

CHAPTER 3

RURAL STRATEGIES

GOAL

To support a diverse and stable agricultural and forestry base that contributes to the County's rural character, scenic quality, natural environment, and fiscal health. The County will strive to meet the following:

- ❖ Support agricultural activities and value-added agricultural businesses to encourage economic vitality
 - ❖ Support and promote specialty and niche farming uses such as equestrian uses
 - ❖ Support new development that enhances rural character
 - ❖ Support carefully designed commercial development in Rural Crossroad Communities
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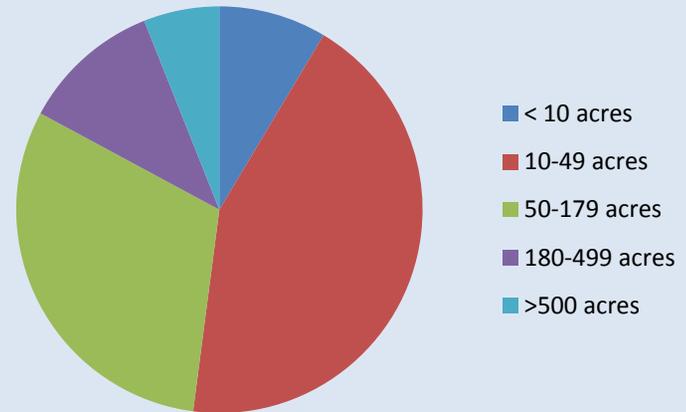
Farms, forests, rolling hills, and scenic views give Goochland its distinctive character. A fundamental principle of previous comprehensive plans is the widely-held desire of the Board of Supervisors and the citizens of Goochland County to protect and maintain the County’s rural character, and this Comprehensive Plan commits to upholding this principle.



The majority of the County is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Rural Enhancement Area. These areas exhibit a rural character with low density residential, agricultural, forest, or other uses, which are not planned for public or central

utilities. Preservation of these areas are encouraged by directing growth to Major

Number of Farms by Acreage



Villages and Designated Growth Areas, and by not extending public utilities to these areas.

Agriculture and forestry play an important and long-standing role in the environment, heritage, and economy of the county. Equestrian activities are another significant agricultural use in the County. In 2012, the Federal Census of Agriculture identified 315 farms in Goochland County (at least \$1,000 gross income), with a total of 50,142 acres or approximately 27% of the County. The overall number of farms and acreage dedicated to agriculture has decreased since 2007. The face of farming nationwide has been changing for decades. Many small family farms have been

absorbed by larger farms or subdivided into residential lots; this may have reduced the overall number of farms in the County or perhaps has caused the remaining farms to drop into smaller size classes.

Rural Strategies Existing Trends

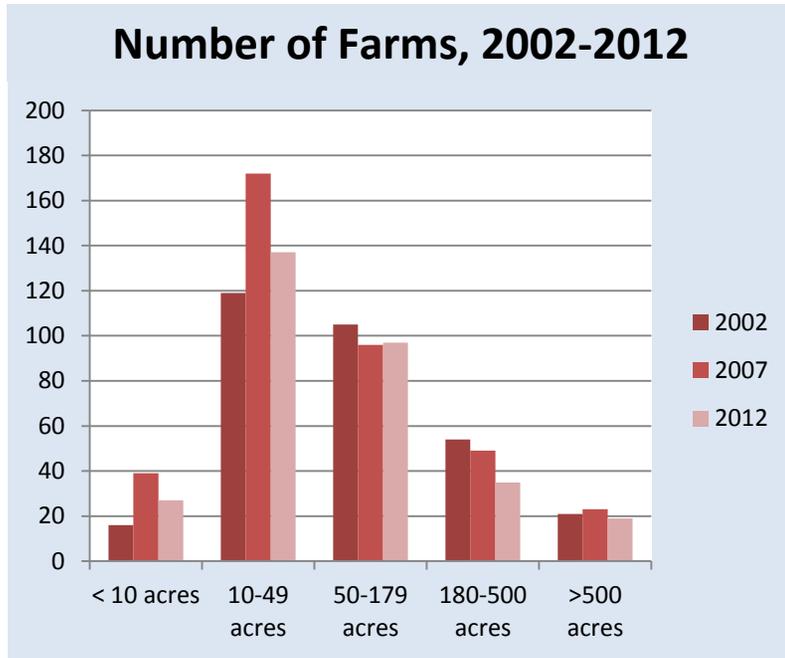
- There is a strong citizen desire to preserve rural land.
- Vast majority of County land continues to be dedicated to forested, natural open space, or agricultural uses
- 27% of the County is dedicated to active farming.
- Farms are decreasing in number and acreage.
- Majority of the farms in the County are between 10 and 49 acres
- Average farm size is 159 acres
- Board of Supervisors created a Rural Economic Development Committee to identify ways to support agri-business

