



BATH COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

**BATH COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Room 115– 6:00 P.M.
Monday, November 27, 2023**

1. Call to Order
2. Acknowledge Public in Attendance
3. Public Comment – Matters Unrelated to the Agenda
4. Additions and Corrections to Agenda
5. Public Hearing(s):
None.
6. Chairman's Report
7. Staff Report
8. Old Business:
Comprehensive Plan – Review Housing Chapter
9. New Business:
 - December meeting
10. Approve Minutes of September 25, 2023 meeting
11. Adjourn

Planning and Zoning

10/4/2023 – 11/8/2023

Tax Maps

- Progress is continually being made on updating tax maps and website updated accordingly

Zoning/Planning Issues

- Received phone calls from several individuals regarding water availability in Millboro for proposed housing development – stated there isn't enough water available
- Received multiple phone calls regarding construction in floodplain and how to determine elevations since Bath County does not have base flood elevations
- Multiple site visits for complaints
- Attended Court on two separate zoning violations – both found guilty – failure to comply with order will result in jail for one and the other will be issued violation and brought back to court again if they have not complied
- Complaint regarding construction of a barn that is actually a residence – being looked into by different county departments
- Received complain regarding chickens and turkeys in residential zoning district that were roosting on neighbor's vehicles – animal control addressed
- Correspondence to VDOT for review of the final draft transportation chapter for inclusion in the upcoming revised Comprehensive Plan
- Draft Housing Chapter for the Comprehensive Plan update will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their November 27th meeting
- Rezoning request from R-2 to A-2 to set singlewide mobile home in Millboro District will be heard by Board of Supervisors on November 14th
- Received request for review of properties being considered for a conservation easement
- Revised Capital Improvement Plan form for inclusion in the upcoming budget packet
- Provided updated Magisterial Maps with polling place change for Warm Springs Magisterial District to Voter Registration

Miscellaneous

- Attended Housing Consortium zoom meeting (regional)
- Attended VATI PMT conference call for update on project and drawdowns
- Attended Watershed Implementation Plan zoom conference call
- Attended Board of Supervisors meeting
- Attended Bath Highland Network Authority meeting in Bolar
- Attended Appalachian Regional Commission meeting for ARC Ready LDD

Permits and Fees

YTD permits issued 2023	168
Permits issued this month	17
Monthly:	
Construction	15
Subdivision	1
Sign	1
Fees collected	\$55.00



HOUSING

CHAPTER 3 Housing

Housing is a necessity. For a community to thrive, it must have a sufficient stock of quality housing that residents can afford. In recent years, the gradual aging of the housing stock, the proliferation of second homes, the conversion of year-round housing units to short-term rentals, and the rise in housing prices triggered by COVID-19 have limited housing options in Bath County that are both affordable and of adequate quality. In short, there is not enough quality housing at needed price points to support the existing year-round and seasonal workforce.

The lack of housing options creates difficult challenges for residents and limits the County's economic development opportunities by creating a major barrier to workforce retention and attraction. Employers have reported housing as a major challenge for recruiting and retaining employees. As the supply of workforce housing remains constrained, many of the County's workers have been priced out of the market and are forced to commute in from surrounding areas.

Ensuring affordable, quality housing is available to all Bath County residents and workers is a worthy goal. Such assurance reflects a community's ability to respond to the needs of its citizens, as well as to accommodate growth and economic development. Local governments can be influential in shaping the housing delivery system by pursuing public policies that are designed and implemented to ensure local housing goals are met. This chapter hopes to lay the foundation for a policy environment that is conducive to meeting the County's housing needs.

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DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND HOUSING DEMAND

The following summarizes major demographic characteristics and trends that impact the need and demand for housing in Bath County.

Population Size: Bath County's population has been gradually decreasing since the 1930s, and according to the Weldon Cooper Center's population projections, this trend is expected to continue.

Household Characteristics: As of 2021, Bath County had 1,823 households, most of whom own their own home (78 percent). At least 14 percent of households rent their home. The majority of households (79%) are small households with 1 or 2 people.

Commuting Patterns: Many residents of Bath commute out of the county for work, especially among higher earners. Of the 1,653 workers living in Bath County, less than half (43%) work in Bath. Workers commuting out of Bath for their primary jobs are commuting to a variety of destinations including Alleghany County (5.6%), the City of Covington (4.7%), and Augusta County (4.5%). In addition, nearly 700 workers commute into Bath for their primary job. High housing

costs and a lack of available units create major barriers for Bath County employees to live and work in the County.

Remote Workers: Increasing opportunities for remote work have introduced a new source of housing demand as workers who were previously required to live in more urbanized employment hubs can now choose to live in rural settings while retaining their jobs.

Second homes and Short-term rentals: Due to its reputation as a vacation destination, Bath also has a relatively substantial market for second homes and investor-owned short-term rentals. This limits the housing units available to longer term residents.

Housing Insecurity: More than 10% of households in Bath County spend more than 30% of their income on housing. These households are more likely to make tough choices between housing and other necessities and are more likely to be at risk for homelessness in the event of an unexpected household expense.

HOUSING STOCK

In 2021, Bath County had 3,349 housing units, an increase of 2.4 percent from 2010. The majority of Bath County's housing (96%) are single-family units, about three-fourths of which have three or more bedrooms. Since more than three-quarters of households have two or fewer people, there is a mismatch between unit size and household size. Consequently, supporting smaller units, especially on primary transportation routes and near villages, could benefit both current residents and prospective residents.

The remaining 3.6 percent of Bath County's units are mobile homes. As of June 2020, 557 manufactured or mobile homes in Bath were registered with the DMV and the 2021 ACS suggests that as many as 514 may be occupied as primary residences.

Owner-occupied housing units accounted for 54.4 percent of the total units (up nearly 6 percent from 2010) while 12.1 percent of the total units were renter occupied and 33.5 percent of total housing units were considered vacant.

