



NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Henry County protects and enhances its unique natural and cultural heritage as a critical component of community well-being, pride, and prosperity.



How can we better protect natural and cultural resources while increasing access and benefits for current and future residents?

Protecting natural and cultural resources is essential for community well-being and prosperity. Green spaces contribute to cleaner air and water, provide critical ecological services such as stormwater management, help mitigate flood risks, and encourage active, outdoor lifestyles. Cultural sites, meanwhile, strengthen community identity, preserve local history, and attract tourism and economic activity. These resources enhance quality of life and create appealing environments that stimulate economic development and drive growth and new investment. By safeguarding these assets, Henry County can not only promote environmental health but also build a foundation for future prosperity.

- ✓ **Support the Health of Natural Resources & Mitigate Environmental Hazards**
- ✓ **Protect Cultural Resources & Leverage Them to Tell the Story of Henry County**
- ✓ **Support Sustainable Land Use & Strategic Growth**
- ✓ **Increase Access to Natural Areas & Outdoor Recreation**

Detailed public engagement results and community data analysis are available in *Part 2 Our Home* and *Part 3 Our Voice*.

How can we better protect natural and cultural resources while increasing access and benefits for current and future residents?

What Do You Value Most About Henry County?

(Public Survey Question 1 - Top 4 Responses)

Affordability 48.8%

Rural Character 44.4%

Natural Environment 39.8%

Sense of Community 28.1%

The vast majority of Henry County is rural with large areas of the County considered to be of high environmental and natural value. These assets are recognized and appreciated by residents and the many parks and outdoor recreation opportunities highlight the values of the community. Integration of ecotourism planning into Henry's planning efforts supports these values. Continued protection of these assets is necessary to ensure their long-term resilience and the overall health and wellness of the community.

The County is Equipped to Handle Natural Hazards

39.1% Agree 31.4% 29.5%



Henry County has a unique history and story that is worthy of state and national recognition. The County's built and natural environment tell this unique story. Capturing the region's history, promoting it to attract tourism, and reinvesting in historic areas to meet modern needs are some of the most effective strategies the community can pursue to create a vibrant future for the County. The community overwhelmingly supports the revitalization of the County's mill towns and successes, such as the School Drive Apartments adaptive reuse and Fieldale Community Center project, provide a solid foundation to continue revitalization efforts. Reinvesting in mill towns allows the community to leverage these assets to tell the story of a resilient and determined community, to create places with quality of life that are attractive to people of all ages, and to protect undeveloped areas of the County from sprawl.

- Road
- Water Body
- Floodplain
- Historic Site (National Register)
- Protected Landscape (Park, Easement, Etc.)
- Very High Ecological Value
- High Ecological Value
- Moderate Ecological Value



NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES WORK PLAN

How can we improve the health of natural resources & mitigate environmental hazards?

- Protect Water Quality and Supply
- Improve Community Resilience
- Encourage Sustainable Land Management Practices

Henry County's forestlands, watersheds, and open spaces are vital assets for biodiversity, recreation, and economic development, making them areas to protect and nurture. Ongoing pressures from development require proactive strategies to conserve these resources. By implementing conservation programs, sustainable land management practices, and flood resilience measures, Henry County can safeguard its natural assets and enhance environmental quality for future generations.

#	Actions	Indicator(s) of Success	Type	Time Frame	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party & Partners
NC 1	Develop a Countywide Conservation Strategy which identifies conservation areas, zoning protections, and promotes the private conservation of land.	Development of Plan	Policy	Catalyst	\$	Planning Department
NC 2	Enhance riparian buffers and reforestation efforts by expanding vegetated buffers, supporting tree planting, and promoting forest restoration.	Pilot Program	Policy	Long Term	\$	Engineering Department, Volunteer Services
NC 3	Improve watershed and stormwater management by strengthening stormwater regulations to reduce water runoff, and enhance flood resilience.	Adoption of Regulations	Policy	Near Term	\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department
NC 4	Encourage low-impact development techniques through the use of incentives or requirements.	Pilot Program	Policy	Near Term	\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department
NC 5	Advance resilience planning by identifying areas vulnerable to extreme weather.	Development of Plan	Policy	Medium Term	\$\$	Engineering Department; Planning Department
NC 6	Use tree planting to increase canopy coverage in strategic areas of the County.	Development of Tree Canopy Improvement Program	Policy	Ongoing	\$\$	Parks & Recreation, Planning Department, Public Works
NC 7	Expand environmental education and public engagement by increasing community awareness of volunteer conservation training opportunities.	Partnership With Volunteers	Policy	Ongoing	\$	Public Information, Volunteer Services

*Note: The strategies are not listed in order of priority.



NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES WORK PLAN

How can we support sustainable land use and strategic growth?

- Protect Areas of the County that Retain High Ecological Value & Direct Development Away from Valuable Resources
- Incorporate Conservation-Based Land Use Planning Best Practices

Community vitality and environmental preservation go hand in hand. By embracing sustainable land use practices and strategic growth, Henry County is prioritizing the protection of natural resources while fostering efficient community development. This balanced approach not only safeguards local ecosystems but also encourages long-term resilience and prosperity for the entire community.

