



A Special Report for James City County Citizens



# james city county's progress report

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## We Work in Partnership

*James City County has an important responsibility to its citizens to carefully account for public funds, to manage assets wisely, and to find innovative ways to meet the public service needs of a growing community.*

*Our 1995 Annual Progress Report detailed many of the "seeds" we planted to cultivate a quality community. Many of those seeds took shape—the new library in Norge, Neighborhood Connection initiatives and the groundbreaking for Solarex, a multi-million dollar manufacturer of solar energy panels. But the search continues for public and private partnerships that can help us balance community needs with resources.*

*Last fall the Board of Supervisors and staff met to discuss their shared image of the future of James City County, focusing on services and customers. In addition, we began the year-long review process to update the County's existing Comprehensive Plan—**Toward 2007: Steering Our Course**.*

*Your voice and your participation in those processes has made a difference. Based on what you told us, we developed our mission statement and County goals to help us meet the demands of growth for the year 2007 and beyond. Please take a few moments to read **We Work in Partnership**, our annual progress report for Fiscal Year 1996. Please continue to help us define needs, concerns and problems affecting our community, and to find creative solutions to those challenges.*

*David Sisk, Chairman, Board of Supervisors*



The James City County Board of Supervisors pictured with the Comprehensive Plan timeline (sitting, left to right): **Perry DePue**, Powhatan District; **Stewart Taylor**, Stonehouse District; and **Jack Edwards**, Berkeley District. (Standing left) **Bob Magoon**, Jamestown District; and **David Sisk**, Board Chairman, Roberts District. Photo by Jim Gleason.

### We work in partnership with all citizens to achieve a quality community.

#### G O A L Ensure Broadbased Citizen Involvement in Decision Making

*"... making critical choices ..."*

More than 1,600 citizens thus far have participated in **Toward 2007: Steering Our Course**, the yearlong process to review the County's existing Comprehensive Plan. Citizens participated by attending a series of town meetings called "Community Conversations," by responding to a feedback card in the County's citizen newsletter "FYI," or by completing a survey mailed at random to one-third of all County households. Citizens also voiced their concerns on the quality of growth via letters, calls, and the Internet. The results of citizen and staff efforts will be the 1996 Comprehensive Plan which will serve as the County's guide to growth for the next 5 years.

Citizens now have more convenient opportunities to help make critical government decisions with the **National Voter Registration Act** implemented in

Virginia in March. The Act provides for voter registration by mail, at the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), designated State agencies, government buildings and other public places.

A state-of-the-art **computerized vote tallying system** is now on line; allowing a final tally of election results just minutes after the polls close. The new voting equipment is easier to use, allows information to fit on one ballot, and saves poll workers 1.5 to 3 hours on election day. The new system also frees up warehouse space previously filled by the 39 voting machines as one new machine is used per precinct versus one lever machine per 750 voters.

To meet the increased demand for information and communications without adding personnel, a **communications network** was developed to link County buildings through fiber optics. The network provides competitive equality for citizens and businesses who need more information and quicker communications.

#### G O A L Balance Service Demands with Available Resources

*"... finding financial partners ..."*

To provide citizens with more and better coverage of government and community events and activities, the County, the City, and Continental Cablevision joined to fund the operation of the **Community Video Center** which opened in July. Most of the programming and staffing is done by a team of citizen video volunteers. Citizens can receive free training on the use of video production equipment to produce local programs that air on the local government or public access channels.

The County joined seven other Hampton Roads municipalities on the information superhighway through a **regional Internet contract** with one provider. The regional agreement gives each locality joint purchase power. All participating Hampton Roads municipal employees should be connected by January 1997.

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James City and three other local jurisdictions joined to form the new Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail Authority to cooperatively build and administer the new **Regional Jail**. The \$28-million dollar project—of which the State is contributing 50 percent and the participating jurisdictions (*York County, Poquoson, and Williamsburg*) split the remaining cost—is expected to create 108 jobs in the areas of security, food service, secretarial assistance and nursing. The jail, located at 9320 Merrimac Trail, is expected to be in full operation by May 1997.

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The new **James City County Library** in Norge opened in July, serving citizens in the County and City as part of the Williamsburg Regional Library system. The full-service facility, located on Croaker Road, was funded by bonds approved by County residents in the March 1994 Bond Referendum. The 35,000 square-foot library houses a collection of more than 75,000 items—primarily books, with small collections of videos and books on cassettes. The Library also features a community room with seating for 150 people and more than 30 computer terminals available for public access of the Internet, CD-ROM, and training.

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**Solarex**—the largest U.S. owned solar cell producer, estimates it will make about 200,000 solar panels each year, initially employing up to 60 workers locally, with an average annual salary of \$24,000. The plant is expected to reach its full production capacity by mid-1997. Solarex's total capital investment for this James City County project will be \$25 million.