The County's 1,526 vacant units are largely (69%) held for seasonal, recreational or other occasional use which is evidence of demand from second-home buyers over and above demand from residents and prospective residents. At least 9% of vacant units are long-term vacancies: abandoned, slated for demolition, or otherwise held in the long term without being occupied. From 2014 to 2021, 71 new housing permits were issued (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service). No multi-family homes were built during that same time period.

About two-thirds (66.5 percent) of the housing stock was built prior to 1980 (Figure 3.1). Bath County has its share of older homes as approximately 25 percent of the total housing stock was

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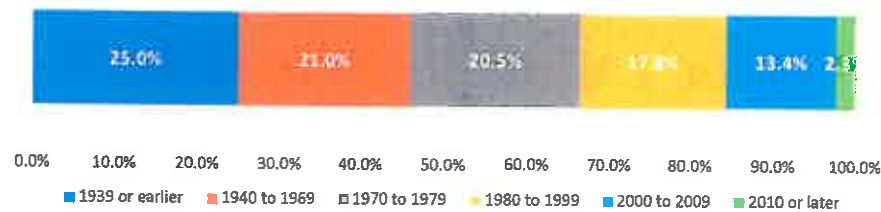
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Bath County Comprehensive Plan Housing

built prior to 1940 (2021 ACS Five-Year). As for newer construction, one-third (33.5 percent) of the homes in Bath County were built after 1980, compared to 56.2 percent throughout Virginia. About 15 percent of Bath County homes were built in 2000 or later (2021 ACS Five-Year).

Figure 3.1: Age of Bath County Housing Units

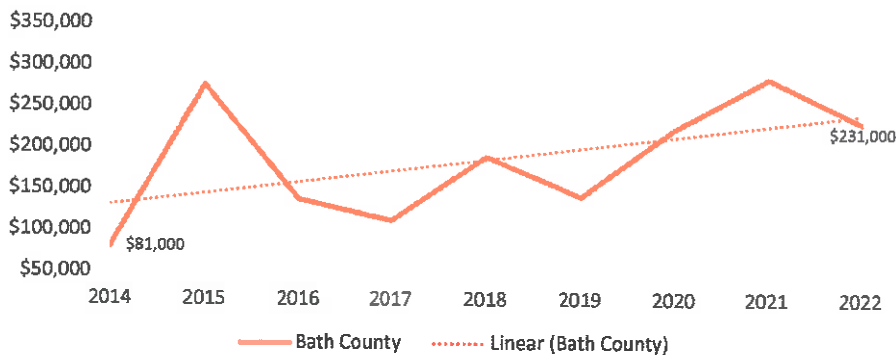


Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year data (2017-2021)

HOUSING MARKET & COSTS

The median value of owner-occupied housing units was \$174,100 according to the 2021 ACS (five-year estimates). This figure is slightly higher than Highland County's \$166,400, but both counties significantly trailed the statewide median value of \$330,600. However, median sale prices have increased dramatically from \$81,000 in 2014 to \$231,000 in 2021 (Figure 3.2). The median gross rent in Bath County was \$628 per month. Highland County was somewhat higher, at \$710, whereas the statewide median was at \$1,326 (2021 ACS Five-Year).

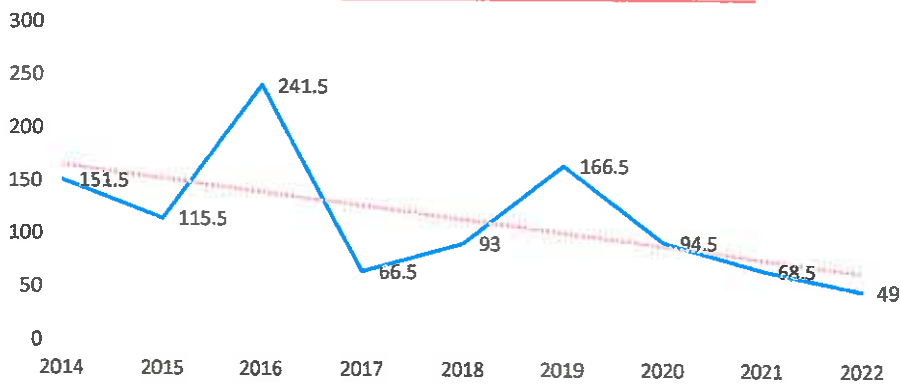
Figure 3.2: Bath County Median Sale Price, 2014-2022



Source: VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2022 REALTOR Sale Data

Despite a declining population, demand for housing in Bath County has increased since 2014 as indicated by rising housing prices and homes being sold more quickly. As seen in Figure 3.3, the number of days on the market that houses are for sale before they are sold decreased between 2014 and 2021.

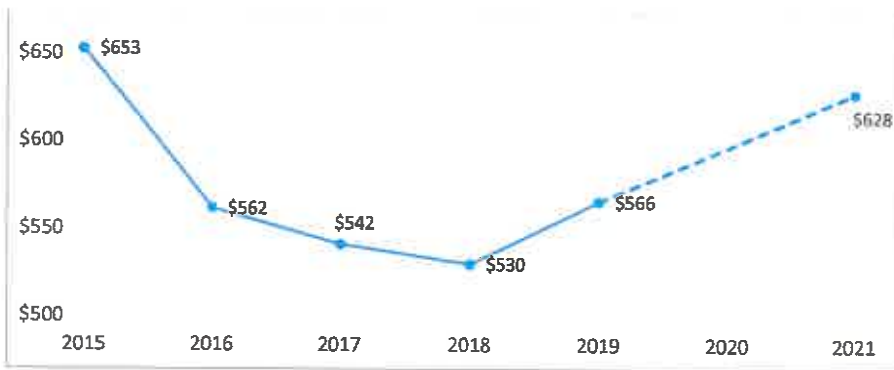
Figure 3.3: Bath County Median Days on the Market, 2014-2022



Source: VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2022 REALTOR Data

Less than 4% of all housing units are vacant for-sale or vacant for-rent, and the rental market vacancy rate (less than 2.5%) is even lower than the for-sale rate (less than 4.5%). This indicates a need for additional rental units as the rental market is likely too tight. Increasing rents that rose by 18 percent between 2018 and 2021 also indicate increasing demand and scarcity of rental units.

