

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a growing county in the heart of Virginia, Powhatan is on a journey to exemplify excellence in local governance and community engagement. Our strategic vision is to be a high performing organization anticipating and meeting the needs of its residents.

The 2025-2028 strategic plan provides a roadmap designed to navigate the realities of growth while harnessing opportunities that benefit our citizens. The plan is structured around six strategic priorities, each backed by strategies that support our goals.

### 1. Financial Stability and Efficiency

Financial health and resilience are fundamental to the county's future. Our strategies focus on diversifying funding sources, balancing the tax structure and increasing reserves.

### 2. Economic Prosperity

A thriving economic environment benefits the entire community. Our strategies focus on nurturing a business-friendly atmosphere, attracting commercial and industrial development that fits our landscape. The 2025 Economic Development Plan will establish the groundwork for Powhatan County to be a prime destination for business growth.

### 3. Housing and Residential Options

As the community grows, so does the need for a variety of housing solutions. Our plan leverages the Comprehensive Plan as a guide to align residential growth with the county's commercial needs. Our goal is to develop housing that is accessible by a wider socio-economic cross-section of the community while also addressing the housing needs of county staff, teachers, and those employed by businesses locating in the county.

### 4. Quality-of-Life and Public Safety

The safety and well-being of our residents is paramount. To be a thriving, growing community requires investing in health services, enhancing public safety, and promoting community engagement.

### 5. Workforce and Enhancing Government Operations

Our employees are critical to achieving the county's success. By investing in leadership development and employee engagement, we will ensure government continues to value efficiency, professional growth and service.

### 6. Rural Heritage and Resource Preservation

Powhatan's long history of rural living and abundant natural resources are key elements of what make up its unique identity in the region. Growth in the county should be strategically located and designed so as to manage impacts to farmland and natural resources.

## **STRATEGIC VISION, PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES**

### **OUR STRATEGIC VISION**

Powhatan County will be a high-performing organization that proactively engages its employees and the community to continuously improve efficiency and service delivery. This vision captures our commitment to effective government operations and a highly engaged county workforce, all while being a place where you can still see farms, large expanses of undisturbed forests and natural lands, clean waterways and the stars are brightly visible at night.

### **OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

- Financial Stability and Efficiency
- Economic Prosperity
- Housing and Residential Options
- Quality-of-Life and Public Safety
- Workforce and Government Operations
- Rural Heritage and Resource Preservation

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1**

### **Financial Stability and Efficiency**

This priority focuses on enhancing long-term financial stability by developing a funding framework that is not only more consistent and diversified but also sustainable. The objective is to avoid increasing the tax burden on the residential homeowner by broadening other revenue streams that can support county services and infrastructure.

The strategic priority is intended to enhance commercial and industrial tax contributions and identifying new revenue sources. By broadening the tax base, Powhatan County can ensure a stable financial environment that supports its strategic development goals while maintaining the quality-of-life for all residents.

#### **Key Strategies**

1. **Balance Funding Framework:** Devise strategies that increase the share of revenue from non-residential sources. Engage in policy discussions to determine realistic targets, including making significant steps towards an 85/15 tax revenue split over the next five years.
  - a. County staff will deliver an initial report to the Board of Supervisors of current revenue contributions from residential and non-residential sources, and potential sources of non-residential revenues for review and discussion, and work with the Board to establish, year-over-year targets.  
Timeline: FY26 budget process.  
Responsible Party: Administration and Finance Dept
  - b. Board and staff will implement an annual review process to monitor progress, and to make adjustments as needed.  
Timeline: Annually, as part of the budget process.  
Responsible Party: Administration and Finance Dept
2. **Increase Fund Balance:** Establish targets to increase the fund balance as a percentage of annual operating revenues, with the goal of improving credit ratings and increasing the financial buffer.
  - a. County staff will review current fund balance levels, deliver targets to increase the fund balance over time.  
Timeline: FY26 budget process.  
Responsible Party: Administration and Finance Dept

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2**

### **Economic Prosperity**

This priority focuses on maintaining a business-friendly environment that attracts and sustains commercial and industrial growth. This priority reflects the county's commitment to fostering an economy that supports diverse business opportunities and creates high-value jobs for our residents.

