



2014 Update

**Town of Blacksburg
2012**

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Alyssa Halle
Wendell Hensley
"J.B." Jones, Jr.
Alan Raflo
Courtney Simón Grohs

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Acknowledgments for 2012 Update

Thanks are due to the many citizens of Blacksburg, only some of whom are listed here, who contributed to the 2012 update to *Blacksburg 2046*. It was the support and fine assistance of the hundreds of project participants that made the plan what it is -- a reflection of the community's desires and hopes, with strategic steps to achieve that future.

Town Staff

Marc. Verniel, *Town Manager*
Steve Ross, *Deputy Town Manager*
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Keith Bolte, *Fire Chief*
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Jack Leahy, *Community Center Supervisor*
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Rebecca Martin, *Transit Director*
Kelly Mattingly, *Director of Public Works*
JD Smith, *Network Analyst*
Larry Spencer, *Town Attorney*

Planning & Building,

Engineering & GIS Departments

Anne McClung, *Director of Planning & Building*
Adele Schirmer, *Director of Engineering & GIS*
Karen Drake, *Town Comprehensive Planner*
Trish Basham, *Permit Technician*
Lisa Browning, *Zoning/Code Inspector*
Cathy Cook, *Building Official*
Carrie Cross, *Administrative Assistant*
Greg Dudash, *Property Maintenance*
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Karen Hansen, *Administrative Assistant*
Kafi Howard, *Town Engineer*
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Lori Lester, *Water Resources Manager*
Amy Meadows, *CADD/GIS Technician*
Kinsey O'Shea, *Development Administrator*
Daniel Porter, *CADD/GIS Technician*
Sam Sapienza, *Building Inspector*
Doug Shaver, *Construction Inspector*
Katherine Smith, *GIS Coordinator*
Brandon Steele, *Town Engineer*
Matt Stolte, *Town Engineer*

Kasey Thomsen, *Office Manager*
Andrew Warren, *Zoning Administrator*
Will Yager, *Building Inspector*

Planning Interns

Carol Davis, Lauryn Douglas, Kelsey Fryling, Rachel Gabriele, Alyssa Halle, Erika Hansen, Chelsea Jeffries & Heather Poole

Community Relations Office & WTOB

Heather Browning, *Community Relations Manager*
Chip Herman, *WTOB Station Manager*
John McKenna, *Town Website Administrator*
Terry Nicholson, *Museum Coordinator*
Lisa Sedlak, *Producer*

Community Conversations

Blacksburg Chapter of the AARP
Blacksburg Citizens Institute
12th Grade Students and Teachers, *Blacksburg High School*,
8th Grade Students and Teachers, *Blacksburg Middle School*,
Cranwell International Center, *Virginia Tech*
Kim Kirk, *Housing & Neighborhood Services*

Town Contributing Committees

Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.
Downtown Revitalization Committee
Greenway/Bikeway/Sidewalk Corridor Committee
Historic/Design Review Board

Other Contributors

Lauren Blakemore, *Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.*
J. Dan Brugh, *New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization*
Fall 2012 Urban Affairs & Planning Community Involvement Class, *Virginia Tech*
New River Planning District Commission, *Staff*
Meg Nugent, *Omega Designs*
Michael St. Jean, *Virginia Tech/Montgomery Executive Airport Director*
Walter Hearn, *Walter Hearn Associates, LLC*

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December 11, 2012

The Town of Blacksburg is a sustainable community of natural beauty, diversity, civic pride, technological innovation, and educational leadership.

Blacksburg 2046, Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan, addresses the major strengths of Blacksburg, as well as the issues we would like to address as we grow. The Comprehensive Plan is amended and updated annually, and revised every five years pursuant to Virginia State Code. This revision represents the dedication and contributions of Karen Drake, the Town's Comprehensive Planner, and the members of the Long Range Planning Committee, appointed by the Planning Commission. The Long Range Planning Committee has met bi-weekly during 2012 to discuss, revise, and polish the Plan, noting which of the goals and objectives identified in prior plans have been accomplished, which need to be revised or updated, and what new goals or strategies for achieving them need to be implemented. We thank them for their dedication.

As mentioned, the Comprehensive Plan is mandated by State Code. But in Blacksburg, we take our Plan and the process very seriously. We go beyond the minimal requirements, work to seek active input, and incorporate these words into our future planning.

The Comprehensive Plan reviews growth and development issues, first through town-wide categories, such as Sustainability or Transportation, and second through Land Use which includes future land uses for specific areas of Town in addition to issues unique to certain lifestyle-defined areas of Town. The Comprehensive Plan is the first and the last item to be studied before any development project is undertaken. It is not only our guide for land use decisions but it also continues to be a comprehensive reference on the Town and the blueprint for community programs, public and private sector initiatives, and investments in facilities and infrastructure.

Many individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of this Comprehensive Plan, which sets goals to be achieved by the community of Blacksburg by the year 2046. We have made a pointed effort to revise this plan to make it more user-friendly and more accessible. The 2012 plan has been structured with the needs in mind of both the users and those who will implement the various strategies. We hope this guide will serve well to assist the community in moving toward the future.