Figure 3.4: Bath County Median Gross Rent, 2015-2021



Source: VCHR tabulation of 2015-2021 ACS 5-year, Estimates adjusted to 2021 Dollars

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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Having an adequate supply of affordable housing in Bath County, and the proximity of jobs and housing are worthy goals for the County to pursue to improve the lives of all our citizens. On one hand, increasing home values in Bath County are desirable, but it also means that affordable housing becomes scarcer for our teachers, nurses, firefighters, police officers, carpenters, hotel and retail workers, waitresses, and others. This situation is forcing these wage earners to look elsewhere to meet their housing needs, separating them from their workplaces in Bath County and increasing their transportation costs and gasoline usage at a time when gas prices have risen.

Furthermore, some "affordable housing" in the form of older housing stock can easily deteriorate from lack of maintenance investment, prompting the need for potential costly remodeling or even reconstruction of these older homes.

Housing affordability problems are not limited to Bath County alone. As home values continue to increase, more attention has been given to this issue both statewide and nationally. Rather, these problems are regional in nature and warrant that all localities in our region work together for equitable solutions.

Defining Affordable Housing

In 2003 the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 2406 requiring localities, as part of their comprehensive plans, to designate areas and implement measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing that is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality.

So many people may ask, "what is affordable housing?" While the answer will vary, depending on an individual's or family's ability to pay, the Task Force looked to established definitions as a basis for its work. Section 15.2-2201 of the Code of Virginia states the following:

"Affordable housing" means, as a guideline, housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below the area median income, provided that the occupant pays not more than 30% of his gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities.

Based on the statistics presented in the [2021 ACS \(Five-Year\)](#), [70.2](#) percent of Bath County's homeowners with a mortgage have access to housing that is affordable to their income bracket, because they are spending less than 30 percent of their salaries on housing costs. However, Bath County suffers from a lack of housing which is affordable to those making within 80-120 percent of the median [household](#) income, which means a yearly salary between [\\$44,645](#) and [\\$66,965](#) ([2021 ACS Five-Year](#)). If this segment of the population is priced out of the market, community vitality will suffer.

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Regardless of established definitions of housing affordability, what is considered affordable to an individual or family depends on their circumstances. In general, whether a house or other dwelling is affordable hinges on the following “affordability variables.”

- Family/household size
- Total income
- Selling or rental price of dwelling

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While workforce housing is a major concern, the County should also be mindful of the following needs across the spectrum:

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- Housing for “our public servants”
- Active senior housing
- Housing for those on fixed or retirement incomes
- Assisted living facilities and long-term care facilities
- Fair and accessible housing for disadvantaged populations
- Homeownership & rental housing

Workforce Housing

Workforce housing is important to the economic vitality of communities. Affordable homes support the local workforce so workers can live close to their jobs. A healthy mix of housing options—including market-rate and affordable, owner-occupied and rental, single-family and multifamily—targeted to households across the age spectrum, ensure opportunities for all individuals to improve their economic situation and contribute to their communities. Adding workforce housing in Bath County would have numerous benefits. In particular, workforce housing will serve to meet the needs of entry-level workers and workers who want to stay in the area as they grow into adulthood. This will help to encourage younger residents to put down roots in Bath County. Additionally, local businesses will benefit both from having a larger customer base of year-round residents and from an improved ability to attract and retain workers.

Many factors influence housing construction costs. The following factors contribute to higher construction costs and can impede efforts to provide affordable housing, particularly to the local workforce.

- Rising land costs
 - Land availability
 - Lack of high density zoning
 - Lack of mixed use zoning
 - Design standards
 - Lack of local incentives

- Public perception of “affordable housing”

A long-term vision for affordable housing should emphasize an assurance that all housing needs are being met for people at all income levels. However, a high priority for the short-term should be to promote the development of an adequate supply of local housing for wage earners, often referred to as “workforce housing,” which should consist of both homeownership and rental housing choices.

Doing so will enable people who work in Bath County and are already vested in the community to have more viable options to live in Bath County. These endeavors would assist the housing needs for employees, and could aid in their retention.

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Supporting Workforce Housing

After establishing workforce housing as a priority housing need to be addressed in Bath County, the following endeavors should be explored:

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Strategy #1: Increase the supply of homes that would be attractive to first-time homebuyers, young persons just out of college starting their careers, public service employees, and active seniors who are looking to downsize. Such housing choices should include both new construction and rehabilitation of existing, deteriorated homes.

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Strategy #2: Increase the supply of housing that is affordable to moderate-income households and inclusive of both homeownership and rental opportunities. This is housing that is affordable to those with incomes between 80 percent and 120 percent of area median income, so that no more than 30 percent of household income is spent on housing costs, including basic utilities.

Strategy #3: Create an equitable distribution of workforce housing throughout the County to avoid concentration. Wherever possible, workforce Dwelling Units should be built in both new and in existing neighborhoods and can be distributed evenly between and throughout the village cores and the rural areas of the County.

Strategy #4: Ensure that all workforce housing, both new construction and renovation of older housing, is of high- quality design and compatible with surrounding housing, for long-term sustainability and minimal future maintenance.

Strategy #5: Enhance effectiveness of existing housing assistance programs through local funding.

Strategy #6: Develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations to help implement the workforce housing strategies.

Strategy #7: Stress in the public forum that our affordable housing initiative focuses on building or rehabilitating housing that is affordable to those whose continued service is vital to Bath’s future vitality.

