

A 50-Year Vision for Mr. Jefferson's Region

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May 3, 2002

A Vision for Sustainability

The small city and rural areas that make up the Charlottesville, Virginia region are changing and growing rapidly. Some are excited about the new economic and cultural development this growth presents. Others are concerned that the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the historical ambience of Monticello are encroached upon by strip commercial development and dispersed subdivisions.

These concerns prompted the Sustainability Council of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) to develop the broadly supported 1998 "Sustainability Accords and a Vision of Sustainability." The Accords included goals such as --

- Strong ties between urban and rural areas
- Water quality and quantity
- Clustering and infill development
- Farm and forest preservation
- Transportation alternatives

Creating Goals for Sustainable Transportation and Land Use

In January 2000 the TJPDC launched the Jefferson Area Eastern Planning Initiative (EPI) with a grant from the FHWA Transportation & Community & System Preservation (TCSP) program. Goals of the EPI included --

- *Develop a set of accessible, affordable planning tools to help planners evaluate regional transportation scenarios that are sensitive to local land use variables.* The resulting CorPlan model, which runs on Excel with an optional link to Arcview, met this goal well and is available free from FHWA for use by any interested parties.
- *Create a regional land use and transportation vision for the fast-growing areas around Charlottesville (pop. 180,000 expected to reach 330,000 by 2050).* The EPI presents alternative land use and transportation patterns that achieve the Sustainability Accords, and identifies key success factors needed for a sustainable future. The study findings and recommendations are now being used in regional and local transportation and land use plan updates.

The EPI Advisory Committee, made up of elected officials, study area residents, and leaders from business, development, environmental and community groups, met eleven times and hosted four public workshops during the two-year study. The committee focused on three key questions:

- *How will we live?* – In what types of communities do we want to live and work by the year 2050?
- *Where will we live?* – What areas in the region are suitable for urban development and what areas are off limits?
- *How will we get there?* – What steps are needed to move the region from where it is now to the desired types of communities and growth patterns?

How will we live? Community Elements

How can community design can improve everyday quality of life? The project team, which included architects from the University of Virginia, developed an inventory of drawings and spreadsheets describing the physical characteristics of existing community types or “elements” throughout the region. Each element was scaled to a ¼ mile circle, about a 5-minute walk, which made it easy for participants to visualize and compare them. Workshop participants evaluated the community elements based on their personal perspectives and the regional Sustainability Accords. Based on the feedback, the team developed enhanced urban and suburban community elements.

<i>Designing Desirable Communities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Create a focal point that establishes a community's identity➤ Provide a greater variety of activities to encourage more interactions and improve convenience➤ Design buildings and distances at a scale comfortable for people on foot➤ Provide travel options, most importantly the ability to walk➤ Make better use of open space, with open spaces accessible and available

Urban Mixed-use



East Market Street

Circle reflects five minute walk

How it Is Today.....



Urban Mixed-Use

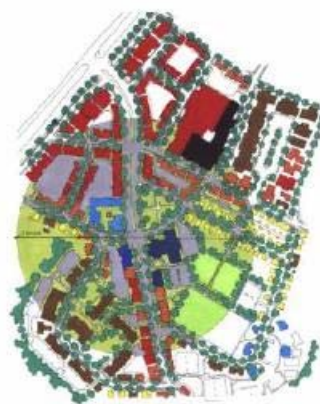
Enhanced Suburban Mixed-use

How it Is Today.....



