be added at a future date*

● **PS30. SUPERNoVA Transit/TDM Vision Plan**

*Under development by the VA Department of Rail & Public Transportation
– to be added at a future date*

● **PS31. Route 522 Multimodal Corridor Study June 2010**

A regional plan proposing multiple types of transportation improvements in the Rt. 522 Corridor from I-81 to I-66.

b. EXISTING ORDINANCES. *The following ordinances are included within the appendix.*

- O1. The Virginia Code, Title 15.2, Chapter 22
- Front Royal Municipal Town Code
 - O2. Chapter 148, Front Royal Subdivision Ordinance
 - O3. Chapter 156, Urban Forestry
 - O4. Chapter 175, Front Royal Zoning Ordinance

c. EXISTING MAPS. *The following maps are included within the appendix.*

- M1. VDOT 2035 Small Urban Area Transportation Study
- M2. VDOT Functional Classification
- M3. Aerial Map of Riverton Area
- M4. Aerial Map of Rt.522 North Corridor
- M5. Historic Front Royal Districts
- M6. Town Sanitary Sewer Map
- M7. Town Waterline Map
- M8. Trails and Bikepaths
- M9. Transportation Projects
- M10. Urban Development Area
- M11. Future Land Use Map (Overall)
- M12. 14 Individual Planning Area Maps
- M13. Existing Town Zoning Map
- M14. FEMA Floodplain Map
- M15. Public Owned Property

d. EXISTING STAKEHOLDERS. *Below is a list of stakeholders with contact information. Other stakeholders may certainly be identified during the review process.*

- S1. FRONT ROYAL PLANNING & ZONING
Jeremy F. Camp
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- S3. Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC)
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- S13. VIRGINIA DEPT. OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
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- S14. VIRGINIA DEPT. OF TOURISM
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- S15. VIRGINIA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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- S22. Builder's Association
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- S23. Warren County, VA School Superintendent
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- S24. The Shenandoah Valley Civil War History
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VIII. APPENDIX.

The attached compact disc includes the existing plans and studies in digital format. Maps are attached with this report on 8 ½" x 11" size paper, and are also saved on the attached disc in .pdf format.