Strategy #8: Increase the number of long-term rental units in the market.
Implementing Housing Strategies

The County could look at the following as means to implement these recommended strategies that support workforce housing:

- Rezone land to establish new zoning districts, mixed-use zoning districts, and add more uses and higher densities in existing zoning districts -- which will encourage the collocation of jobs and housing, such as the use of Village Centers.
- Update the zoning code to support needed housing types such as multi-family housing, single-level living, and starter.
- Rezone additional lands for more zoning for commercial and industrial uses, thereby providing the potential for more employment opportunities to County residents.
- Adopt a new Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance that aligns with Section 15.2-2305 of the Code of Virginia as part of the new update to the Land Use Regulations to help our workforce afford to live here.
- Adopt and implement a Village Initiatives Plan which could provide opportunities for new housing and rehabilitation of existing housing within certain Village Centers.
- Administrative or permitting fees may be reduced or even waived and permitting can be expedited as a means to support affordable housing.
- Integrate housing supports such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), Habitat for Humanity, Project-Based Vouchers, and USDA and DHCD housing rehabilitation programs in the market by engaging with state and regional service providers and encouraging landlords and developers to offer units for voucher-holders.

More specifically, an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance can be a tool for realizing the construction of affordable dwelling units with certain new development applications, providing regulations for and developer incentives to promote the construction of affordable dwelling units as part of new residential development projects. Such an ordinance is enabled by the authority set forth in Section 15.2-2305 of the Code of Virginia, and may follow the text verbatim.

For purposes of example, another locality in Virginia has adopted certain specifics in their ADU ordinance that prescribe:

A rezoning may be approved with an increase in the developable density by no more than 20%, if the applicants consents to a voluntary and enforceable condition in which at least 12.5% of the units are set aside as Affordable Dwelling Units (and density increases of no more than 10% are allowed if at least 6.25% of the units are set aside in a multi-family project application).

In this example, if fifty (50) new housing units are planned and 12.5 percent of the fifty (50) units are set aside as Affordable Dwelling Units, then the Board of Supervisors could grant a density bonus of ten (10) additional units. In this scenario, the applicant must also agree to an enforceable phasing schedule, whereby market rate units must be built and occupied concurrent with a certain percentage of the affordable units, ensuring that both get built.

One final note, approving new subdivisions with low densities can increase housing costs because of the costs associated with providing infrastructure. If the permitted density through zoning is increased, more housing units can typically be built at a lower cost, because the development costs get spread across a greater number of units. A "cluster zoning" or pattern of development can help make this type of development pattern attractive in a rural community due to its decreased road costs and increasing the chances to mix in some affordable dwelling units. Consequently, providing ADU's will help to increase access to affordable housing for all of our public service workers.

HOUSING SERVICES

Bath County is the recipient of numerous housing programs designed to ensure citizens have access to adequate, affordable housing. Several organizations work together towards meeting the housing needs of low-income households. The following is a partial listing of housing providers serving low- and moderate-income individuals and families in Bath County:

Community Housing Partners (formerly Virginia Mountain Housing) – provides low-interest, deferred, and forgivable loans for the installation or improvement of indoor plumbing to owners of substandard housing.

448 Depot Street NE, Christiansburg, VA 24073 (540) 382-2002

Virginia Housing – through the Single-Family Regional Loan Fund, assists low-income households in purchasing their first home. The program offers low-interest loans with down payment and closing cost assistance, making monthly mortgage payments more affordable.

601 S. Belvidere St. Richmond, VA 23219 (877) 843-2123

(The Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority currently services Bath County and may be contacted at 1700 New Hope Rd Waynesboro, VA 22980 (540) 946-9230.)

USDA Rural Development – offers low-interest loans to very low- and low-income people in rural areas who are lacking adequate housing and unable to obtain loans from private lenders at reasonable rates. Loans may be used to purchase, build, improve, repair, or rehabilitate rural homes and to provide sufficient water and waste disposal systems.

650 N. Lee Highway, Lexington, VA 24450 (540) 248-0246

Commented [JC1]: Would you like to keep this discussion of ADUs? Has the County adopted an ADU ordinance since then?

We could consider replacing this discussion with a strategy that says to "Use the example ADU ordinance found in Section 15 2-2305 of the Code of Virginia to draft and adopt an ADU ordinance that allows the constructions of accessory dwelling units as part of new residential development projects "

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Bath County Comprehensive Plan
Housing

Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) – provides a variety of programs addressing the needs of low-income individuals, including emergency housing repairs and weatherization.

302 2nd Street, SW Roanoke, VA 24001 (540) 777-4673

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Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (formerly Virginia Water Project) – encourages the development of water and wastewater systems to serve low-income, rural residents at affordable costs.

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347 Campbell Ave SW. Roanoke, VA 24001 (540) 345-1184

SHARE Homeless Intervention Program – seeks to prevent the displacement of individuals and families from their homes as a result of eviction or foreclosure, and assists the homeless in securing permanent housing. The program also provides a training and educational component to ensure self-sufficiency.

Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority 1700 New Hope Rd. Waynesboro, VA 22980 (540) 946-9230

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission – offers down payment and closing cost assistance to low and moderate income first-time homebuyers.

112 MacTanly Place, Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 885-5174

HOUSING GOALS

1. Maximize the opportunity for a diverse range of housing to serve the varying needs of Bath County's present and future populations.
2. Foster a healthy housing market as a tool for economic development and workforce attraction and retention.
3. Increase the availability of long-term housing to provide additional housing options for residents and workers.
4. Support residential growth in designated areas and promote suitable infrastructure to support these communities.
5. Ensure that the County's natural beauty, environmental quality, and rural character are not sacrificed when planning for future housing opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- a. Improve the condition of existing housing to ensure that all households have safe, sound, and sanitary homes.
- b. Promote the development of a diversity of housing types, including attached and multifamily housing development, to serve a wide range of existing residents and attract new households.
- c. Ensure the zoning code supports needed housing types including multi-family housing, smaller units, single-level living, starter homes, and modest up-grade housing for young families.
- d. Continue strategic efforts to identify and prepare priority sites for residential development.
- e. Be responsive to the housing needs of the County's growing elderly population by promoting affordable senior housing and allowing attached or accessory units for elderly parents.
- f. Increase the availability of rental housing; promote the development of mixed-use residential with a range of affordability.