The most important way to prevent the suburbanization of our rural areas is to provide ways for property owners to keep their properties intact. Agriculture and agri-business uses should be recognized as economically desirable – not vacant

land. Agri-business and tourism uses that are compatible with rural character should be encouraged. Activities that are natural extensions of traditional farming practices are important to farm profitability and should be considered part of agriculture. There is a delicate balance between providing more opportunities to support rural uses and allowing too many uses that will cause the rural features to be lost.

The conversion of land in the Rural Enhancement Areas for residential development should be monitored by the County. The number of rural non-farm housing units are increasing. When subdivisions do occur, careful design that is sensitive to the surrounding areas is encouraged. Being sensitive to the landscape, preserving open space, and providing buffers along roads can help retain rural character and reduce the appearance of transforming rural places into very low density suburban places. Uses which negatively impact rural areas, but would otherwise be desirable in the County should be located in appropriate areas designated by the Comprehensive Plan.

Businesses in rural areas, that supply basic services and convenience to nearby residents, are encouraged in our Rural Crossroad Communities. Rural Crossroad businesses can help retain the rural character by reusing existing commercial buildings, building new uses in scale with the character of the community, and avoiding strip commercial development.



Source: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012



Rural Implementation Strategies

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Type*	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department	On-Going	Short Term	Mid Term
P	Market agricultural and natural resources as amenities and tourist destinations	Planning & Econ Dev	✓		
P	Encourage farming techniques that help protect farmland and water quality	Planning	✓		
P	Educate the public about the importance of farmland preservation	Planning	✓		
P	Encourage and support agricultural education in our classrooms	Schools	✓		

Rural Production and Economic Vitality

Type*	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department	On-Going	Short Term	Mid Term
A	Support agri-business	Planning & Econ Dev		✓	
A	Use the County's Economic Development website for marketing	Planning & Econ Dev		✓	
P	Allow appropriately scaled low impact uses on working farms	Planning	✓		
A	Review home occupations ordinance to allow uses in barns or outbuildings	Planning			✓

Protect and Enhance Equestrian Activities

Type*	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department	On-Going	Short Term	Mid Term
P	Encourage bridle paths where appropriate	Planning	✓		
P	Encourage continuance of existing equestrian activities	Planning	✓		

*P: Policy, A: Action

Residential Development in Rural Areas

Type	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department	On-Going	Short Term	Mid Term
P	When appropriate, new residential development should: Minimize visual impact with roadway buffers; include significant open space; plan placement of new buildings; preserve natural features on site; be sensitive to existing topography and land forms; minimal clearing, grading, and impervious surfaces; clustering of building lots	Planning	✓		

Commercial Development in Rural Areas

Type*	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department	On-Going	Short Term	Mid Term
P	Encourage development to complement existing architecture and character	Planning	✓		
P	Encourage reuse of existing buildings	Planning	✓		
P	Encourage scale and scope of new uses to be consistent with the character of the community	Planning	✓		
A	Develop rural design standards for commercial uses within rural crossroad communities	Planning			✓

*P: Policy, A: Action