#	Actions	Indicator(s) of Success	Type	Time Frame	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party & Partners
NC 8	Consider adopting conservation-focused land use planning by using overlay districts and zoning to protect open space and farmland.	Adoption of Regulations	Policy	Medium Term	\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department
NC 9	Partner with community organizations to protect agricultural and forest lands.	Partnership with Organization	Policy	Near Term	\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department, Volunteer Services
NC 10	Promote tax benefits and Purchase of Development Rights programs for land preservation.	Partnership with Organization	Policy	Near Term	\$\$	Planning Department, Public Information
NC 11	Support soil health and sustainable agriculture by providing technical assistance and promoting best management practices.	Promotion of Program	Policy	Ongoing	\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department
NC 12	Promote sustainable land management by providing incentives and technical assistance to property owners.	Pilot Program	Policy	Ongoing	\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department, Public Information



NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES WORK PLAN

How can we protect cultural resources & leverage them to tell the story of Henry County?

- Strengthen Regulatory Tools to Protect Cultural Resources
- Leverage Henry County's Unique Story and Sites as Drivers for Tourism
- Prioritize the Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings and Sites
- Expand Community Engagement in Preservation

Henry County's rich history and cultural heritage are defining elements of its identity. Historic landmarks and industrial legacies play a vital role in shaping the community's character and visual landscape. However, many historic properties face threats from neglect and struggle to find new purpose. By expanding preservation programs, promoting heritage tourism, and engaging the community in preservation efforts, Henry County can celebrate its diverse cultural story while supporting economic development and finding new uses for important properties.

#	Actions	Indicator(s) of Success	Type	Time Frame	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party & Partners
NC 13	Strengthen historic preservation policies by conducting a countywide survey of historic sites.	Development of Plan	Policy	Near Term	\$\$	Planning Department, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
NC 14	Develop and promote historic overlay districts for the County's historic "Mill Towns".	Adoption or Expansion of Three Historic Overlay Districts	Policy	Catalyst	\$\$	Planning Department, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
NC 15	Develop a Countywide Heritage Tourism Plan to promote the County's historic sites to tourists	Development of Plan	Policy	Catalyst	\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department, Public Information, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
NC 16	Enhance partnerships with museums and cultural organizations by collaborating with local and state entities to promote historic programming and interpretation.	Partnership with Organization	Policy	Mid term	\$	Planning Department, Public Information, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Volunteer Services
NC 17	Support historic property reinvestment by promoting tax credits, grants, and loans available for historic rehabilitation projects.	Promotion of Program	Policy	Near Term	\$	Planning Department, Public Information

#	Actions	Indicator(s) of Success	Type	Time Frame	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party & Partners
NC 18	Conserve historic landscapes by protecting viewsheds through land trusts and scenic corridor designations.	Adoption of Scenic Corridor Designations	Policy	Medium Term	\$\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department
NC 19	Preserve African- American and Indigenous heritage by documenting and protecting significant cultural sites, cemeteries, and histories.	Listing of Historic Structures, Installed Signage, or Property/ Easement Acquisition	Policy	Ongoing	\$\$	Planning Department, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Volunteer Services
NC 20	Integrate historic preservation into land use planning by requiring impact assessments for development near specific historic sites.	Adoption of Regulations	Policy	Ongoing	\$	Planning Department, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
NC 21	Increase public awareness of historic resources by using social media, events, and school programs to promote local history.	Promotion of Program	Policy	Ongoing	\$	Planning Department, Public Information
NC 22	Encourage community participation in preservation efforts by launching an oral history project that captures a broad spectrum of the County's heritage—including its industrial roots, local traditions, and cultural landmarks.	Complete Oral History Project	Policy	Catalyst	\$	Planning Department, Public Information, Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Volunteer Services, Library of Virginia



NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES WORK PLAN

How can we increase access to natural areas & outdoor recreation?

- Expand Public Access to Recreational Amenities
- Promote Ecotourism and Outdoor Recreation

Henry County's natural landscapes, waterways, and trail systems offer significant opportunities for outdoor recreation and ecotourism. In order to fully take advantage of this, the County should increase the connectivity of facilities and the length and number of recreational options available to visitors. It must also balance growth with environmental protection. By prioritizing access to natural areas, implementing the strategies from the Active Transportation Plan, and promoting ecotourism, the County can encourage healthier lifestyles, support local businesses, and preserve its scenic beauty for future generations.

#	Actions	Indicator(s) of Success	Type	Time Frame	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party & Partners
NC 23	Enhance public ADA access to waterways by installing accessible facilities such as an accessible fishing pier.	Installation of an ADA accessible fishing pier	Capital	Near Term	\$\$	Engineering Department, Parks & Recreation
NC 24	Develop an Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism Plan to market the County's natural assets and improve park amenities.	Development of Plan	Policy	Catalyst	\$\$	Engineering Department, Planning Department, Parks & Recreation, Public Information
NC 25	Implement the Active Transportation Plan by expanding the trails, pedestrian paths, and bicycle infrastructure.	Extend the Dick & Willy Passage into Bassett	Capital	Catalyst	\$\$\$	Engineering Department, Parks & Recreation, Planning Department
NC 26	Work with nonprofit organizations and volunteers to maintain and expand recreational spaces.	Partnership with Organization	Policy	Ongoing	\$	Engineering Department, Parks & Recreation, Public Information, Volunteer Services
NC 27	Expand water access and recreational opportunities by developing public access points, trails, and waterfront recreational facilities.	Creation of an Additional Access	Capital	Medium Term	\$\$\$	Engineering Department, Parks & Recreation

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