- g. Coordinate with major employers to identify housing needs and prioritize in-demand housing types.
- h. Promote the development of affordable, starter, and workforce housing within the County.
- i. Institute a policy to ensure that developers, and not taxpayers, pay for the costs and impacts of development within the County.
- j. Allocate proper and suitable areas for desirable low, medium, and high-density residential development through zoning and through management of public services and infrastructure.
- k. Allow for village centers/mixed use development in designated growth areas.
- l. Limit residential expansion in designated rural areas that are not appropriate for development or in areas where there are environmental concerns such as limited water or karst topography.
- m. Promote adaptive reuse to create opportunities for multi-family housing.
- n. Explore full range of real estate tax abatement options under state code to incentivize residential rehab and revitalization.
- o. Support prefabricated, manufactured, and modular construction houses where appropriate to provide new opportunities for more affordable housing.
- p. Integrate housing supports such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), Habitat for Humanity, Project-Based Vouchers, and USDA and DHCD housing rehabilitation programs in the market by engaging with state and regional service providers and encouraging landlords and developers to offer units for voucher-holders.



HOUSING

CHAPTER 3

Housing

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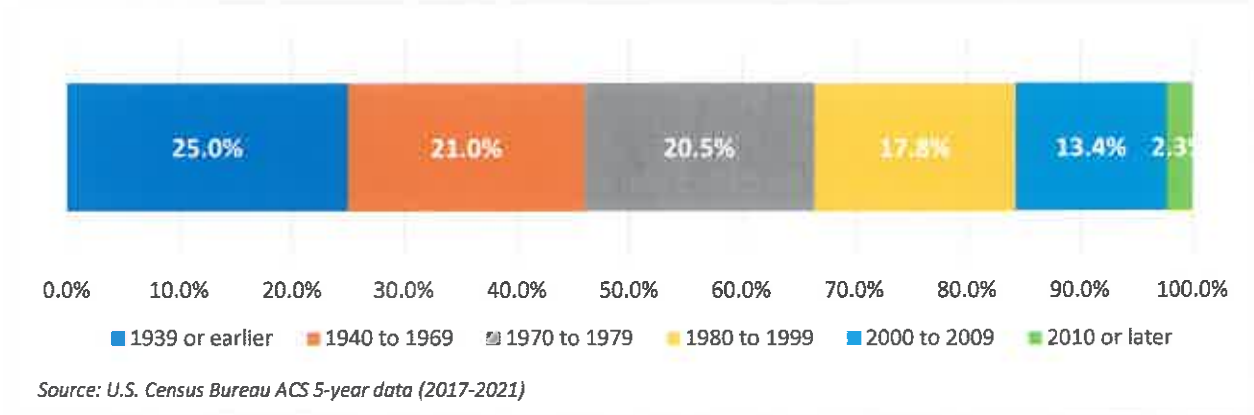
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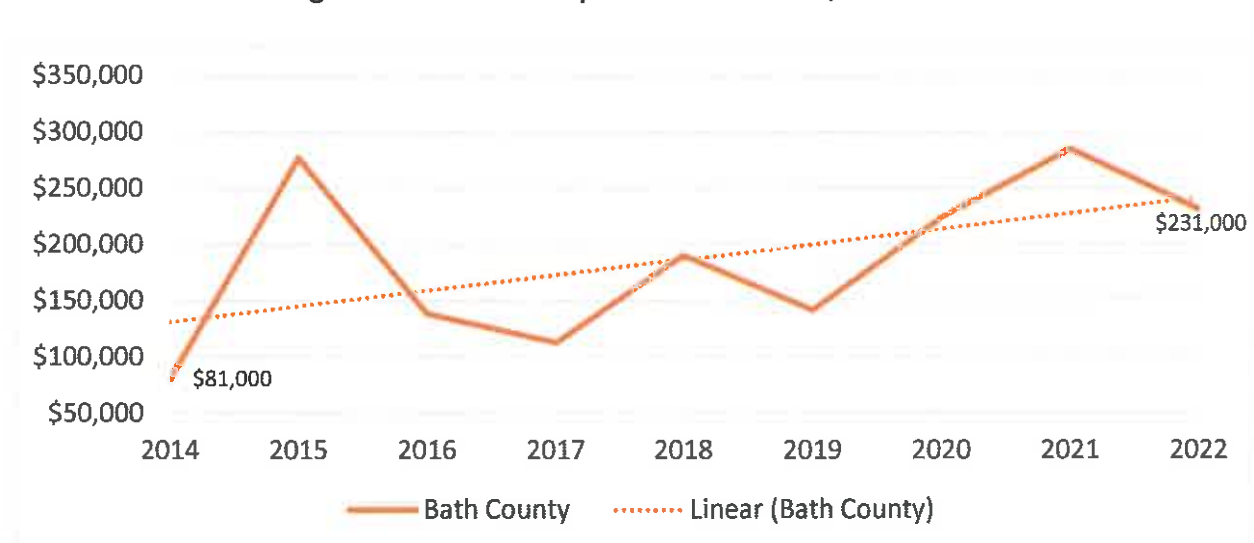
Figure 3.1: Age of Bath County Housing Units



