



## **ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING**

### **STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

<b>Project Name:</b> CPA202100002 AC44 Comprehensive Plan Update	<b>Staff:</b> Tori Kanellopoulos, Principal Planner Ben Holt, Senior Planner II David Benish, Development Process Manager Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager Kevin McDermott, Deputy Planning Director
<b>Planning Commission Work Session:</b> February 13, 2024	<b>Board of Supervisors Work Session:</b> Tentative date: March 20, 2024
<b>Owner:</b> Multiple	<b>Applicant:</b> N/A (County-initiated)
<b>TMP:</b> Multiple <b>Acreage:</b> ~464,640 acres (726 sq mi)	<b>Comprehensive Plan Amendment:</b> Update of the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan
<b>Magisterial Districts:</b> Rivanna, Scottsville, White Hall, Jack Jouett, Samuel Miller, Rio	<b>Future Land Use:</b> Multiple
<b>DA (Development Area) or RA (Rural Area):</b> All Development Areas and the Rural Area	<b>Topics for discussion:</b> Draft Goals and Objectives for the following three Comprehensive Plan chapters: Rural Area Land Use and Transportation, Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities.
<b>Discussion/Recommendation:</b> Staff recommends that the Commission review the attached draft Goals and Objectives, community input summaries, and information provided in this staff report and consider the following questions for each chapter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the draft Goals aligned with the AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community?</li> <li>• What is missing from the draft Goals and Objectives?</li> </ul>	

**STAFF CONTACTS:**

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**PLANNING COMMISSION:**

February 13, 2024

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Tentative date March 20, 2024

**PROJECT BACKGROUND:**

Albemarle County's Comprehensive Plan Update (AC44) is currently in Phase 2. The Comprehensive Plan is being updated through a four-phased process:

- Phase 1: Plan for Growth
  - AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community (Attachment 1)
  - Updated land use buildout analysis (2022)
  - Review of Growth Management Policy using growth management options
- Phase 2: Goals, Objectives, and Planning Toolkits
  - Updated Goals and Objectives for each Comp Plan chapter
  - Plan recommendations for each of the Toolkit topics (Activity Centers, Factors for potential future Development Areas expansion, Crossroads Communities, Rural Interstate Interchanges)
- Phase 3: Prioritize Action Steps
  - Updated Action Steps for each Comp Plan chapter
  - Prioritized Plan recommendations with 'Big Moves' (wide-reaching initiatives that cover multiple goals of the updated Plan that will set the County on track to reach its vision for 2044; Big Moves may include multiple Action Steps and are priorities for the next 5 years to implement the updated Plan)
  - Metrics for tracking successful Plan implementation
- Phase 4: Finalize and Adopt Plan
  - Finalized Comprehensive Plan document
  - Public hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors
  - Final adoption by the Board

At the beginning of Phase 2 (Step 1), staff shared a series of topic reports with data, trends, challenges, and opportunities for each Plan chapter that provide a foundation for updating Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps. Community members shared input on their priorities by topic through an online questionnaire, chat kits, and pop-ups. Several County committees, including the Natural Heritage Committee, the Historic Preservation Committee, the Architectural Review Board, and the Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee shared their input on their topic areas of expertise and suggestions for relevant Plan recommendations.

The second round of Phase 2 engagement (Step 2) focused on the Planning Toolkit Topics: Activity Centers, factors for potential future Development Areas expansion, Crossroads Communities, and Rural Interstate Interchanges. Community members shared their input through questionnaires, open houses, and chat kits. Summaries of Phase 2 Step 1 (Attachment 5) and Phase 2 Step 2 (Attachment 6) are also available on the AC44 website. Staff held work sessions with the Planning Commission (August 8, 2023) and the Board of Supervisors (September 6, 2023) and are continuing to refine the Planning toolkits based on community, Commission, and Board feedback.

The final round of Phase 2 engagement (Step 3) involves sharing draft Goals and Objectives for each Plan chapter with a series of community engagement opportunities and Planning Commission work sessions:

- October 10 work session: Environmental Stewardship, Parks and Recreation, and Historic, Scenic, and Cultural Resources
- November 14 work session: Housing and Economic Development
- December 19 work session: Multimodal Systems Plan and Activity Centers, updating future land use designations, draft community design guidelines, calculating residential density, and draft definition of crossroads communities
- February 13 work session: Rural Area Land Use and Transportation, Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities

Community engagement in Step 3 includes online questionnaires, pop-ups, a virtual open house, 'chat with a planner' office hours, Community Advisory Committee meetings for each CAC, and two Rural Area community meetings.