The Town Council thanks all the citizens who have contributed to this revision of our Comprehensive Plan, *Blacksburg 2046*, our community's guide to development and our vision for our future.

Sincerely,



Ron Rordam, Mayor

BLACKSBURG'S COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Section § [15.2-2223](#) of the Virginia State Code states that *the local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction, and every governing body shall adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.*

While the Town of Blacksburg had adopted previous comprehensive plans, the current format of *Blacksburg 2046* originated in 1996, detailing a 50-year vision for the Town of Blacksburg. The Town is currently working towards achieving this vision. The 50-year vision of the comprehensive plan is intended to remain focused on the year 2046 until the 25-year mid-point in 2021. At that time, a vision should be developed for the next 50 years.

Five-Year Review

Section §[15.2-2230](#) states that *at least once every five years the Comprehensive Plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.*

The first mandatory five-year review and update of *Blacksburg 2046* was completed in 2001, the second was in 2006 and officially adopted in 2007. The 2012 update is the third mandatory five-year review and update and is also the fifteen-year review of a 50-year vision for the Town of Blacksburg.

This review provides an opportunity to assess changes in the community and to update background data and action strategies. The following is an outline of the general process to be followed by the Planning Commission and Town staff when conducting the five-year review of the plan:

- Gather current population, income, employment, and other data to assess trends and compare with projections.
- Update existing land use maps and background data to reflect current information, revising projections and targets as appropriate.
- Compile progress reports from the adopted plan for the past five years and assess progress towards implementation of the long term 50-year vision, goals, and objectives in the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- Host a series of community conversations and public input meetings to reaffirm or adjust the long-term vision and to address any new issues that have arisen over the past five years.
- Update goals, policies, and objectives; include new items that have emerged as a result of the review process, new regulations or requirements.
- Review and revise all text and the Future Land Use Map Series in an open meeting process that allows public input.
- Prepare a recommended plan for review by the Planning Commission and adoption by Town Council after a formal public hearing process.

Annual Review

In addition to the required five-year review, the Town of Blacksburg has instituted an annual amendment review process that allows the Town's Comprehensive Plan to be a long-term vision guiding development within the Town that reflects current trends and developments. The annual review process and implementation plan by Town staff consists of the following steps:

- Review and report progress towards the implementation of the *Blacksburg 2046* Comprehensive Plan objectives and policies.
- Update pertinent data and internal maintenance of plan, for example, the Blacksburg Administrative Manual.
- Reflect new issues that have occurred per Town Council direction or new state legislative requirements.

Citizens may request amendments to the Comprehensive Plan during the annual review. Staff will publicly advertise when amendment applications are being accepted for review, generally at the beginning of the calendar year. Council always retains the ability to initiate amendments to the Comprehensive Plan at any time.

Applicants should meet with Planning Department staff before submittal of an amendment request to review the proposed text or map amendment or a reclassification of a Future Land Use designation reclassification. In order for a private amendment to be approved, the applicant must first demonstrate that:

- A. The amendment will effectively aid in the implementation of goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Additionally the applicant must prove that one or more of the following criteria have been met:

- B.1. The request must be a creative idea or concept that will benefit the community and that was unforeseen during the planning process for the Comprehensive Plan.
- B.2. The subject property or concept is misinterpreted in the Comprehensive Plan.
- B.3. Conditions have changed substantially since the last Comprehensive Plan update, necessitating a change, (e.g., significant changes in surrounding land use or economic conditions).

Amendment applications are considered based on the preceding qualifications. All amendment applications are forwarded to the Long Range Planning Committee for review and recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on the application and provide its recommendation to Town Council. All amendments will be heard by Town Council in a public hearing.

A summary of changes to the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update, as well as future annual amendment details, can be found in the *Blacksburg Administrative Manual*.

How We All Use the Comprehensive Plan

There are multiple audiences who refer to the Town's Comprehensive Plan via the Town's website. Additionally, students research copies available at the Blacksburg Public Library or Virginia Tech's library to learn about the Town and the planning process. Listed below are some of the ways in which the Town staff, committees, and elected officials use the Comprehensive Plan, as well as ways citizens, businesses, and developers can use the plan.

For the Town, the Comprehensive Plan is a guide to:

- Town decision making
- Capital Improvement Projects planning
- Review development applications

For the Community, the Comprehensive Plan is a guide to:

- Learn about the Town
- Learn how to become involved in Town committees and activities
- Research for the purchase of a home, business or property
- Illustrate the long-term land use pattern for the Town
- Understand the basis for Town review of development proposals
- Reference during public hearings on development applications
- Assist developers with project design

Blacksburg Administrative Manual

To help bridge the gap between *Blacksburg 2046*, a more static document, and the dynamic world it functions in today, the Blacksburg Administrative Manual was established. The *Blacksburg Administrative Manual* is an extension of the Comprehensive Plan containing demographics, land use statistics, supplemental maps, and survey results. The information contained within the Blacksburg Administrative Manual supports the policies found within *Blacksburg 2046*, and provides additional information for administering those policies. The data and policy implementation status found in the Administrative Manual is updated by staff on an annual basis.