HOUSING MARKET & COSTS

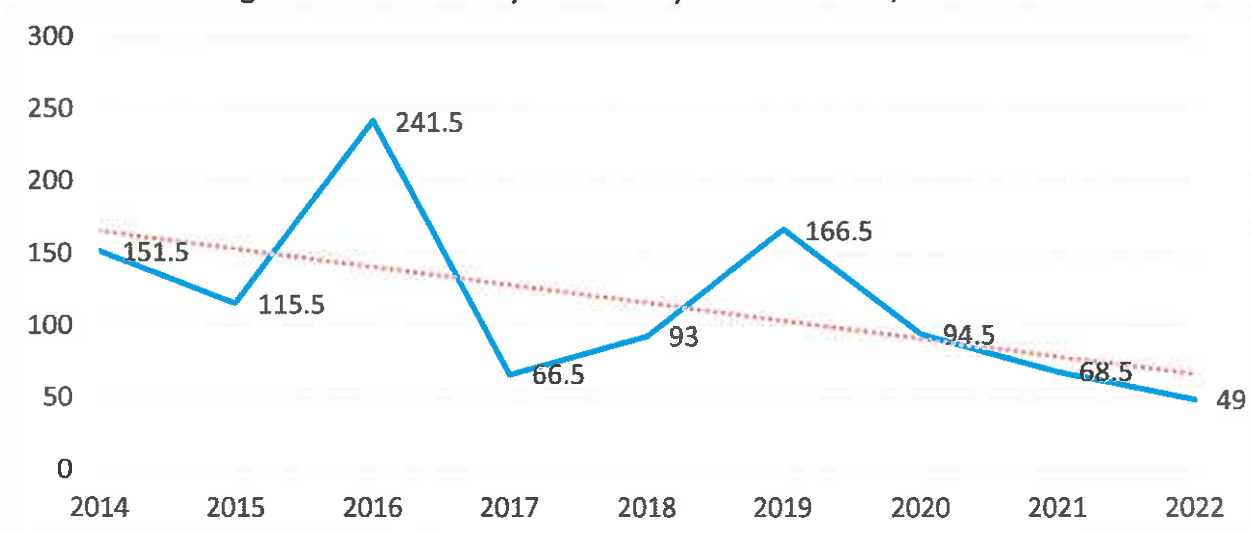
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Figure 3.2: Bath County Median Sale Price, 2014-2022



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Figure 3.3: Bath County Median Days on the Market, 2014-2022



Source: VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2022 REALTOR Data

Less than 4% of all housing units are vacant for-sale or vacant for-rent, and the rental market vacancy rate (less than 2.5%) is even lower than the for-sale rate (less than 4.5%). This indicates a need for additional rental units as the rental market is likely too tight. Increasing rents that rose by 18 percent between 2018 and 2021 also indicate increasing demand and scarcity of rental units.

Figure 3.4: Bath County Median Gross Rent, 2015-2021



Source: VCHR tabulation of 2015-2021 ACS 5-year, Estimates adjusted to 2021 Dollars

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Having an adequate supply of affordable housing in Bath County, and the proximity of jobs and housing are worthy goals for the County to pursue to improve the lives of all our citizens. On one hand, increasing home values in Bath County are desirable, but it also means that affordable housing becomes scarcer for our teachers, nurses, firefighters, police officers, carpenters, hotel and retail workers, waitresses, and others. This situation is forcing these wage earners to look elsewhere to meet their housing needs, separating them from their workplaces in Bath County and increasing their transportation costs and gasoline usage at a time when gas prices have risen.

Furthermore, some “affordable housing” in the form of older housing stock can easily deteriorate from lack of maintenance investment, prompting the need for potential costly remodeling or even reconstruction of these older homes.

Housing affordability problems are not limited to Bath County alone. As home values continue to increase, more attention has been given to this issue both statewide and nationally. Rather, these problems are regional in nature and warrant that all localities in our region work together for equitable solutions.

Defining Affordable Housing

In 2003 the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 2406 requiring localities, as part of their comprehensive plans, to designate areas and implement measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing that is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality.

So many people may ask, “what is affordable housing?” While the answer will vary, depending on an individual’s or family’s ability to pay, the Task Force looked to established definitions as a basis for its work. Section 15.2-2201 of the Code of Virginia states the following:

“Affordable housing” means, as a guideline, housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below the area median income, provided that the occupant pays not more than 30% of his gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities.

Based on the statistics presented in the 2021 ACS (Five-Year), 70.2 percent of Bath County’s homeowners with a mortgage have access to housing that is affordable to their income bracket, because they are spending less than 30 percent of their salaries on housing costs. However, Bath County suffers from a lack of housing which is affordable to those making within 80-120 percent of the median household income, which means a yearly salary between \$44,645 and \$66,965 (2021 ACS Five-Year). If this segment of the population is priced out of the market, community vitality will suffer.

Regardless of established definitions of housing affordability, what is considered affordable to an individual or family depends on their circumstances. In general, whether a house or other dwelling is affordable hinges on the following “affordability variables.”

- Family/household size
- Total income
- Selling or rental price of dwelling

While workforce housing is a major concern, the County should also be mindful of the following needs across the spectrum:

- Housing for “our public servants”
- Active senior housing
- Housing for those on fixed or retirement incomes
- Assisted living facilities and long-term care facilities
- Fair and accessible housing for disadvantaged populations
- Homeownership & rental housing

Workforce Housing

Workforce housing is important to the economic vitality of communities. Affordable homes support the local workforce so workers can live close to their jobs. A healthy mix of housing options—including market-rate and affordable, owner-occupied and rental, single-family and multifamily—targeted to households across the age spectrum, ensure opportunities for all individuals to improve their economic situation and contribute to their communities. Adding workforce housing in Bath County would have numerous benefits. In particular, workforce housing will serve to meet the needs of entry-level workers and workers who want to stay in the area as they grow into adulthood. This will help to encourage younger residents to put down roots in Bath County. Additionally, local businesses will benefit both from having a larger customer base of year-round residents and from an improved ability to attract and retain workers.

Many factors influence housing construction costs. The following factors contribute to higher construction costs and can impede efforts to provide affordable housing, particularly to the local workforce.

- Rising land costs
- Land availability
- Lack of high density zoning
- Lack of mixed use zoning
- Design standards
- Lack of local incentives
- Public perception of “affordable housing”

A long-term vision for affordable housing should emphasize an assurance that all housing needs are being met for people at all income levels. However, a high priority for the short-term should be to promote the development of an adequate supply of local housing for wage earners, often referred to as “workforce housing,” which should consist of both homeownership and rental housing choices.

Doing so will enable people who work in Bath County and are already vested in the community to have more viable options to live in Bath County. These endeavors would assist the housing needs for employees, and could aid in their retention.

Supporting Workforce Housing

After establishing workforce housing as a priority housing need to be addressed in Bath County, the following endeavors should be explored:

Strategy #1: Increase the supply of homes that would be attractive to first-time homebuyers, young persons just out of college starting their careers, public service employees, and active seniors who are looking to downsize. Such housing choices should include both new construction and rehabilitation of existing, deteriorated homes.