Staff will hold a work session with the Board of Supervisors on draft Goals and Objectives for the Rural Area Land Use and Transportation, Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities Plan chapters in early 2024, which will include sharing the Commission's feedback. Staff will then revise Goals and Objectives based on community, County committee, Commission, and Board input. Staff will then move into AC44 Phase 3 and share draft Action Steps in Spring 2024.

### **PURPOSE OF THE WORK SESSION:**

The draft Goals and Objectives for each Comprehensive Plan chapter are developed through collaboration by an interdisciplinary team of County staff, in coordination with partner agencies, by reviewing the current (2015) Comprehensive Plan, incorporating best planning practices, using the AC44 Framework, and by incorporating community, County committee, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors input.

The updated Comprehensive Plan will be organized by goals, objectives, and action steps. Each chapter will have multiple goals, and each goal will have associated objectives and action steps. A goal is a high-level and long-term direction to fulfill the AC44 Framework and Plan vision. An objective is a specific outcome or target that accomplishes a goal. An action step is a policy, infrastructure improvement, planning effort, or other activity or project to achieve and implement a Plan objective.

The purpose of this work session is to receive Planning Commission feedback on the draft Goals and Objectives for Rural Area Land Use and Transportation, Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities, focused on the following two questions:

**Q1 – Are the draft Goals aligned with the AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community?**

**Q2 – What is missing from the draft Goals and Objectives?**

The Commission's feedback will be used to refine the draft Goals and Objectives and will be shared with staff topic experts for each chapter and with the Board of Supervisors at their work session.

### **Rural Area Land Use and Transportation**

#### **Topic Overview**

The County's Rural Area has a variety of natural features and landscapes, ranging from rivers and streams to mountain ridges. The Rural Area is currently approximately 95% of the county's land area, or 689 square miles. It is intended to provide land for agriculture, forestry, protection of the natural environment, and historic, scenic, and cultural resources. This purpose for Rural Area land is reflected in the draft Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives and existing County policies and programs, including conservation easements, Agriculture-Forestal Districts, and the Growth Management Policy.

Protection and restoration of the natural environment in the Rural Area benefits both rural and urban community members and supports the County's Climate Action Plan. Based on the County's 2018 Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory, forests and other natural land cover in the county sequestered an average of nearly one million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, with the majority of forests in the Rural Area. The Rural Area is also the source of the majority of the public water supplies that support the Development Areas and the City of Charlottesville. There is significant overlap between this chapter and the Environmental Stewardship chapter, along with the County's Biodiversity Action Plan.

Transportation planning in Albemarle County's Rural Area works towards the same outcome as transportation planning in the Development Area: the development of a transportation system that supports a variety of transportation options for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to access employment, educational, recreational, and other opportunities safely and efficiently. Historically, transportation planning for the Rural Area has been focused on the safe and efficient movement of personal vehicles. Consequently, there has been an emphasis on keeping roads in a state of good repair and paving unpaved roads. The draft Rural Area goals and objectives refine and expand the County's approach to transportation planning for the Rural Area. These goals and objectives aim to meet the unique needs of the Rural Area and address many of the comments and concerns voiced by rural residents in the Comprehensive Plan update process and in everyday communications with transportation planning staff.

While the provision of public services and infrastructure will continue to vary between the Rural Area and the Development Areas, the Comprehensive Plan update is an opportunity to find ways to more equitably provide, support, and distribute some public services in the Rural Area. This includes essential health and safety services (such as mobile health services), spaces for community gathering and community programs, access to healthy and affordable food, and emergency shelters. Recommendations for crossroads communities and community resilience hubs are focused on communities that are more distant to designated Development Areas (and the services and resources available there) and increasing community resilience.

### **Key Themes from Community Input**

The following summary highlights the most prominent themes from community engagement heard to date during AC44 Phases 1 and 2. These community priorities help inform Plan recommendations.

