

## **Comprehensive Plan: 4 Guiding Principles**

*The Blackthorne Inn Aligns with the [Comprehensive Plan](#) of Fauquier County*

Fauquier County Vision Statement: *Fauquier County is a thriving community that honors its natural and cultural resources, agricultural heritage and rural landscape while building a sustainable economy and promoting outstanding services and growth within defined service districts.*

The Blackthorne Inn project directly corresponds the Rural to the four guiding principles of Fauquier County Comp Plan. The purpose of this summary is to highlight the guiding principles of the County and demonstrate how the Blackthorne Inn directly supports the objectives of promoting sustainable growth while honoring and preserving the unique heritage and history. Finally, Easton Porter Group has a proven record in successful agritourism efforts outlined in the included Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards case study.

The Guiding Principles to the overall vision of Fauquier County:

1. The County's natural and cultural heritage are intrinsic to the County's character.
2. The County's unique communities, from rural and agricultural to village settlements to urbanized, are integral to the County's collective identity
3. A strong and diverse local economy is necessary for the sustained vitality of the County.
4. Effective public facilities and infrastructure are important components of a thriving community.

### **1. Natural and Cultural Heritage**

The long-range vision of Fauquier County seeks to preserve the County's cultural, ecological and environmental resources to ensure the continued quality of life within the County for its residents and visitors. This project directly supports the commitment to promote the identification, evaluation, registration and protection of heritage/historic resources, as well as the business opportunities presented by their rehabilitation and reuse. Protecting the environmental, cultural and visual resources of the land is critical to the viability of the project.

The Blackthorne Inn is a key example of an adaptive reuse project that also safeguards the environment with water and air quality and natural resource management.

The historic renovation and preservation of the Blackthorne Inn directly supports the Heritage Resources chapter. Our adaptive reuse of the 1763 stone house will meet or exceed the Federal Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. We have a successful track record of historic renovations and responsible investment in the rural communities and environments, and we are proud to take part in the environmental and historic preservation initiatives at Blackthorne Inn which are detailed in our plans.

We are not developers, we are long-term owner-operators invested in preserving the rural landscape. We share the community's commitment to preserving the natural beauty and investing sustainably in projects that support the County's theme of "Progress with Reverence for Heritage."

The very nature of this project requires it to be designed to fit into the area landscape; not stand out in it. We will meet all required codes, engineering, planning and zoning requirements. In fact, we are going above and beyond to exceed those requirements when possible. Examples of where we are exceeding requirements include but are not limited to: land density (up to 15% is permitted to be developed and we are at 3%), hydrological impact study, water quality of effluent, green building standards, Dark Sky lighting for our landscape lighting to eliminate light pollution, and noise pollution control with limited outdoor night events.

We are conducting environmental studies and engineering to protect the natural resources. Our engineering addresses the current sewage treatment shortcomings and provides state-of-the-art systems. The historic renovation will include the County Historic Preservation office in review of our plans for the building exterior materials and finishes.

## **2. A Collective Identity**

The vision of Fauquier county is to identify special places in the County and support them through individualized plans. The Blackthorne Inn is a cornerstone of the Upperville community. The revitalization plans for the property directly contribute to providing quality recreational and cultural opportunities.

According to the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, agritourism is the "repositioning of the agricultural sector to maximize the integration of indigenous food, culture, wellness and the environment into a sustainable tourism experience." Key elements include farm based tourism, community tourism, agro-heritage tourism, agro-trade (agribusiness), culinary tourism, and health and wellness tourism. The Blackthorne Inn supports all aspects of this definition of agritourism.

The Blackthorne Inn will specialize in agritourism. The focus will be on farm-to-table culinary programs with hotel packages based on connecting guests to local farmers and our onsite Kitchen Gardens. Experiences will emphasize the slow-food movement, local sourcing, sustainable farm practices, and regional food history and education.