Strategy #2: Increase the supply of housing that is affordable to moderate-income households and inclusive of both homeownership and rental opportunities. This is housing that is affordable to those with incomes between 80 percent and 120 percent of area median income, so that no more than 30 percent of household income is spent on housing costs, including basic utilities.

Strategy #3: Create an equitable distribution of workforce housing throughout the County to avoid concentration. Wherever possible, workforce Dwelling Units should be built in both new and in existing neighborhoods and can be distributed evenly between and throughout the village cores and the rural areas of the County.

Strategy #4: Ensure that all workforce housing, both new construction and renovation of older housing, is of high- quality design and compatible with surrounding housing, for long-term sustainability and minimal future maintenance.

Strategy #5: Enhance effectiveness of existing housing assistance programs through local funding.

Strategy #6: Develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations to help implement the workforce housing strategies.

Strategy #7: Stress in the public forum that our affordable housing initiative focuses on building or rehabilitating housing that is affordable to those whose continued service is vital to Bath’s future vitality.

Strategy #8: Increase the number of long-term rental units in the market.

Implementing Housing Strategies

The County could look at the following as means to implement these recommended strategies that support workforce housing:

- Rezone land to establish new zoning districts, mixed-use zoning districts, and add more uses and higher densities in existing zoning districts -- which will encourage the collocation of jobs and housing, such as the use of Village Centers.
- Update the zoning code to support needed housing types such as multi-family housing, single-level living, and starter.
- Rezone additional lands for more zoning for commercial and industrial uses, thereby providing the potential for more employment opportunities to County residents.
- Adopt a new Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance that aligns with Section 15.2-2305 of the Code of Virginia as part of the new update to the Land Use Regulations to help our workforce afford to live here.
- Adopt and implement a Village Initiatives Plan which could provide opportunities for new housing and rehabilitation of existing housing within certain Village Centers.
- Administrative or permitting fees may be reduced or even waived and permitting can be expedited as a means to support affordable housing.
- Integrate housing supports such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), Habitat for Humanity, Project-Based Vouchers, and USDA and DHCD housing rehabilitation programs in the market by engaging with state and regional service providers and encouraging landlords and developers to offer units for voucher-holders.

More specifically, an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance can be a tool for realizing the construction of affordable dwelling units with certain new development applications, providing regulations for and developer incentives to promote the construction of affordable dwelling units as part of new residential development projects. Such an ordinance is enabled by the authority set forth in Section 15.2-2305 of the Code of Virginia, and may follow the text verbatim.

For purposes of example, another locality in Virginia has adopted certain specifics in their ADU ordinance that prescribe:

A rezoning may be approved with an increase in the developable density by no more than 20%, if the applicants consents to a voluntary and enforceable condition in which at least 12.5% of the units are set aside as Affordable Dwelling Units (and density increases of no more than 10% are allowed if at least 6.25% of the units are set aside in a multi-family project application).

In this example, if fifty (50) new housing units are planned and 12.5 percent of the fifty (50) units are set aside as Affordable Dwelling Units, then the Board of Supervisors could grant a density bonus of ten (10) additional units. In this scenario, the applicant must also agree to an enforceable phasing schedule, whereby market rate units must be built and occupied concurrent with a certain percentage of the affordable units, ensuring that both get built.

One final note, approving new subdivisions with low densities can increase housing costs because of the costs associated with providing infrastructure. If the permitted density through zoning is increased, more housing units can typically be built at a lower cost, because the development costs get spread across a greater number of units. A “cluster zoning” or pattern of development can help make this type of development pattern attractive in a rural community due to its decreased road costs and increasing the chances to mix in some affordable dwelling units. Consequently, providing ADU’s will help to increase access to affordable housing for all of our public service workers.

HOUSING SERVICES

Bath County is the recipient of numerous housing programs designed to ensure citizens have access to adequate, affordable housing. Several organizations work together towards meeting the housing needs of low-income households. The following is a partial listing of housing providers serving low- and moderate-income individuals and families in Bath County:

Community Housing Partners (formerly Virginia Mountain Housing) – provides low-interest, deferred, and forgivable loans for the installation or improvement of indoor plumbing to owners of substandard housing.

448 Depot Street NE Christiansburg, VA 24073 (540) 382-2002

Virginia Housing – through the Single-Family Regional Loan Fund, assists low-income households in purchasing their first home. The program offers low-interest loans with down payment and closing cost assistance, making monthly mortgage payments more affordable.

601 S. Belvidere St. Richmond, VA 23219 (877) 843-2123

(The Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority currently services Bath County and may be contacted at *1700 New Hope Rd Waynesboro, VA 22980 (540) 946-9230.*)

USDA Rural Development – offers low-interest loans to very low- and low-income people in rural areas who are lacking adequate housing and unable to obtain loans from private lenders at reasonable rates. Loans may be used to purchase, build, improve, repair, or rehabilitate rural homes and to provide sufficient water and waste disposal systems.

650 N. Lee Highway, Lexington, VA 24450 (540) 248-0246

Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) – provides a variety of programs addressing the needs of low-income individuals, including emergency housing repairs and weatherization.

302 2nd Street, SW Roanoke, VA 24001 (540) 777-4673

Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (formerly Virginia Water Project) – encourages the development of water and wastewater systems to serve low-income, rural residents at affordable costs.

347 Campbell Ave SW. Roanoke, VA 24001 (540) 345-1184

SHARE Homeless Intervention Program – seeks to prevent the displacement of individuals and families from their homes as a result of eviction or foreclosure, and assists the homeless in securing permanent housing. The program also provides a training and educational component to ensure self-sufficiency.

Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority 1700 New Hope Rd. Waynesboro, VA 22980 (540) 946-9230

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission – offers down payment and closing cost assistance to low and moderate income first-time homebuyers.

