

Primary Service Area Summary

Purpose

The Primary Service Area policy is James City County's principal tool for managing growth. In growth management terms, it falls under the category of urban containment as it attempts to direct growth in one area (where public facilities and services are planned) and away from another (where the majority of agricultural and forestal activities occur). The Primary Service Area utilizes many of the same principles as Urban Growth Boundaries or Urban Service Areas found in other localities. They are all concepts for concentrating growth in a compact geographical area in order to accomplish the following goals:

- to encourage efficient utilization of public facilities and services (water and sewer, roadways, schools, fire and police stations, libraries, etc.);
- to help ensure such facilities and services are available where and when needed;
- to increase public benefit per dollar spent;
- to promote public health and safety through improved emergency response time;
- to minimize well and septic failures; and
- to preserve rural lands.

Other important considerations include the following:

1. The Primary Service Area is most effective when it is tied to the provision of public utilities. Connecting developments to public utilities not only facilitates residential development and increases the need for associated peripheral uses, but extending utilities to the rural lands also encourages those previously preserved lands to convert to development. Development pressures could entice more rural landowners into selling their lands, which could increase the pace of development and increase the amount of farmland developed.
2. The effectiveness and tightness of the Primary Service Area as a policy tool is affected as more housing and amenities are allowed. More intensive expansion outside of the PSA boundary creates a need for additional core services, such as health facilities, supermarkets, post offices, and so forth. While the County does not necessarily directly bear the cost of providing these types of services, there are indirect effects:
 - The new services require staffing, which brings traffic to the Rural Lands.
 - The creation of new businesses and services in the Rural Lands increases the demands for new housing. As more new houses are built, the demand for businesses, services, and amenities increases, creating a cycle of "providing amenities leading to demanding additional amenities."
 - The net effect of this cycle is that the PSA boundary could quickly become an ineffectual way of controlling or limiting growth.
3. A strong PSA policy can have compound environmental benefits when tied to transit. Concentrating growth inside the PSA helps to make provision of public transit systems more efficient and cost effective to run. Efficient public transit systems are important in reducing traffic, reducing our national dependency on foreign oil, reducing our carbon footprint and pollution levels, and helping to keep our environment cleaner.
4. The PSA supports citizen goals. In the 2007 Virginia Tech Citizen Survey, 83% of respondents felt that development was occurring too quickly and 79% favored preserving farmland over more development.

On the James City County Land Use Map, the Primary Service Area defines areas presently provided with public water and sewer, and high levels of other public services, as well as areas expected to receive such services over the next 20 years. It is intended that most residential, commercial and industrial development will occur within the Primary Service Area. Boundary changes to the PSA should be conditioned upon significant changes in development trends and patterns, significant changes in County

policy, and projected community needs. The PSA should provide for adequate economic growth and County housing needs at all levels of affordability.

Capacity

In order to be an effective tool for managing growth, the PSA also should hold enough capacity for anticipated growth through the cycle of the land use map. One measure of this is the development capacity of the PSA relative to the projected absorption rates. To assist in this exercise, James City County commissioned Kimley-Horn and Associates to determine the total development potential of the PSA. They reported their findings in a study entitled *James City County 2002 Development Potential Analysis* which is summarized in the table below.

As the numbers indicate, an additional 13,060 to 13,790 dwelling units could be built in the PSA with existing zoning approvals alone. Once unzoned residentially designated property is added into the equation, this number grows to 19,290 to 20,475 dwelling units. These numbers compare to only 20,772 dwelling units currently existing in the entire County, according to the census.

Utility Policy

James City County's utility policy plays a major role in limiting growth to areas within the PSA. The following points briefly explain JCSA's pertinent water and sewer requirements.

- If public water and sewer are available, they must be extended to all lots within a new subdivision including recreation lots. Availability of public water and sewer is determined in accordance with the JCSA regulations. Generally speaking, all residential structures within the PSA are required to connect to public water and sewer if they are within 300 feet of an existing line. Any new development is required to connect to the JCSA system if it is within 1,000 feet of a JCSA water or sewer line. Most developments desire to be served by public water and sewer to achieve a higher density and reduce infrastructure costs.
- If public water is not available, the subdivider of any major subdivision (generally, subdivisions with more than 9 lots) must construct a central well and water system including distribution lines, storage, and supply facilities within the subdivision. (This is a requirement of the Subdivision Ordinance.) Upon completion and acceptance of the improvements, the water system together with all necessary easements and rights-of-way, including the well lot are dedicated to the JCSA. There are six areas located outside the PSA which have central water systems owned and operated by JCSA--Wexford Hills/River View Plantation, King's Village, Ware Creek Manor, Racefield, The Retreat, and Glenwood. In addition, areas where systems are either in progress or are being planned include West Port, Liberty Ridge, Deer Lake (Colonial Heritage), Summer Place, Mill Creek, and Shepard's Landing.

The central water system requirement may be waived by the JCSA. The JCSA is reluctant to grant waivers to subdivisions with more than 5 lots within the PSA and 25 lots outside the PSA. Community wells that withdraw 300,000 gallons or more per month are required to obtain a Groundwater Withdrawal Permit from the State Water Control Board. Water systems are designed for an average household use of approximately 400 gallons per day (gpd). Using these figures, JCSA estimates that a subdivision with a central well and more than 33 homes would be required to obtain a State Groundwater Withdrawal Permit. If a waiver were granted, no State permits would be required for the individual wells.

The operation of a public water system to serve a subdivision of less than 100 lots or less is not cost effective to operate. The Board of Supervisors has agreed to accept the JCSA Manager's recommendation not to grant additional waivers to the central water system requirement until further

evaluation of the County's water policy. In addition, the JCSA Board of Directors approved a \$4,000 per lot fee on the developer for independent water systems to help offset the costs of operating the water system.

- If public water is not available for minor subdivisions (generally 9 or fewer), then each lot must be served by an individual well approved by the Health Department.
- If public sewer is not available, subdivision lots must be served by individual septic tank systems approved by the Health Department. The plans for these lots must include specific on-site septic tank locations and soil information as required by the Health Department. All new lots are required to have dual drainfield locations. Soil conditions in many areas of the County have historically restricted residential development; however, the introduction of new types of systems has increased the ability to develop these areas.
- A Special Use Permit is required for extensions of major water and sewer lines. There are certain locations that have SUPs for utilities located outside the PSA. These areas include John Tyler Highway (Governors Land), Greensprings West, Jolly Pond Road, Cranston's Mill Pond Road, Chickahominy Road, Brickbat Road (school site), and Riverview Plantation from the Wexford Hills Water System. The Jolly Pond, Cranston's Mill Pond, and Chickahominy Road lines were installed to improve service within the PSA. Per direction in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, staff and the Board amended the SUPs for John Tyler Highway, Jolly Pond Road, Cranston's Mill Pond Road, and Chickahominy Road to allow one residentially-sized connection for each existing vacant lot adjacent to the lines; previous SUP conditions permitted a connection to serve existing structures only. The Riverview Plantation line was approved to address a failing water system within the development.

SUPs for utility extensions within the PSA occur infrequently due to the extensive network of utility lines already in place inside the PSA. The SUP for the extension of water lines to serve the Stonehouse Commerce Park in the 1990's is an example of a case that occurred inside the PSA. By requiring a SUP for utility extensions, the County has an opportunity to evaluate the impacts of the construction and develop conditions to mitigate the negative impacts of the utility installation.

- The developer is responsible for paying the cost of providing water and sewer service to the subdivision. If desired, the JCSA can contribute to the costs to upsize a water or sewer line to serve additional areas. The developer is responsible for all utility costs within a development.