

**Discussion: How the Irvington, VA Comprehensive Plan objectives of 1) preserving the Town's working waterfront and 2) preserving the Village Character of our Town are achieved.**

**Irvington, Virginia's Comprehensive Plan (adopted December 2024, updating prior versions) explicitly addresses preserving the town's working waterfront and its village character.** These are core elements of the town's vision as a historic, small-scale waterfront community on Carter's Creek.

## **1. Preserving the Town's Working Waterfront**

Irvington's identity ties strongly to its maritime heritage as a former steamboat port. The Plan supports an **active, working waterfront** with marinas, boatyards, yacht clubs, and related businesses alongside recreational uses, while protecting environmental quality.

**Key mechanisms in the Plan include:**

- **Vision Statement and Goals:** It endorses redevelopment of a working waterfront and expanded public access to the water. **Goal F** focuses on preserving and enhancing waterfront charm, with **Strategy F.3** specifically to "Maintain a working waterfront." The tactic involves engaging property owners to understand their plans and encourage ongoing cooperation.
- **Goal D:** Encourages organic growth of tourism *while preserving the Town's quiet waterfront character*. This balances economic activity (events, local businesses) with maintaining a low-key atmosphere.
- **Public Access and Infrastructure:** **Goal C, Strategy C.2** aims to maintain and improve public waterfront access (e.g., via the Gaskins property/landing). Tactics include building relationships with landowners, considering a right of first refusal, and exploring alternatives. The Plan also references Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) compliance for water quality protection.
- **Land Use and Zoning:** Zoning and future land use maps support water-dependent uses in appropriate areas. The Plan restricts development in floodplains and sensitive areas while allowing compatible commercial/maritime activity. It promotes stewardship of Carter's Creek and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- **Broader Context:** Alignment with regional efforts (e.g., Virginia Working Waterfront Master Plan principles) emphasizes protecting commercial marine activities through zoning, public access improvements, and education.

**Achievement relies on** ongoing dialogue with private waterfront owners, targeted capital projects (e.g., access points), regulatory tools like CBPA overlays, and tourism strategies that avoid overwhelming the working character.

## **2. Preserving the Village Character**

Irvington emphasizes its **rural village character**—historic, walkable, close-knit, with limited density, compatible architecture, green spaces, and small-town hospitality.

**Key mechanisms include:**

- **Vision and Residential Guidance:** The Plan calls for open green space, limited density, and compatible architecture in residential areas to maintain the "cherished rural village character." It respects the historic appearance and small-town feel while allowing purposeful, organic growth.
- **Goal A:** "Preserve and enrich the charm and attractiveness of the Town." Strategies include protecting historic resources, reviewing zoning/subdivision ordinances for appropriate densities and uses, and beautification efforts (e.g., streetscapes that calm traffic).
- **Historic District and Cultural Assets:** Recognition of the Irvington Historic District, events at the Irvington Commons, and assets like the Steamboat Era Museum reinforce community identity. Preserving village aesthetics and historic assets is a high priority.
- **Land Use Policies:** Existing and future land use maps support lower densities in undeveloped areas (e.g., 1 unit per 2 acres in some zones) to preserve rural atmosphere. Opposition to multifamily housing and emphasis on single-family compatible development align with this.
- **Livable Community Elements:** **Goal B** promotes walkability, pedestrian/bicycle improvements, and traffic calming to maintain a safe, human-scale environment. Traffic calming and limiting through-trucks help retain the peaceful village feel.
- **Implementation:** Regular review of zoning ordinances, public engagement, and balancing growth with character (e.g., supporting local businesses without chain stores).

## **Overall Implementation Approach**

The Plan uses **goals, strategies, and specific tactics** (ordinance reviews, capital projects, programs, initiatives) with a timeline through 2033. It is a "living document" guided by public input, emphasizing purposeful change that respects natural setting, history, and community while encouraging entrepreneurship.

Success depends on:

- Zoning and subdivision ordinance updates.
- Collaboration with landowners, Lancaster County, and state agencies (e.g., VDOT, CBPA).
- Community events and stewardship at places like the Commons.
- Careful management of tourism and infrastructure (e.g., potential sewer, communications) to avoid eroding character.

This balanced framework positions Irvington to evolve while safeguarding what makes it unique: its working waterfront vitality and intimate village charm. For the full details, refer to the official 2023 Update (adopted 2024) on the Town's website.