112 MacTanly Place, Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 885-5174

HOUSING GOALS

1. Maximize the opportunity for a diverse range of housing to serve the varying needs of Bath County's present and future populations.
2. Foster a healthy housing market as a tool for economic development and workforce attraction and retention.
3. Increase the availability of long-term housing to provide additional housing options for residents and workers.
4. Support residential growth in designated areas and promote suitable infrastructure to support these communities.
5. Ensure that the County's natural beauty, environmental quality, and rural character are not sacrificed when planning for future housing opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- a. Improve the condition of existing housing to ensure that all households have safe, sound, and sanitary homes.
- b. Promote the development of a diversity of housing types, including attached and multifamily housing development, to serve a wide range of existing residents and attract new households.
- c. Ensure the zoning code supports needed housing types including multi-family housing, smaller units, single-level living, starter homes, and modest up-grade housing for young families.
- d. Continue strategic efforts to identify and prepare priority sites for residential development.
- e. Be responsive to the housing needs of the County's growing elderly population by promoting affordable senior housing and allowing attached or accessory units for elderly parents.
- f. Increase the availability of rental housing; promote the development of mixed-use residential with a range of affordability.

- g. Coordinate with major employers to identify housing needs and prioritize in-demand housing types.
- h. Promote the development of affordable, starter, and workforce housing within the County.
- i. Institute a policy to ensure that developers, and not taxpayers, pay for the costs and impacts of development within the County.
- j. Allocate proper and suitable areas for desirable low, medium, and high-density residential development through zoning and through management of public services and infrastructure.
- k. Allow for village centers/mixed use development in designated growth areas.
- l. Limit residential expansion in designated rural areas that are not appropriate for development or in areas where there are environmental concerns such as limited water or karst topography.
- m. Promote adaptive reuse to create opportunities for multi-family housing.
- n. Explore full range of real estate tax abatement options under state code to incentivize residential rehab and revitalization.
- o. Support prefabricated, manufactured, and modular construction houses where appropriate to provide new opportunities for more affordable housing.
- p. Integrate housing supports such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), Habitat for Humanity, Project-Based Vouchers, and USDA and DHCD housing rehabilitation programs in the market by engaging with state and regional service providers and encouraging landlords and developers to offer units for voucher-holders.

Building, Planning & Zoning
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**Bath County Planning Commission
Bath County Courthouse – Room 115
Monday, September 25, 2023 - 6:00 P.M.**

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Monroe Farmer, Bill Gram, Mark Hall

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chairman John Loeffler, Vice-Chair John Cowden,

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE: Austin Hall (press), Michael Bender (County Administrator), Meredith Tingler, Lisa Tingler

STAFF PRESENT: Sherry Ryder

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Farmer called the Bath County Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ACKNOWLEDGE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Farmer welcomed everyone.

PUBLIC COMMENT- MATTERS UNRELATED TO THE AGENDA: None

ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA: None

PUBLIC HEARING(S):

Lisa and Meredith Tingler (TM #87-2-A) – Rezoning Application – Application to rezone approximately 1.832 acres for R-2 Residential to A-2 General Agriculture. Property is vacant but has been used as agriculture and residential in the past. The purpose of rezoning is to have the ability to set a singlewide manufactured home, which is not a permitted use in R-2 zoning. Property is located at the intersection of Ice Pond Road and Crooked Spur Road (1843 Crooked Spur Rd.), Millboro, Virginia, and situate in the Millboro Magisterial District.

Mr. Farmer: Why are you wanting the rezoning?

Mrs. Tingler stated part of their land is already A-2. The land beside the A-2 is R-2 and they would like to have all of the land zoned A-2.

Mr. Hall: Where is this land located?

Mrs. Tingler: It is in Millboro, on Crooked Spur Road.

Mr. Tingler: On the corner of Ice Pond and Crooked Spur Road.

Mr. Farmer: Sherry, does it meet all the qualifications?

Sherry Ryder: As you see in your packet, it does meet agriculture zoning. It is 1.832 acres. It has access off the highway. It does have public sewer and water through there. It was zoned R-2 for residential, not R-1 for an established community, so to down zone it to A-2, I have not heard anyone saying they oppose. Mr. Loeffler did review the packet and he didn't have any qualms about it. He didn't see any reason why it couldn't be rezoned to Ag. They have been very clear about why they want to do this. Install a singlewide, and the only districts that permits singlewides are A-1 and A-2 Agriculture and R-4 Manufactured Home Park. None of the residential zoned areas permit it. The Tinglers stated this is the only way they can use this property. It would be a hardship to purchase a doublewide or stick build due to the expense. They can afford a singlewide. It is a residential dwelling but is taxed differently.

Mrs. Tingler: Another reason is, there is nothing in the area to rent. Right now, my niece and her two children are living with us. She wants to be in a home of her own. She sold their home and the only way for her to have their own resident is to put in a singlewide there. It's getting a little crowded in ours.

Sherry Ryder: Her property and yours, join this property?

Mrs. Tingler: Yes, our house is at the top of the hill, and this is at the bottom of the hill. There is nothing for people to rent.

Mr. Farmer: Does this meet the Comp Plan?

Sherry Ryder: Yes, Bath County Land Use Regulations 603.00, et seq and Comprehensive Plan: Page 3-8 Goal 1, Objective c. It is within a designated growth area.

Mr. Farmer: Is there any discussion? Do I hear a motion?

Mr. Gram: I recommend approval for the rezoning from R-2 to A-2. It is consistence with our Comp Plan: Page 3-8 Goal 1, Objective c. And the Bath County Land Use Regulations 603.00, et seq. The reason for the rezoning is to allow a singlewide mobile home.

Mr. Hall: Second

Vote: 3-0 Motion approved.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - None

STAFF REPORT:

Sherry Ryder: My report is in your packet, and I will answer any question you may have.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Comprehensive Plan – Housing
- Data for the Comp Plan is not ready but may be before our next meeting.
- Cell Tower: Was approved by the BZA.

NEW BUSINESS: None

APPROVE MINUTES:

Mr. Farmer: Can we vote on the Minutes of August 28, 2023?

Sherry Ryder: No. We will have to carry them over to next month.

ADJOURN

Mr. Farmer: Motion to adjourn?

Mr. Gram: Motion to adjourn.

Mark Hall: Second.

Vote: 3-0

Mr. Farmer (Acting Chairman)

Date