- Protect and restore environmental features and natural areas, including waterways, mountain ridges, wildlife corridors, and dark skies
- Recognize and protect historic and cultural resources in the Rural Area, including historic Freetowns, cemeteries, and communities
- Protect farmland and support sustainable agriculture and food systems
- Consider allowing other types of housing units in certain areas (e.g. places designated Village Residential and crossroads communities) in the Rural Area besides single-family detached, such as small-scale multi-unit and live-work units
- Community input generally indicated support for community resilience hubs, with the need for community centers with classes/events/programming, affordable food access, senior or youth centers and related programming, and emergency shelter with phone/internet access

- Land uses in crossroads communities should be small-scale/local businesses and community services such as health care (e.g. mobile), country stores, community centers, and post offices
- Engage with individual crossroads communities prior to land use or zoning changes
- Identify opportunities for walking and biking in the Rural Area, including rural recreational roads
- Improve public transit/paratransit service in the Rural Area, especially to access employment areas and health care (which may be in the Development Areas)

## **Draft Goals and Objectives**

The draft Goals and Objectives for Rural Area Land Use and Transportation are provided in Attachment 2 (starting on page 5), along with a summary of community input and the topic report.

The updated Goals and Objectives for this chapter reflect community input and carry forward key themes from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, including thriving farms and working forests, a strong agricultural and silvicultural rural economy, traditional crossroads communities, protected scenic and historic resources, protected and restored natural systems, and focusing on safety and congestion issues for Rural Area roads. The updated recommendations include a greater focus on community resilience and equitable distribution of resources and services, updated recommendations for crossroads communities, recommendations to develop a policy for utility-scale solar siting, a greater emphasis on supporting bike and pedestrian opportunities where feasible, and recommendations to proactively plan for unique locations in the Rural Area with established and concentrated land-use patterns, zoning, and existing development that are inconsistent with Rural Area goals. The proactive planning for these unique locations is also paired with Community Facilities Objective 1.4 to evaluate the possibility of public water and/or sewer in locations with concentrated legacy zoning (non-RA zoning in the RA) that are near or adjacent to the Development Areas to address public health and safety needs generated by the existing uses and potential by-right development.

## **Development Areas Land Use and Transportation: Draft Goals and Objectives**

### **Topic Overview**

The County's Development Areas (growth area) are currently approximately 37 square miles or 5% of the county's land area. They are intended to provide land for vibrant, dense, and mixed-use development that is connected by a multimodal transportation network and supported by public amenities and infrastructure. By using Development Areas land effectively and efficiently, the County can continue to preserve land for agriculture, forestry, and the natural environment in the Rural Area. Having land use patterns that are concentrated and avoiding sprawl supports the County's climate action goals and tends to make service delivery more efficient. Ensuring an equitable transportation system to connect land uses requires high-quality infrastructure so that people who do not own cars or cannot drive can still navigate the community. Increasing the use of pedestrian, bike, and transit options also reduces vehicle emissions. Additionally, increasing density and allowing and encouraging residential areas near employment, shopping, and service destinations results in fewer vehicle miles traveled and lower emissions. Allowing and encouraging a variety of housing types (including multi-family and smaller units) within the Development Areas provides more housing choice.

**Activity Centers** and **Multimodal Systems Planning** are part of the coordinated land use and transportation planning approach for the Development Areas. Activity Centers are locations where a higher intensity and density of uses is expected, paired with supporting amenities and infrastructure. This approach is intended to help guide and prioritize future projects and investments. Activity Centers should provide benefits for both new and existing development, as existing neighborhoods should be connected to Centers and other key destinations (such as parks and schools) through improvements to the

multimodal transportation network. The Multimodal Systems Plan would also support improved coordination with VDOT on future projects and review of new development proposals.

While not all properties in the Development Areas are within Activity Centers, each property has a **future land use designation**. Future land use designations provide a guiding vision for the future use of each property and are used as part of the rezoning and special use permit review process. There are 10 draft future land use designations being shared through AC44 Phase 2. Each includes a description, primary and secondary land uses, building form, and ground floor design. In Phase 3, these future land use designations will be applied to an updated future land use map for the Development Areas in a one to one 'matching' approach. There may be some changes made during AC44 to reflect existing development or to reflect the intended future use of County-owned properties. It should be noted that some Master Plans may have unique designations for specific areas that are not more broadly applied in the Development Areas. These designations include Downtown Crozet in the Crozet Master Plan and Neighborhood Density (Low) in the Crozet and Village of Rivanna Master Plans. Guidance for those unique land use designations is found (and would remain) in the Master Plans.