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**Permitted industrial and commercial building construction** projects during FY 96 totaled near \$59.7 million and accounted for 26.3 percent, or more than one-quarter, of all permitted construction value in the County. This figure—up by more than \$21 million versus FY 95—is the highest such value and percentage ratio increase since FY 90, the first year the Office of Economic Development started tracking this economic indicator. Once completed, this new industrial and commercial construction will translate into nearly \$485,000 in new annual County real estate tax revenues alone, which equates to almost two cents on the real estate tax rate.

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James City was one of 14 Virginia localities to successfully compete for and receive an **Enterprise Zone Designation**. Enterprise zones are geographical areas in which the state and locality offer incentives to businesses. The County's goals for the James River Enterprise Zone are to encourage local commercial and industrial development which creates full-time, higher waged jobs, diversifies the County's tax base, and improves the quality of life within the zone. The new zone consists of 3,456 acres near the Newport News line and is the first enterprise zone in the County.

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More than 540 citizen **volunteers** donated their time, energy and expertise to James City County government during the past year. As a group, volunteers donated more than 33,806 hours, with an estimated cost saving of more than \$420,885.

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Citizens who pay their personal property taxes on time can now have their windshield **decals** automatically mailed to them without charge. The new service saves the cost of the \$15 decal and eliminates having to wait in line to purchase the decal. The County saves money by no longer having to print, stuff, mail, and process some 40,000 decal forms.

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## G O A L Promote a Healthy Community "... promoting self-sufficiency ..."

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More than 200 citizens attended the first James City County/Williamsburg **Neighborhoods Conference** in March. Conference topics included how to organize a neighborhood group and how to get resources and information from your local government and community agencies. Community support of the Conference included representation by 30 neighborhoods, volunteers who donated their time in planning the event and hosting the conference, and the donation of conference funding and door prizes by the business community. The Neighborhood Connections initiative expanded to include 15 neighborhoods.

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Efforts to improve citizen services, to save money, and to continually look for creative projects and ideas to solve routine problems, resulted in the County's receipt of the 1995 **U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award Plaque** for Virginia. The award brought positive recognition to our staff and services; matching the operation of our local government against successful private companies.

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To provide citizens with an understanding of their mission and the roles they play, the County **Fire Department** continued the Citizen's Fire Academy. Participants learn the essential functions of the Department and benefit from a variety of hands-on training including, the proper installation of smoke detectors and how to develop home fire escape plans. The Department also opened a Fire Training Center to conduct regular training classes for the public and the local business community.

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To continue the partnership with citizens to solve and prevent crime, the County **Police Department** collaborated with Neighborhood Connections and the Community Partnership for Excellence in Education to seek grants which resulted in a Community Crime and Drug Prevention Officer in the middle schools. Overall crime in the County was down 1% (*1,300 crimes in FY 95*

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*and 1,284 in FY 96*) with a clearance rate of 40 percent versus the FY 95 rate of 32 percent. Operation Triple Play, a drug task force led by County officers, broke up three drug distribution groups with 29 arrests.

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Social Services secured additional funding to address critical issues in the community:

- The **Family Preservation and Support Grant** funded Project Excel. The project, jointly sponsored by Social Services, Parks and Recreation, and Neighborhood Connections, is a prevention program designed to reach youth at high risk of becoming delinquent or entering foster care.
- The **Comprehensive Services Trust Fund Grant**, received in conjunction with neighboring York County, Williamsburg, and Poquoson, provides at-risk youth with respite care, therapeutic foster care and in-home services.
- The **Foster Parent Recruiter and Trainer Grant** allowed for a recruitment campaign to increase the number of community foster parents available to care for abused and neglected children. This grant also enables foster parents to receive more comprehensive training to deal with special issues affecting foster children. Better trained parents tend to be less likely to terminate placement.

## G O A L Enhance the Character of the Community "... looking good ..."

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Nearly 500 firms registered to compete in the international **Town Plan and Courthouse Design Competition** for a new County courthouse and surrounding town center to be built on 600 acres at the corner of Ironbound Road and Monticello Avenue. The land is owned by the Casey family of Williamsburg. The two winning designs were announced in January, and County officials have held numerous meetings since then to finalize the plans. The Courthouse is slated to open in 1999. The new town center—a mix of office, retail, and residential space will be developed over the next 20 years.

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The County purchased more than 500 acres of land on the Warhill Tract, and has accepted a gift from the White Family of over 60 acres of sensitive **greenspace** (*open space*) near Greensprings Road. During the FY 96 budget process, the Board of Supervisors approved the use of 1-cent of real estate tax rate for acquisition of greenspace and also approved a partial position to develop the program to acquire greenspace.

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Development is underway for an **historical manuscript** on James City County's history and heritage. The manuscript, written by a local historian contracted by the Historical Commission, will be designed to enhance the knowledge of the general public, students, and history scholars.

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