The updated 2025 Economic Development Plan will be the primary guiding document addressing long-term business growth and priorities. By focusing on strategic land use and promoting high-value industries, Powhatan County aims to achieve a balanced and resilient economic base that broadens the local tax base and provides more opportunities for goods, services and employment.

#### **Key Strategies:**

1. **Economic Development Plan:** The county will update and implement the 2025 Economic Development Plan to address long-term growth, development priorities, infrastructure and workforce development needs.
  - a. The Board of Supervisors in concert with County leadership will work with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to update the Economic Development Plan.  
Timeline: Adopt updated plan mid-2025, review progress annually  
Responsible Party: Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Dept and EDA
  - b. The Board of Supervisors, EDA and county leadership will work cooperatively to implement the 2025 Economic Development Plan to promote and support business recruitment, commercial and industrial growth, and infrastructure investment.  
Timeline: On-going throughout the life of this Strategic Plan.  
Responsible Party: Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Dept and EDA
2. **Commercial and Industrial Growth:** Implementing the new Economic Development Plan, the county will move towards an 85/15 tax revenue split over the next five years.  
Timeline: Make improvements annually towards the goal.  
Responsible Party: Administration, Economic Development Dept and EDA
3. **Strategic Land Development:** Increase the availability of ready-to-build industrial parcels and buildings in growth areas through partnerships with private industry and owners or by investing in infrastructure that supports commercial and industrial growth.  
Timeline: Make improvements annually towards the goal.  
Responsible Party: Economic Development Dept, Planning Dept and EDA

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3**

### **Housing and Residential Options**

Housing is fundamental to the well-being of our residents and balanced residential growth is key to maintaining a vibrant and thriving community. The Board of Supervisors in conjunction with county staff will establish policies intended to balance future housing and infrastructure needs with concern for preservation of the Powhatan's rural heritage. This focus ensures that as we plan for and accommodate growth, we remain focused on maintaining the natural landscapes that make the county unique.

The Comprehensive Plan will provide guidance as we implement policies that will establish housing inventories that meets the diverse needs of the county's residents. There is a growing need for more varied housing options catering to different age groups and economic backgrounds, ensuring everyone from young professionals to retirees can find housing options within the county.

#### **Key Strategies**

1. **Comprehensive Plan Review and Utilization:** The Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and county leadership will utilize the Comprehensive Plan, as a guide for establishing residential and commercial growth policies.
  - a. Consider the recommendations of a citizen working group chartered to ensure alignment of the Comprehensive Plan with the Strategic Plan.  
Timeline: Mid-2025  
Responsible Party: PC, Working Group, Planning Dept.
  - b. The Planning Department will hold several work sessions in the latter half of 2025 to update the Comprehensive Plan and build alignment around a shared vision of the county's development and growth priorities.  
Timeline: Second half of 2025  
Responsible Party: Planning Dept
  
2. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Work with housing organizations and private industry to reduce costs and encourage diverse housing solutions.
  - a. Investigate the potential for collaborative, public/private development options, such as land banks or land trusts, to help create quality, attainable housing options.  
Timeline: 2025  
Responsible Party: Planning Dept
  - b. Consider ordinance amendments to permit new lower cost and alternative development types such as tiny homes, agrihoods, co-housing or ecovillages.  
Timeline: 2026  
Responsible Party: PC, Planning Dept
  - c. Consider the housing needs of an aging population. Review how to encourage the development of aging in place housing, as well as assisted living communities.  
Timeline: 2026  
Responsible Party: PC, Planning Dept

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4**

### **Quality of Life and Public Safety**

This priority addresses the community's desire for a safe, healthy, and engaged community. The goal is to enhance services and opportunities, bolstering public safety and community well-being. The strategy focuses on expanding access to health services, enhancing public safety through continued coordination among emergency services and promoting community engagement through recreation and learning opportunities.