Many of the future land use designations provide recommended density ranges for residential uses. It should be noted that these are recommendations, and density above the recommended range may be considered, especially in cases involving infill sites where the site acreage is smaller and therefore the calculated density is relatively high (compared to a greenfield site that may have significant acreage in open space/natural areas) and to accommodate additional designated affordable units (beyond the Housing Policy). The draft recommendation through AC44 is that density should be calculated based on the full acreage of the site, using **gross density**.

The **Community Design Guidelines** are an update to the 12 Neighborhood Model Principles in the current Comprehensive Plan. They also provide guidance for review of rezoning and special use permit applications and are intended to encourage the mixed-use, dense, and walkable development that is expected throughout the Development Areas. There are four guideline categories, which consolidate the 12 Neighborhood Model Principles: Land Use, Transportation, Site Design, and Parks/Recreational Amenities/Open Space. The guidelines are intended to provide flexibility based on the characteristics of each proposed development and the surrounding context. These guidelines may also be used to inform updates to the County's Zoning Ordinance.

### **Key Themes from Community Input**

The following summary highlights the most prominent themes from community engagement heard to date during AC44 Phases 1 and 2. These community priorities help inform Plan recommendations.

- Provide safe and comfortable multimodal transportation options, especially to access key destinations such as parks, schools, and employment opportunities
- Improve the pedestrian network with more sidewalks and crosswalks and other ways to safely cross high-speed barrier roads (like Routes 250 and 29)
- Improve bike infrastructure including with bike lanes (separated from vehicles) and bike parking
- More frequent and reliable transit and more park and ride lots
- More electric vehicle (EV) charging stations
- Improved street connectivity and fewer neighborhood cul-de-sacs
- Concern with cars speeding and safety, especially for walking and biking
- More infill and redevelopment to avoid Development Areas expansion earlier than necessary, especially in Activity Centers

- Pair greater density/intensity of uses with quality open and recreational spaces and a protected natural environment
- Support for mixed uses in Activity Centers and employment located near housing
- Placemaking features in Activity Centers, including green space, street trees and benches
- Infrastructure needs to keep up with growth, especially transportation and schools
- Greater variety of housing throughout the Development Areas
- Improve existing neighborhoods with expanded pocket parks, more tree coverage and better-connected bike/pedestrian networks

## **Draft Goals and Objectives**

The draft Goals and Objectives for Development Areas Land Use and Transportation are provided in Attachment 3 (starting on page 5) along with a summary of community input and the topic report. Along with the Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps that will be drafted for this chapter, there are a variety of tools and maps that are used to guide land use and transportation planning. These include future land use designations, community design guidelines (currently ‘neighborhood model principles’), activity centers, and multimodal systems planning. Draft recommendations for these tools are also provided in Attachment 3.

The updated Goals and Objectives for this chapter reflect community input and carry forward key themes from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, including prioritizing efficient use of the Development Areas over potential expansion, encouraging mixed-use, dense, and walkable development, multimodal transportation planning, promoting density in the Development Areas, and investing in neighborhoods. The updated recommendations include more detailed guidance on potential future Development Areas expansion (if found to be needed in the future), updated Community Design Guidelines (currently ‘Neighborhood Model’), new recommendations for tree coverage (for both existing and new development), and a greater emphasis on multimodal transportation planning with the County’s first Multimodal Systems Plan.

## **Community Facilities, Infrastructure, and Services: Draft Goals and Objectives**

### **Topic Overview**

The Community Facilities chapter includes recommendations for service provision, public facilities and buildings, and capital projects. The location and level of service provision of community facilities helps implement other County policies, including growth management, protection of the natural environment, climate action, and equity in access and distribution of services and resources. Some of the services and facilities in this chapter are provided by Albemarle County Local Government and Public Schools, while others are provided by external partner agencies (such as the Albemarle County Service Authority and Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority) or by private entities (e.g. electric, broadband, and cell towers).

The primary guidance and policies for community facilities are related to the Growth Management Policy and land use and focus on the physical location and development of these facilities. Public facilities are scheduled and prioritized through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The Comp Plan helps guide CIP requests and review criteria for these expenditures. The CIP also allows staff to coordinate community planning, financial capacity, and physical development; as well as anticipate the county’s needs for new public buildings and facilities; major renovation and maintenance of existing buildings and facilities; transportation and stormwater improvements; enhancements such as roadway landscaping and streetlights; and new and replacement equipment.