The Restaurant at Blackthorne Inn will be an integral part of the agritourism experience - attracting guests to experience the region's cuisine showcasing locally grown, seasonal ingredients. Culinary tourism directly impacts the cultural and natural heritage of communities by providing job opportunities, agricultural-biodiversity conservation initiatives and interactive and immersive visitor experiences. Blackthorne Inn understands its responsibility to the community to make sure that our agritourism initiatives also benefit the community. We will be

partnering with local farm partners to source our products and developing our culinary teams with local talent. We will highlight local farmers on our menus and in our marketing. We will be positioning Blackthorne within the context of the region's culinary heritage and focus on telling the stories of our local farm partners and our commitment to the locavore practices that define our culinary philosophy.

Agritourism provides an opportunity for people to connect with nature, learn how food is produced and where farmers live, and have a memorable experience while doing it. The Blackthorne Inn will offer exceptional farm-to-table cuisine, easy access to nature and connection to local culture. These characteristics are the foundation for authentic agritourism experiences.

Tenants of our agritourism program tap into emerging travel trends: a growing interest in knowing the source of food and how it is produced; the rise of artisan production and respect for "making/makers" versus consumption; food and travel as a cultural experience; and technology overload. The Blackthorne Inn is a destination designed to help guests unplug, experience an authentic sense of place, and reconnect with nature.

Blackthorne Inn will offer agritourism onsite as well as connect guests to Fauquier County through nature excursions to Sky Meadow Park, wine tours to area vineyards, and farm visits to meet local purveyors and artisans.

Culinary tourism overlaps with agritourism when the culinary activity takes place on a farm or ranch, or when it involves meeting the producer. On property, the Kitchen Gardens and the organic vines will be the cornerstone of the agritourism programs developed. The Cooking School will offer classes to educate guests about local, sustainable farming practices and will source ingredients directly from the grounds.

The Blackthorne Inn will also serve as a hub for cultural opportunities including hosting artists in residence, guest chefs, and workshops.

### **3. Strong, Diverse Economy = Sustained Vitality**

The comprehensive plan encourages and supports the growth of existing businesses and investment of new business in the County and promotes opportunities for Fauquier County residents to work in the County.

The County is to facilitate the revitalization of older, underperforming commercial operations. The former Blackthorne Inn was not economically viable, and this is a key example of how the County can support the revitalization of the property.

Blackthorne Inn will be promoting agritourism which corresponds to vision for County to continue to promote a vibrant and robust farming and agricultural sector of the economy.

The Fauquier County plan includes developing County gateway plans to encourage business and tourism and to promote Fauquier County as an attractive location. The Blackthorne Inn will be positioned as a top destination resort in the Country, attracting international press for its authentic, rural Virginia experiences offered and culinary programs.

The Blackthorne Inn enhances tourism in the County by attracting visitors who share our rich appreciation and commitment to honoring the heritage of the area.

#### **4. Effective Public Facilities & Infrastructure Necessary for Thriving Community**

This guiding principle encourages collaboration with the private sector to provide integrated infrastructure in the most efficient way possible. The Blackthorne Inn demonstrates that we improve the quality of infrastructure in the County.

This project supports the mission to seek excellent educational and recreational opportunities as the destination resort will promote area recreational activities and create experiences for locals and guests to enjoy such as our agritourism initiatives. The Blackthorne Inn will provide extensive educational opportunities including job training and internships. Easton Porter Group's scholarship program directly benefits students in the areas in which it operates.

One of the policies in this principle is that the County will use a variety of transportation design and modal options to minimize the vehicular impacts of new development.

Blackthorne Inn has commissioned traffic studies to design flow to minimize traffic impact. Traffic impact varies by season and our in-depth traffic analysis outlines how the incorporation of VDOT approved two turn lanes on US Route 50 will minimize traffic impact during peak hours on this major traffic artery. We have concurrent use restrictions in our plans, to minimize the overall impact. Our plan not only limits traffic but provides safe transportation for off-site guests, and is a standard best practice for luxury weddings and corporate events.

This principle also encourages technology infrastructure throughout the County. The Blackthorne Inn has brought in high speed fiber and will activate the site. The latest technology in energy efficiency helps reduce emissions and draw power on the grid.

The Rural Land Use Plan of Fauquier County serves to protect and preserve farmland, historic sites and open space. The primary tenants are to encourage farming, direct growth to the designated service districts and to protect the environmental cultural and visual resources. This project continues the preservation of scenic vistas, the historic property, and the sensitive resource areas which are valued elements of this County's rural and town heritage.