Building on steep slopes and ridge tops can be costly in terms of finances, safety, and convenience, and can adversely affect the environment. Fire and rescue apparatus may not be able to reach your home in time if it is inaccessible. Although you may have a four-wheel drive vehicle, an ordinary fire-department tanker carrying 2,000 gallons of water to put out a fire will take a great deal of time in low gear to reach a home on a steep slope or ridge top, if it can do so at all.

Rain can erode your driveway, with the runoff polluting streams, while winter snow and ice can make steep driveways dangerous or impassable, and can require time, effort, and expensive equipment to keep them clear. Steep driveways also generally require more maintenance than those with lesser inclines. Remember, while building on a hill may give you a great view of nature, that vista can easily give way to a view of hillsides covered with houses instead of trees and fields.

The mainstays of Rappahannock County's economy are farming and tourism. Ill-considered development can undermine this economic base as well as degrade the qualities of the county that make it so attractive to residents. The county is blessed with having a number of Realtors™, architects, and builders who understand what building a home in a rural area entails. They can advise you on how to enhance your property's value while preserving the environment and the rural, scenic nature of the county.

Living with Nature

Living in the country also calls for respecting the native flora and fauna, which are often challenging to live with. Numerous species of mammals, reptiles, insects, and plants thrive in the county. Be prepared to share your property with creatures that look upon it as their home. Some are endangered and need our protection; some can be a nuisance or even dangerous.

To avoid destroying the very things that attracted you to Rappahannock County, please carefully consider all of these factors before moving here. The county can be ideal if you respect the values that have made Rappahannock so desirable that some families have made it their home for hundreds of years.

For more information, contact

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
P.O. BOX 519
WASHINGTON, VA 22747
(540) 675-5330

Living with Your Land

IN
RAPPAHANNOCK
COUNTY

The Appeal of Rappahannock

Rappahannock County is almost 170 years old and has changed little since its founding. The county is rich in history and in natural beauty. Less than 100 miles from one of the nation's largest cities, it has preserved its beauty and rural nature.

Many homes, farms, and vistas date back to the early 1700s, and agriculture is still a mainstay of the county's economy. By preserving much of its natural resources, Rappahannock has remained the home of numerous wildlife species that have disappeared from more developed areas.

The county has shown, through careful land management, that its residents care for the land, its flora and fauna, and its historic legacy. We strive to preserve this legacy, to conserve the county's resources, and to maintain a balance with nature by not encouraging growth. The people of this county have developed and supported a comprehensive plan to meet these simple goals.

The Challenges of Rural Life

Settling down in a rural county is significantly different from living in the city or a suburb. Many services available in heavily populated areas are not available here. Moving here means adjusting to a different way of life.

Smaller Government. Rappahannockers believe in simplicity rather than complexity. It makes managing our government easier and keeps our taxes lower. Rappahannock County has a very small county government, and one of its charms is that citizens deal directly with their elected representatives or with the small county staff. The county has no layers of bureaucracy. To keep the cost of government low, the county has only one small recreational park, no public swimming pools or golf courses, and few support programs.

The county also has no hospital. Only some villages have fire and rescue organizations—and those are volunteer. If you're concerned about these matters and wish to settle in the county, finding a home in or near the villages with those services might be your best choice.

If you do live in the countryside, you must have a suitable driveway so fire and rescue and sheriff's department vehicles may reach you. Such a driveway is also needed for other services, such as fuel and package delivery, and for visitors.

Only the Town of Washington, our county seat, has a public water system. If you build a house elsewhere, you must dig a well. Unless you live in Sperryville, you must also install a septic tank and drain field for sewage disposal. The county does not provide trash pickup, so you'll need to take your trash to the landfill unless you pay for a private service to haul it away.

Farming. Farming is still the county's economic base, along with tourism. You'll encounter slow-moving agricultural equipment on the highways and byways, as well as the occasional stray cow or horse. Farm odors and the sound of farm operations from early morning to late evening during the growing and harvesting season are part of living in a rural area such as ours.

Shopping. Rappahannockers generally prefer to live a quiet life, without intrusive noise or glaring lights. The county has no fast-food franchises, big-box stores, shopping malls, convenience stores, drug stores, or large entertainment centers.

Building or Renovating a Home

Many people moving to the county are interested in historic preservation and seek out homes with a historic legacy, some of which they renovate. If you're building a new dwelling, please consider the historic and scenic views around you and build your home so as not to mar the landscape.