Suburban Mixed-Use

How it Could Develop

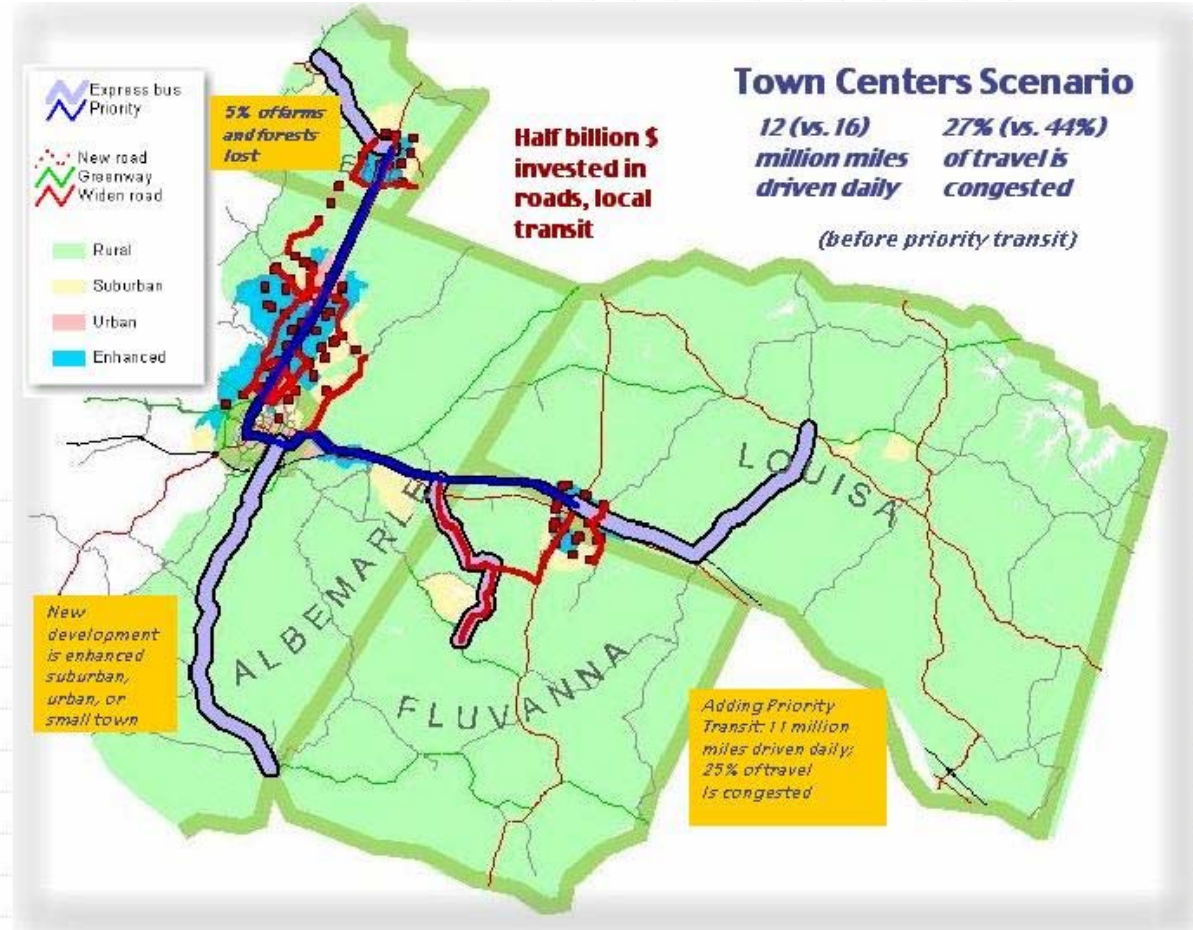
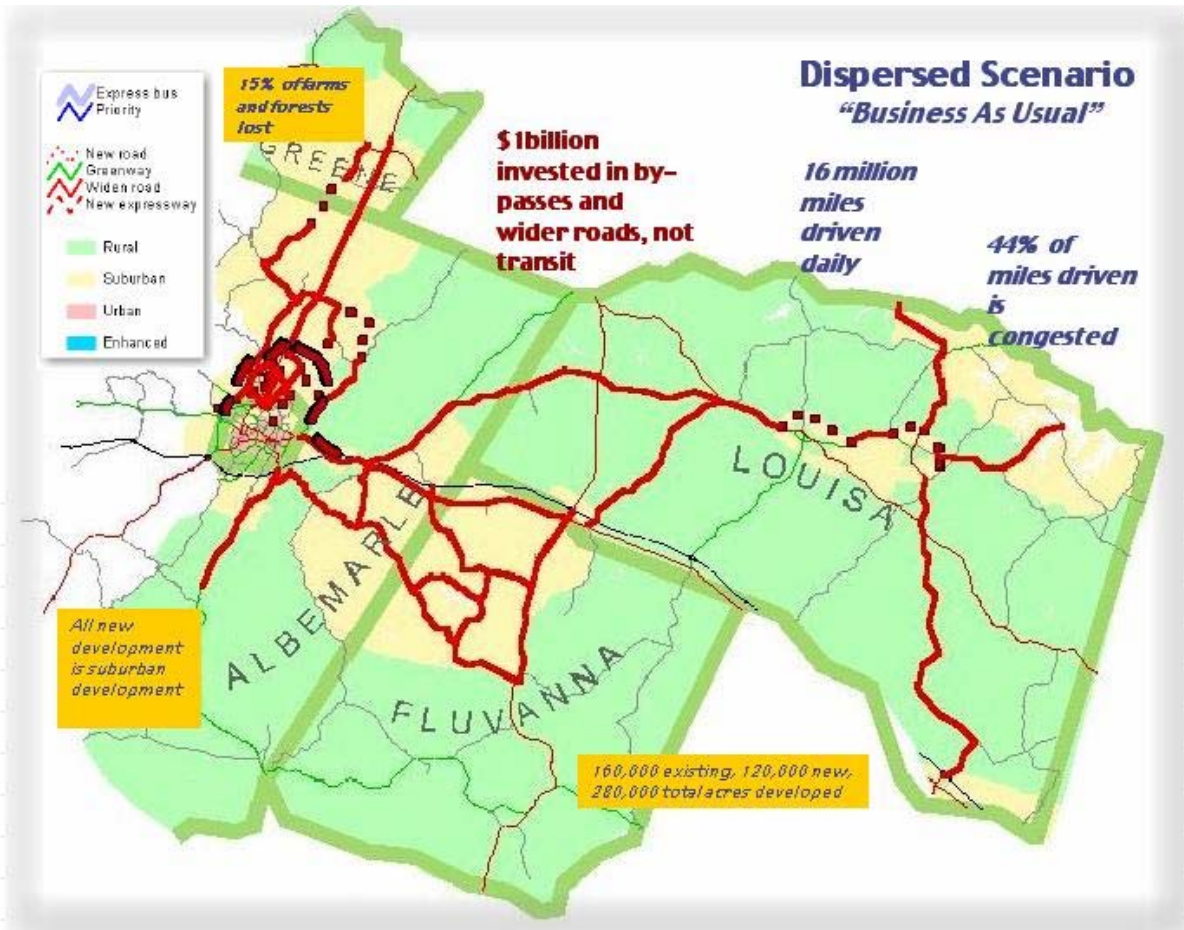