The Growth Management Policy guides the provision of public services, facilities, and infrastructure primarily to the Development Areas to provide more cost-effective service, promote more sustainable

development patterns, and avoid sprawl. The Comprehensive Plan update is an opportunity to guide more equitable service provision throughout the county. For example, AC44 recommends libraries and public schools provide equitable access and inclusive educational opportunities for community members, with new facilities funded and located by population demands. Additionally, AC44 guides the provision of broadband to be more equitably distributed throughout the county, with an emphasis on affordability and accessibility.

Draft plan recommendations for solid waste management call for increased reuse, recycling and reduction of products and materials for a more sustainable model of materials consumption and usage. Expanded waste management infrastructure, including waste transfer stations and recycling centers, provides improved and more equitable access to these services. Consistent with emissions reduction targets established by the County's Climate Action Plan, recommendations for renewable energy facilities (especially utility-scale solar) are encouraged, with recommendations for appropriate locations and siting in progress.

### **Key Themes from Community Input**

The following summary highlights the most prominent themes from community engagement heard to date during AC44 Phases 1 and 2. These community priorities help inform Plan recommendations.

- Infrastructure and capacity need to keep up with growth, especially for public schools and transportation
- Provide more libraries and recycling centers
- Improve broadband service, especially in the Rural Area
- Use low impact development best practices for stormwater management for County-owned facilities
- Improve options for walking, biking, and taking transit to community facilities
- Provide more electric vehicle charging stations
- Address failing septic systems, especially when they could impact public water supplies and when homeowners need financial assistance; consider options to connect to public water/sewer when feasible to improve health/safety/welfare
- Increase community resilience to hazards, including floods and power loss during storms
- Support solar and renewable energy, including utility-scale solar
- Add amenities to public parks and other open/recreational spaces, such as benches, tables, and public restrooms

### **Draft Goals and Objectives**

The draft Goals and Objectives for Community Facilities are provided in Attachment 4 (starting on page 3), along with a summary of community input and the topic report.

The updated Goals and Objectives for this chapter reflect community input and carry forward key themes from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, including recommendations that are consistent with the Growth Management Policy, collaboration with external and partner service providers, and providing facilities and services that meet changing community needs. The updated recommendations include a greater focus on equitable service provision, increasing community resilience, updated recommendations for broadband consistent with the County's Broadband Office and target of universal broadband access by 2025, and draft revised recommendations for when public water and sewer may be appropriate in the Rural Area.

The current (2015) Comprehensive Plan recommends allowing public water and sewer connections to properties within the Rural Area only if there is a long-term or permanent health or safety issue on the



property with no viable solution on-site and if the property is adjacent to an existing water or sewer line. This to prevent the expansion of lines into areas where new development is not encouraged. An update to this policy is being considered with AC44 (**Objectives 1.3 and 1.4**) to allow for the provision of public water and sewer to some public facilities in the Rural Area (e.g. some schools) and to areas with concentrations of existing development or by-right zoning that is not consistent with Rural Area goals. The intent is to address public health and safety needs generated by existing uses and potential by-right development. In these areas that are in the designated Rural Area but have non-RA zoning and/or development that has already occurred, allowing connections to public water and sewer could provide health and safety benefits such as improved fire suppression, protection of the natural environment, protection of public water supplies, and service consistent with existing and by-right development.

### **Next Steps**

At the upcoming Board work session on these chapters, staff will share a summary of the Commission's input and ask for Board feedback and direction, building on the Commission's recommendations. After the Board work session, staff will revise draft Goals and Objectives and will draft associated Action Steps. From that point, staff anticipates moving into Phase 3 where the Action Steps, metrics for tracking successful implementation of the Plan, and prioritized "Big Moves" for the next 5 years will be developed and refined.

### **Attachments:**

- Att 1 – AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community
- Att 2 – Rural Area Land Use and Transportation: Draft Goals and Objectives
- Att 3 – Development Areas Land Use and Transportation: Draft Goals and Objectives
- Att 4 – Community Facilities, Infrastructure, and Services: Draft Goals and Objectives
- Att 5 – Phase 2 Step 1 Engagement Summary
- Att 6 – Phase 2 Step 2 Engagement Summary