#### **Key Strategies**

1. **Expand Access to Health Services:** Work with the Health District to identify emerging health needs, gaps and risk areas, and to develop recommendations to increase health care services and service delivery.
  - a. Convene local and regional health partners to review the current ALICE and other data and make recommendations to address areas of opportunity for the County.  
Timeline: 2025  
Responsible Party: Deputy County Administrator, DSS
  - b. Community Groups. Review service gaps that may be provided by existing or new non-profits, as well as opportunities for increased collaboration, funding or space.  
Timeline: 2025  
Responsible Party: County Administration
  
2. **Promote Countywide Recreation, Learning and Engagement:** Boost community engagement and wellness by expanding educational and recreational programs that foster collaboration among parks and recreation, the public library, and schools. Focus on engaging diverse groups including seniors, young adults, and families to enhance community health and wellness.
  - a. Develop and implement a new strategic/master plan for Parks and Recreation to include parks, green spaces, and activities that cater to all age groups and lifestyles.
  - b. Implement the Trail Master Plan.  
Timeline: On-going annually  
Responsible Party: Parks and Recreation, Planning Dept
  - c. Implement the Public Library's Strategic Plan to expand access to books and digital resources for all residents.  
Timeline: To be determined in coordination with Library  
Responsible Party: Library
  - d. Develop at least one public access point to the Appomattox river.  
Timeline: By 2027  
Responsible Party: Parks and Recreation, Planning Dept
  
3. **Enhance Public Safety and Emergency Services:** Continue to invest in public safety, enhancing coordination and collaboration with other county services, improving training and resources, and increasing community outreach.
  - a. Evaluate need for and location of future fire and rescue stations.
  - b. Update Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5**

### **Workforce and Enhancing Government Operations**

This priority area focuses on being a high-performing, service-oriented organization that supports the professional growth of our workforce and the efficiency of our operations.

The strategies outlined will develop leadership skills within the county's workforce, modernize operational practices and foster a workplace culture that values engagement and recognition. These efforts are designed to improve service delivery and operational efficiency, ensuring that Powhatan County can effectively respond to current needs and future challenges.

#### **Key Strategies**

1. **Leadership Development Program:** Establish a development program to ensure employees are growing their leadership, communication, and team management skills.
  - a. Develop a curriculum focused on leadership and management.
2. **Public Education and Engagement:** Improve communication, expand public awareness, and increase informed resident involvement in county initiatives.
  - a. Hire a Public Information Officer to oversee and streamline county communications.  
Timeline: FY26 budget process
  - b. Develop and implement a countywide communication plan that includes public, communication channels for information sharing.
  - c. Organize periodic town hall meetings to provide residents a forum to stay better informed and involved in key county developments, programs and activities.
3. **Space Planning and Operational Upgrades:** Modernize the county's operational infrastructure to support efficient service delivery and employee productivity.
  - a. Complete a long-range staffing plan that benchmarks the County's staffing against our peer counties and recommends staffing adjustments in support of the County's strategic needs.
  - b. Complete a space planning audit and a long-term plan to optimize physical spaces for current and future needs, enhancing both employee workspace and public service areas.
4. **Employee Engagement, Recognition, and Retention:** Increase employee engagement, retention and job satisfaction.
  - a. Develop and conduct an employee engagement survey annually to identify opportunities to strengthen our efforts.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6**

### **Rural Heritage and Resource Preservation**

This priority area focuses on ensuring that as Powhatan grows, it maintains those characteristics that make it a unique alternative to the more developed areas of the region. These features include active farms, managed and natural forests, undisturbed lands, fields, waterways and historic structures.

#### **Key Strategies**

1. **Preserve Land.** Preserve rural lands and natural resources.
  - a. Adopt and fund a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.  
Timeline – Program adoption into County Code in 2025. Program funding to be considered in FY26 and future budget processes.
  - b. Review buffer requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and ordinances to achieve greater protection for the highest priority resources and greater flexibility for lower priority areas, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.  
Timeline: Review and make recommendations to the Board in 2025.
  - c. Update development regulations related to setbacks, landscaping and buffering to ensure rural look and feel along primary roadways.  
Timeline: Adopt in 2025
  
2. **Preserve Agriculture.** Slow or reverse the loss of agricultural operations.
  - a. Develop a program to help first time farms get started, particularly on smaller parcels.
  - b. Develop a program to assist next generation farmers, to remain sustainable through generational transitions.
  - c. Investigate emerging trends in agriculture and how to incentivize opportunities such as vertical growing, advanced ag and high demand products.
  - d. Grow agricultural programs through Powhatan’s school system
  
3. **Expand State Parks.** Work with State agencies to expand offerings at Powhatan State Park and the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area (“WMA”).
  - a. Advocate to the State for the funding necessary to complete the Powhatan State Park’s master plan.
  - b. Work with Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries to expand programs and facilities at the WMA.
  - c. Consider facility improvements to existing boat ramps on the James River.