Enhanced Suburban Mixed Use

Where will we live? *Regional Scenarios*

Through games developed by the project team, residents created maps of proposed development areas using the enhanced community elements. Using the CorPlan model developed for the EPI, the team converted the maps into scenarios that compared impacts on transportation, land consumption, and other factors from the Sustainability Accords. The public's reaction was clear: residents rejected a dispersed, low-density pattern, and preferred clustered enhanced communities along major corridors and key crossroads.

Performance Measure <i>Sustainability Accord</i>	Dis- persed	Town Cntr	Urban Core
Percent Farms & Forests <i>Retain resources/habitat/farms/forests</i>	55	64	65
Percent Developed <i>Retain resources/habitat/farms/forests</i>	45	36	35
Percent Living in Clustered Communities <i>Optimize use/cluster/human scale</i>	13	61	68
Percent Non-Auto Trips <i>Transportation Alternatives</i>	4	15	18
Annual Gallons Gas Consumed (billions) <i>Conserve Energy</i>	155	121	110
Percent Travel Congested <i>Employment/Education Access</i>	44	27	20
Water Quality & Quantity <i>Water Quality & Quantity</i>	Poor	Good	Good



How will we get there? *Key Success Factors*

The current development pattern is likely to result in the dispersed scenario. The EPI distilled the following “key success factors” for a regional agenda that achieves the alternative scenarios.

Key Success Factors: A Regional Agenda for Change

- Build in designated development areas
- Maintain viability, character, and scale of small towns
- Maintain development area boundaries
- Build quality communities by using urban or enhanced suburban designs in development areas.
- Preserve rural areas
- Coordinate investments so infrastructure supports and directs desired development
- Ensure regional equity so that the benefits and fiscal impacts of development are shared fairly among the localities in the region
- Ensure affordability with incentives such as inclusionary zoning and location-efficient mortgage programs.

The TJPDC is now busy pulling together players from all arenas to apply these concepts to local and state agency plans and projects. The process is kicking off with the United Jefferson Area Mobility Plan (UNJAM 2025) that will combine the MPO's long range plan with rural transportation and land use plans. Hands-on, interactive workshops are bringing together local and state officials, activists, transportation engineers, and business people to brainstorm and prioritize transportation policies, projects and implementation strategies that will deliver on the community's desired vision for the future.

Taking advantage of the broad planning requirements of TEA-21, the UNJAM plan will include recommendations linked to local land use and zoning, regional economic development, and environmental protection. Within two years, the TJPDC will have a regional strategic plan identifying a sustainable future for transportation, land use, the economy and the environment.

The EPI played a critical role in the TJPDC's ability to make the leap from broad-based policies to specific strategies. It provided the community a way to visualize and understand the relationship of local land use decisions to long term regional trends. And it introduced a way for transportation planners and land use decision-makers to find a common language and identify actions that would mutually support goals to improve quality of life for the region.

“Wisdom holds that land use and transportation planning go together like a horse and cart, but this is the first planning effort that hitches them together.” -- Sally Thomas, Member of EPI Advisory Committee, MPO Policy Board & Chair, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

The CorPlan model can be downloaded from FHWA free to any interested parties. The EPI products to be delivered this June to FHWA will include not only detailed reports from the study, but also a handbook for other communities interested in trying a similar approach. For more information, contact Felicia Young of the FHWA TCSP program (www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp): felicia.young@fhwa.dot.gov; (202) 366-1263.

For more information on the TJPDC's ongoing work in sustainable transportation and land use planning, visit www.tjpd.org or contact Executive Director Harrison Rue at hrue@tjpd.org, 434-979-7310.

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